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## FIRE RISKS IN AIR RAIDS

### EQUIPPING OF LOCAL SERVICES

#### HOME OFFICE PROPOSALS

A memorandum, setting out detailed proposals for the emergency organization and equipping of fire brigade services in the event of air raids, was issued yesterday by the Home Office (Fire Brigades Division: Stationery Office, price 6d.). Copies have been sent to all local authorities in Britain. Particulars of the financial assistance which will be granted from the Exchequer towards the cost of the emergency schemes are given in a circular accompanying the memorandum.

The proposals are based on the belief that of all air raid risks none is more serious than that of the incendiary bomb, and that no precautionary measures are more important than those designed to guard against that risk.

Mr. Geoffrey Lloyd, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Home Office, in a broadcast address on the memorandum last night, said that to make the measures effective the wholehearted cooperation of the public was needed. Before long local authorities would be calling for volunteers for training as auxiliary firemen, and for men and women willing to act as fire-pickets at the fire-posts near their homes. Many drivers of lorries, vans, and cars would be needed, as well as motor-cyclists and cyclists to act as messengers in the emergency communication service. He did not think that those who volunteered for that work would find it dull. There was the technical interest of the work itself; there was an appeal to the spirit of adventure, and above all the vital importance of the fire-service in the protection of our homes against air raid risk.

"Our memorandum," he said, "indicates a comprehensive plan of attack; but there is an immense amount to be done to build up the necessary organization and reserves of appliances; to train the volunteers and to ensure that our fire-defence scheme is complete at all points. I am confident that the local authorities and chief officers of fire brigades will not lack for helpers in building up this vital branch of our national defence."

#### THE MEMORANDUM FIGHTING SIMULTANEOUS OUTBREAKS

The memorandum, emphasizing the special character of war risks, states that in case of incendiary attack from the air fire brigades may have to deal with large numbers of simultaneous fires. Moreover, each fire in a congested area must be regarded as a potential conflagration.

Incendiary bombs produce a very intense source of heat and certain types cannot be extinguished with water; the application of water to the bomb itself may be dangerous and involve risk of explosion. Though much can be done to control small incendiary bombs with sand, if applied promptly and in sufficient quantity,

be taken out by the local authorities, and this matter will be dealt with in a further communication to be issued shortly. The question of the granting of compensation in case of injury was under consideration by the Government.

In advocating the augmentation of the heavy fire-fighting appliances the memorandum suggests that they will be wanted in considerable numbers, adding that the main purposes for which they will be required are for direct attack on fires, and, in particular, for concentration on fires which assume serious proportions, and for relaying water, if necessary, in large quantities and over considerable distances from static supplies. Suitable lorries, river craft, or other carrying agencies, should be made available in case of emergency for carrying pumps crew and hose, or other appliances. The provision of lighter fire fighting appliances is also recommended, for manoeuvring round or over obstructions in the streets.

#### EMERGENCY ORGANIZATION

The memorandum sets out proposals for a complete emergency organization, of which the main suggestions are the establishment at suitable points throughout each fire brigade district of auxiliary fire stations; a system of patrols, in sufficient number to keep every street under frequent observation; in addition to mobile patrols, provision for the establishment of fire-posts, equipped with hand appliances, at points where they could be usefully employed; large additional numbers for emergency personnel (ex-firemen and ex-policemen would be particularly valuable if still able-bodied, but in addition every fire brigade would have to recruit and train an auxiliary fire service for duty in an emergency); a course of training for all auxiliary firemen (fire pickets would need only elementary instruction in fire-fighting).

The circular accompanying the memorandum explains that the Home Secretary has considered the recommendations of the Committee on Fire Brigade Services, presided over by Lord Riverdale, and hopes that as regards the improvement of the fire brigade organization of the country for normal peace-time purposes and the preparation of schemes of fire brigade cooperation on a "regional" scale for emergency purposes it may be possible to introduce a Bill dealing with fire brigade organization generally in the present session of Parliament. He also expresses the hope that schemes for the war-time cooperation of fire brigades on a regional basis will be prepared on the lines recommended by the committee and submitted to local authorities concerned for their consideration as soon as the necessary preparatory work can be completed.

The realization by local fire brigade authorities of the need for the measures now advocated, it is stated, is not related to any belief that war is imminent, but arises from the fact that measures to guard against the risk of incendiary attack form an important, if not the most important, part of the defensive organization for safeguarding the civil population against the effects of attacks by hostile aircraft.

#### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Financial assistance, with the full concurrence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, is to be given, as an interim arrangement, pending settlement of the general question of the incidence of air raid precautionary expenditure, in the following forms:—

Provision in kind of certain types of appliances, up to a number sufficient to cover a substantial proportion of the local authorities' requirements under their approved local schemes.

Provision in kind of hose as required for the approved schemes, the question of responsibility for renewal of the hose being reserved for decision along with the general question of financial responsibility.

A grant towards the cost of the initial training and equipment of the additional personnel.

A grant, at rates to be fixed, towards such miscellaneous and incidental expenditure as may be approved by the Secretary of State as required in the initial stages of the measures which are covered by this circular.

It will be understood that the grant of the promised substantial assistance from the Exchequer will not necessarily be continued in the precise form adopted for the purpose of this interim arrangement.

The grant of appliances will be subject to conditions that they will remain, at any rate for the present, the property of the Government, and will be at the disposal of the local authority subject to the local fire brigade service and the approved emergency scheme being effectively maintained; that they will be

it can only be expected that when a bomb falls among inflammable materials or on an ordinary wooden floor a considerable fire may result in a short time. The light type of incendiary bomb will not have great penetrating power, but in buildings with slate and tile roofs may penetrate the roof and come to rest on the top floor, so that roof and top storey fires are likely to result. Effective fire fighting appliances suitable for dealing with this class of fire, with corresponding supplies of water, should therefore be quickly available for use at numerous points. At the same time the normal water supplies from the mains may be interfered with as a result of enemy action, or the pressure in the mains may be greatly reduced by reason of large quantities of water being drawn off for fire fighting and other purposes. For these and other reasons it is necessary to make every effort to provide and use supplementary water supplies, and, so far as possible, to conserve the supplies in the mains for use in combating the more serious fires. Communications and roads also may suffer from enemy action.

Generally, it will be desirable to have all property under close watch, with light appliances distributed at as many points as possible, in addition to more powerful appliances with ample supplies of water. It will also be essential to encourage all householders and occupiers of shops, offices, industrial establishments, and large blocks of flats to take all possible precautions against the fire risk, to provide fire fighting equipment on their own account and to see that reserves of water for fire fighting will be available, if required, in an emergency.

Having regard to the above considerations and to the conditions under which fire extinguishing might have to be carried out in case of air attack, the following will be the principal matters to be dealt with in preparing the emergency fire brigade organization, and represent the main heads under which those measures should be set out in the schemes to be prepared by local authorities and the chief officers of their fire brigades:—

Augmentation of the heavy fire-fighting appliances. Provision of lighter fire-fighting appliances, such as trailer pumps of medium power, and vehicles for towing them.

Organization of auxiliary fire stations for use in an emergency.

Organization of a system of patrols by units equipped for dealing with fires in their incipient stages, e.g. with hand appliances or light portable or light trailer pumps.

Establishment of watching or other fire posts. Provision of additional stocks of hose, bearing in mind the requirements for relaying water supplies.

Provision of miscellaneous equipment required for the above units and for other purposes.

Recruitment and training in peace time of reserve and auxiliary personnel for the above, in four main categories:—

Personnel who will be available to act as whole-time firemen during the emergency;

personnel who will be available to act as part-time firemen;

personnel to man the fire posts, &c.; and personnel for miscellaneous duties.

Augmentation of water supplies, especially:—

Improvement of existing and potential static supplies, and provision of supplementary sources where practicable;

Equipment and organization of pumping units for making use of static supplies;

Provision of mobile auxiliary supplies, especially for use by patrol units; and

if the local authority is also the water authority, improvement of the distribution system, and provision of plant and personnel for the prompt repair of mains which may be damaged, together with provision of valves, if necessary, to minimize the loss of water and facilitate the control of available supplies.

Provision of supplementary means of communication for fire stations, auxiliary fire stations, patrol units, and fire posts.

Provision of administrative staff for working out the emergency measures and supervising their operation, provision of any necessary accommodation, and other incidental requirements.

#### SUITABLE MATERIALS

Another matter which is mentioned in this connexion is the instruction of firemen regarding the special characteristics of incendiary bombs and the best means of controlling them. But it is essential, it is stated, to guard against instruction being given with unsuitable materials or under conditions which might be dangerous. Steps are being taken to obtain supplies of suitable materials for the purpose, particulars of which will be issued as soon as possible, together with any necessary instructions as to the manner in which the demonstration bombs should be used and the safety precautions which should be observed.

Another matter of great importance is the provision to be made for reserve and auxiliary personnel who may be temporarily or permanently disabled, and for the dependents of any who may be killed, either in the course of training or when attending at fires. Consideration is being given to the best means of securing suitable benefits by insurance policies to

able for use by the fire brigade in peace time, at the local authority's risk, i.e., any damage (ordinary wear excepted) to be made good at the local authority's expense; and that they will be properly housed or stored and maintained in good condition, a log of the running and use of each pumping appliance being kept by the fire brigade in such form as the Home Office may prescribe.

Regarding additional personnel, the circular states that financial assistance will be given by way of grants towards the cost of the initial training and the equipment for the personnel under training or available for duty under the schemes. For the time being the grants will be payable as lump sums, not annually, in respect of each man trained and each unit of equipment required, the amounts being, for the present, as follows, but subject to revision from time to time:—

Reservists.—For each man enrolled and passed as fit and efficient, £2; auxiliary firemen.—For each man enrolled, passed as fit and trained to efficiency, up to the standard of training indicated in the memorandum, £3; Reservists and auxiliary firemen available.—For each set of clothing and equipment of approved type required (a) for training purposes and (b) to provide the necessary clothing and equipment for each trained man available for duty, £5. Alternatively, the necessary clothing and equipment may be provided in whole or part, if bulk supplies can be arranged.

The question of the grant of assistance towards the provision of additional sets of clothing for reservists and auxiliary firemen who may render whole-time service is reserved for further consideration. Pending a decision on the question of the incidence of the cost of the emergency measures generally, such miscellaneous items will be dealt with as they arise on consideration of the local authorities' schemes.