



National Operational Guidance

Section Introduction



NFCC
Fire Central
Programme Office

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Introduction

This guidance, for fire and rescue services attending incidents involving animals, is primarily about animal rescue. However, the owner of the animal, or other well-intentioned members of the public, may also be involved in the incident – they will need to be considered in the fire and rescue service's response.

Incidents involving animals may require the rescue or evacuation of an animal. This activity may present hazards to members of the public, the animal or emergency responders. Fire and rescue services, when attending an incident involving animals, may need to:

- Carry out physical animal handling or movement
- Collaborate with other agencies, specialist resources and animal rescue teams
- Interact with the owner of the animal
- Deal with members of the public

Memoranda of understanding (MoUs) may be established, or mutual aid may be in place, that can be called on to support interoperability.

Traditionally, fire and rescue services have developed separate policies and procedures for large animal rescues and small animal rescues. This guidance takes a more holistic approach, as the hazards and control measures are often the same or very similar, regardless of the size of animal involved.

However, if fire and rescue services wish to continue with developing separate policies and procedures, this guidance will support that approach.

The nature of an incident involving animals, taking into account factors such as the species involved and the environment the animal is in, may identify the level of competency of the fire and rescue service personnel who should attend.

Some of the control measures in this guidance, for example the techniques for moving or lifting animals, require specialist skills. Summaries of those techniques have been provided as a reminder about their use, but should not be seen as a substitute for training and practice.



Legislation

Fire and rescue services should have an awareness of animal-related legislation that may affect operational decisions. For a list of the legislation, along with a link to the National Operational Guidance: Legislation, see the Legislation references.

Consideration should be given to:

- [Animal Welfare Act](#)
- [Animal Health and Welfare \(Scotland\) Act](#)
- [Welfare of Animals Act \(Northern Ireland\)](#)

An important premise of these Acts is that the person who owns an animal shall always be regarded as being responsible for it. However, another person can be responsible for the animal on a temporary basis; this could include a fire and rescue service.

- [Protection of Badgers Act](#)
- [Nature Conservation \(Scotland\) Act](#)
- [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act](#)
- [Wildlife \(Northern Ireland\) Order](#), as amended by the [Wildlife and Natural Environment Act \(Northern Ireland\)](#)

In all incidents involving badger setts, the relevant animal welfare charity should be contacted for advice or assistance. Permission will be required before interfering with a sett, for example to rescue a dog that has not been able to extricate itself after a reasonable period of time.

Fire and rescue services need to be aware of the legislation regarding the release of non-native wildlife into the wild, contained in:

- [Wildlife and Countryside Act](#)
- [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act](#)
- [Wildlife and Natural Environment Act \(Northern Ireland\)](#)

As a special licence for the release of these animals is required, the relevant animal welfare charity should be contacted for advice or assistance.

Fire and rescue services may encounter illegally-imported animals during an incident. If activity contravening [CITES \(Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora\)](#) is suspected, the relevant animal welfare charity and the police should be contacted.



Risk management plan

Each fire and rescue authority must develop their strategic direction through their risk management plan. To determine the extent of their services, strategic managers will consider their statutory duties and the foreseeable risk within their area.

Work to identify risk and prepare operational plans should consider all stakeholders, including local emergency planning groups and the fire and rescue service risk management plan.



Responsibility of fire and rescue services

Fire and rescue services are responsible, under legislation and regulations, for developing policies and procedures and to provide information, instruction, training and supervision to their personnel about foreseeable hazards and the control measures used to mitigate the risks arising from those hazards.

This guidance sets out to provide fire and rescue services with sufficient knowledge about the potential hazards their personnel could encounter when attending incidents involving animals. Fire and rescue services should ensure their policies, procedures and training cover all of the hazards and control measures contained in this guidance.