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This circular is	<b>For guidance</b>	By	<b>Immediate effect</b>
This circular is	<b>Relevant to the National Framework</b>		
Status	<b>This Circular provides guidance for FRAs to be incorporated into their policy for operational incidents involving Avian Influenza viruses</b>		

# *Avian Influenza viruses*

## *Operational Procedures*

### Issued by:

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### Addressed to:

**The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority  
 The Chief Executive of the County Council  
 The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority  
 The Clerk to the Combined Fire and Rescue Authority  
 The Commissioner of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority  
 The Chief Fire Officer**

### Please forward to:

**Head of Operations  
 Head of Fire Control  
 All operational personnel**

### Summary

**This Circular provides guidance on the action operational personnel should take in the event of being mobilised to an incident involving the Avian Influenza (AI) viruses e.g. H5N1**

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### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Circular advises Chief Fire Officers of arrangements to be made in the event of their personnel being required (due to operational reasons) to attend an incident involving Avian Influenza (AI). These arrangements should be put into immediate effect as there is now a confirmed case of the H5N1 AI virus having entered the UK in a wild bird.. The guidance has been drawn up in conjunction with The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA), HSE, Health Protection Agency (HPA), State Veterinary Service (SVS) and DEFRA officials.
- 1.2 Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) officials attend the Flu Working Group (FWG) committee which feeds into Ministerial Committee MISC 32 which deals with matters pertaining to the emergence of AI and a flu pandemic. (This Circular's primary function is concerned only with the AI operational procedures.)

### 2.0 Background to the disease

- 2.1 AI is a disease affecting many species of domestic, wild and pet birds (known collectively by the SVS as poultry). It is caused by the influenza virus, which can exist in two forms. One causes serious and often fatal disease in poultry (Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and the other a mild disease in poultry (Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI)). In certain circumstances humans and other animals can also become infected with these viruses.
- 2.2 A highly pathogenic strain of the AI virus, termed H5N1, has caused a worldwide outbreak of HPAI that began in the Far East and has now spread to Europe. This virus has caused some human infections, many of which have been fatal. See [http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/country/cases\\_table\\_2006\\_05\\_23/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/country/cases_table_2006_05_23/en/index.html)
- 2.3 In April 2006, the AI virus H5N1 was recorded for the first time in the UK in a wild bird. A LPAI virus of the H7N3 strain was also discovered in three commercial poultry units in Norfolk.
- 2.4 For further information see the websites in section 6 below.

### 3.0 Operational procedures

**(It should be noted that the procedures 3.1 to 3.2 are additional to the dynamic risk assessment carried out by Incident Commanders at all operational incidents.)**

- 3.1 Fires and non-fire incident attendance (FRS and public protection considerations)
- Minimum protection for firefighters attending an incident at an infected site is full firefighting PPE.
  - If it is necessary for personnel to come into contact with or close proximity to infected birds or associated material, e.g. bedding or faeces, full firefighting PPE and BA will be sufficient to prevent infection.

- The AI virus is destroyed by temperatures of around 70° C.
- Smoke plumes from fires in infected sites will not spread the disease to the local population.
- Before leaving the site PPE should be disinfected as necessary by the SVS officials in attendance.

### 3.2 Fire and non-fire incident attendance (Non human disease spread strategy).

- There is a concern regarding firefighting water run off as this could carry AI virus into local watercourses etc and spread the disease to more birds.
- When attending incidents at infected sites there are no restrictions imposed on the deployment of fire and rescue service appliances and other equipment.
- All vehicles and equipment will be licensed (authorised) to go on and off the Infected premises (The IP) by the SVS case officer.
- At the entrance to the site there will be a cleansing and disinfecting facility set up by the farmer. It will be the responsibility of the SVS officials in attendance to ensure that any PPE, vehicles and equipment are suitably cleansed and disinfected before they leave the site.
- The SVS officials will disinfect the wheels, the underside and the external surfaces of any fire and rescue service vehicle which has entered the site.
- Once disinfected it will not be necessary for any vehicle or other equipment to be taken out of service due to their attendance at an infected site.

## 4.0 Contingency Planning

### 4.1 Fire and rescue services should take the following action as a first step in their contingency planning for operational incidents:

- Contact their local State Veterinary Service (SVS) Divisional Veterinary Manager (DVM) for liaison purposes. See section 6 for the SVS website.
- Ensure FRS mobilisation control centres have available all relevant telephone numbers (including out of office hours) and e-mail addresses of the SVS that may be consulted during or prior to incident attendance.
- Agree a protocol with the local SVS for informing the fire and rescue service of any infected sites within their risk area of responsibility. FRS operational officials should be aware of the interactive map on the DEFRA website. This map gives information on all restricted zones established to control AI.
- Advice on human health risks should if necessary be sought via Local Health Protection Units of the HPA. These units are always the most appropriate source of advice in the multi agency response arrangements for any CBRN hazards, AI is no different. See section 6 for the HPA website.

### 5.0 Administration

- 5.1 If a FRS attends an incident at any infected sites they should notify HMFSI using the FOSI system; category A5 Significant operational difficulties (see FRS circular 22/2006) and head their notification with the words “Avian Influenza Incident”.

### 6.0 Other information links (Websites)

[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/notifiable/disease/ai/index.htm>

[www.alertnet.org](http://www.alertnet.org)

[www.ukresilience.info/latest/avian\\_flu.shtm](http://www.ukresilience.info/latest/avian_flu.shtm)

[www.svs.gov.uk](http://www.svs.gov.uk)

[www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)

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