



Requesting Information from AF&RS

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PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

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1 Introduction

1.1 Policy Statement

All requests for information made to Avon Fire Authority, operationally known as Avon Fire & Rescue Service (AF&RS) will be acknowledged and then researched to discover the necessary data to provide a full and accurate response.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to **all AF&RS staff** (including temporary or contract) contacted to research and provide data to answer requests, regardless of how that data is collected, recorded, used and stored.

All new members of staff must read this policy as part of their induction process.

Avon Fire Authority Elected Members are requested to familiarise themselves with this policy to help them understand procedures for responding to requests for information and the resulting duties and responsibilities that apply.

2 Policy Principles

Any request for information will be acknowledged before being researched to discover the data necessary to provide a comprehensive and precise response. Some deadlines for providing full responses are set by law while others are only considered best practice, and the requester will need to be informed accordingly. If deadline extensions are possible for more complex requests, requesters will be notified as soon as possible of the reason for any extension.

Not all information requested will be automatically available for disclosure, as there are certain legal reasons why the information requested will either be provided or withheld, and one or more exemptions or exceptions may apply for confidentiality, commercial sensitivity, security or legal reasons. All these exemptions or exceptions will be considered prior to the release of any information and valid reasons given for withholding any information, balancing public interest with the need to protect sensitive details.

1. The UK Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) 2000 gives anyone in the world the right to request information held by, or on behalf of, AF&RS. The Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004 gives the same rights to request information held concerning the state of the environment, such as air, water, land, biodiversity, emissions or any policies and activities impacting these areas.

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2. The UK Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) 2016, gives individuals the right to request access to any personal or special category (sensitive) data held by, or on behalf of, AF&RS. They also give the rights to request corrections and, in some cases, request deletion.

FoIA and EIR requests must be responded to within 20 working days, while DPA and GDPR requests must be responded to within 1 calendar month.

3. AF&RS keeps records of any specific incident attended to meet the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and Building Safety Act 2022 also sets out fire safety laws for owners, managers or operators of a business.
4. AF&RS may request information under the powers conferred by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the Fire Safety Act 2021, the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, and the Building Safety Act 2022. These legislative frameworks enable AF&RS to obtain, record and use relevant building and safety information to support its statutory fire safety and enforcement duties.
5. Information held by AF&RS may include details of the premises, occupancy, responsible person(s), cladding status, Fire Risk Appraisal of External Walls (FRAEW), and Fire Risk Assessments (FRA). This information is retained and used solely for fire safety, enforcement, and community risk management purposes, in accordance with data protection legislation.
6. As the enforcing authority under the Fire Safety Order, AF&RS has a legal duty to act where serious fire safety risks are identified. This includes issuing Restriction or Prohibition Notices where there is a risk of death or serious injury, in accordance with statutory powers and enforcement policies.
7. Only requests made by organisations such as the police, insurance companies and similar professionals will be considered for access to CCTV footage from AF&RS Stations or those vehicles fitted with CCTV camera systems. This is because they will have data management procedures, and the requester must provide a data release form showing the legal justification for release.

Requests should be responded to within 20 working days.



3 Responsibilities

3.1 All Staff

Any member of staff tasked with researching data to answer a request must take active steps to ensure the data is accurate and provided as soon as possible.

3.2 All Managers

All managers are responsible for ensuring staff tasked to research for data to answer a request are given the necessary time to carry out that research.

3.3 Information Governance Team (IGT)

IGT manages requests for information, usually made under the remit of the FoIA, EIR, DPA, or GDPR, and requests for CCTV access.

3.4 Performance Improvement Team (PIU)

PIU manages requests for copies of basic incident reports.

3.5 Business Fire Safety Team (BFS)

BFS manages requests for copies of fire risk assessment reports.

3.6 Data Protection Officer (DPO)

The DPO may be consulted if the answer to any request for information contains personal or special category (sensitive) data about any individual, whether they are a member of the public, a member of staff or an agent or contractor for AF&RS.

The DPO is also the first point of contact for any individual who wishes to complain about the handling of their request for information.

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