

Address:  
110 George Street  
Edinburgh  
EH2 4LH

Telephone:  
0845 146 1010

Website:  
[www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk)



## News release

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# Grampian Fire & Rescue is well managed but needs to strengthen prevention work

Grampian Fire and Rescue provides an effective and relatively low cost emergency response service. It is well managed, with a strong focus on the health and safety of its workforce, but there is scope to focus more on prevention to reduce fire casualties.

The Accounts Commission findings published today say Grampian works well with partners in preventing fires, particularly secondary fires (such as on heath land or in derelict buildings) and reducing road traffic accidents. However, it carries out the lowest proportion of home fire safety visits and statutory fire safety audits of any Scottish fire and rescue service and has a relatively high level of fire casualties. This indicates that its prevention work can have a much greater impact.

Grampian Fire and Rescue has strengthened its management arrangements in recent years to better support the delivery of its vision. It has clear aims that cascade through corporate strategies and well-structured business plans.

Board members have been improving their strategic leadership role and scrutiny of resources and performance but they need to play a more proactive role in influencing and coordinating strategic partnership working.

Chair of the Accounts Commission, John Baillie, said: "Grampian Fire and Rescue provides an effective and relatively low cost emergency response service. It is well managed, with a strong focus on the health and safety of its workforce but it needs to strengthen its focus on prevention."

The Commission also emphasises the need for Grampian Fire and Rescue to keep its focus on improving its service to the public whilst fire and rescue services are being restructured on a national basis.

**Media contact:** Chris Holme, Tel: 0131 625 1653 [cholme@audit-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:cholme@audit-scotland.gov.uk)

### Notes to editors

1. The Accounts Commission's findings comment on the audit report prepared by Audit Scotland.
2. This is the sixth Best Value audit of fire & rescue. The Accounts Commission will review its findings from this audit alongside those of the audits of all other fire and rescue services in Scotland. Later in 2012 it will produce a national overview commenting on the overall messages from these audits. This audit work will form a useful information resource ahead of the creation of a single fire service. The Bill is currently being considered by the Scottish Parliament.
3. Best Value is the duty placed on local authorities to demonstrate their on-going commitment to providing better services to local people. The Audit of Best Value is undertaken by Audit Scotland on behalf of the Accounts Commission. It responds to the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. Local authorities in Scotland, including fire and rescue, have a statutory duty to deliver best value in their services. This requires them to establish management arrangements, aimed at securing continuous improvements in their performance while maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost. Since 2004, Audit Scotland has carried out audits of Best Value in each of the 32 councils in Scotland and in most police authorities. These audits have helped to improve performance and accountability in local government and have brought unsatisfactory performance to the public's attention through the public reporting process.
4. The responsibilities of fire and rescue services have changed significantly over the past decade. In 2003, all Scottish services were required to produce Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP), identifying the level of local risks and determining the appropriate allocation of resources. The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 introduced further changes, placing a strong emphasis on prevention rather than simply emergency response.

5. The Accounts Commission for Scotland checks how well Scotland's councils, fire and police boards perform. It operates independently of local and central government. For more information about the Accounts Commission see <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/about/ac/>

6. Audit Scotland provides services to the Accounts Commission for Scotland and carries out work as directed by the Accounts Commission. Its reports are available at [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk)