

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee

Item 10

27 June 2012

Responding to small fires in rural areas more effectively by using Landrovers

Report by the Chief Officer

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1 Summary

- 1.1 Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to matching the resources we use to the risk of the incident we attend. The Service plan for 2011 to 2014 set an objective to respond to small fires more effectively in rural areas. Many fires in rural areas are small and pose limited risk. Most of these small fires in the open can be dealt with using limited water, equipment, and personnel and do not need a major appliance with a crew of five or six. Currently it is the major appliance which is sent to small fires in the open. The aim of this objective is to support a more effective and cost efficient operating model and one which maintains the availability of major appliances so they able to respond to risk critical calls.
- 1.2 Mobilising a crew of two in a Landrover instead of a crew of up to six in a major appliance is considered to be a more efficient operating model, with the additional benefit that some financial savings can be made.
- 1.3 In response to this objective a small fires vehicle trial was held at Fleet, Waterlooville, and Ringwood between May and December 2011.
- 1.4 This trial made a saving of nearly £3,000. If all HFRS Landrovers responded to small fires in the open within their station ground a saving of over £50,000 could be made. If all small fires in the open were tackled by Landrovers then over £80,000 could be saved, though this figure is provisional and is dependant upon availability, a review of the distribution of the Landrover fleet, and selective paging.
- 1.5 This document reports on the results of this trial and make recommendations as to how we can further develop this objective across Hampshire.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee endorse Service Management Team's approval to take the following actions:
 - 2.1.1 A phased approach is taken to using Landrovers to respond to clearly defined small fires in the open as follows.

- 2.1.2 • Phase 1: Landrovers in existing locations will be mobilised as the first appliance to small fires in the open. This will commence on 1 July 2012, with decisions made on a station by station basis.
- 2.1.3 • Phase 2: In line with current work reviewing the disposition of vehicles across the county, consideration will be given to the location of the Landrover fleet.
- 2.1.4 • Phase 3: Landrovers will respond beyond their own station grounds to small fires in the open in neighbouring areas using Automatic Vehicle Location system when this facility becomes available.
- 2.1.5 That, subject to the outcomes of the selective paging project, selective paging* (see glossary in para, 13) be used to reduce the number of personnel required to attend to enable mobilisation of the Landrover.

3 Introduction and background

- 3.1 The objective in the HFRS plan 2011-2014 stated that “we will respond to small fires more effectively in rural areas”. This objective was initiated through Project Engage and based on the concept of the small fires vehicles used in the urban areas of Hampshire. It is important, however, to make the clear distinction between a small fires vehicle and a Landrover. The former is a purpose built appliance which carries out a range of tasks (including community safety work) in city areas whilst the latter is an existing appliance which we propose to use more flexibly in rural areas.
- 3.2 The aims of this objective are to better match our resources to the type of incident. Most small fires in the open can be dealt with using limited water, equipment, and personnel and do not need a main appliance and crew of five or six. By mobilising the Landrover to small fires in the open the main appliance will remain available for larger, critical incidents. Efficiency savings will be made since only two personnel will attract a turnout payment instead of between four and six.
- 3.3 To meet the objective a small fires vehicle trial was run between May and December 2011. The trial was implemented at Ringwood, where the existing Landrover was redesignated a small fires vehicle and for the duration of the trial was not available in its original role. At Waterlooville a purpose built small fires vehicle was used. At Fleet a second Landrover was issued and designated as a small fires vehicle and only used as such.
- 3.4 Feedback from those involved has indicated that guidance on implementation and the practical workings of this trial was limited, with some sense that stations were 'left to get on with it'. This manifested initially as resistance and little or no buy in from stations who felt this trial had been thrust upon them with no consultation. We have learnt that we need to improve engagement with personnel to support the effective implementation of a similar trial in the future, and the need to enable personnel to embrace and effect change.
- 3.5 Managers at all three locations addressed these problems and implemented local solutions in the form of specific crewing and rota arrangements. Ringwood and Fleet maintained the same system for the duration of the trial whilst

Waterlooville modified their system some way through which subsequently improved availability.

3.6 As the trial progressed buy in was variable although by its conclusion all three stations were running the trial effectively.

3.7 Despite the trial running effectively by its conclusion, the model of using a separate rota system to crew the small fires vehicle was found to be unsustainable in the long term. Managing the crewing for the small fires vehicle was onerous, time consuming and complicated. We have learnt that future changes to the type of incidents to which Landrovers are mobilised should not involve separate rotas.

4 Current Situation

4.1 Currently the first attendance to all fires within the geographical area covered by HFRS is a minimum of a major appliance. (The exception being in Southampton and soon Portsmouth and Basingstoke where a specialist small fires vehicle is operated).

4.2 Many of these fires are small such as bins, grass, or refuse.

4.3 Most small fires do not need the same number of firefighters or the same scale of equipment as needed at a major fire; by better matching our resources to the type of incident we will make sure that major appliances are immediately available for larger, life threatening incidents and are not tied up with smaller, less serious events.

4.4 Analysis has shown that substantial monetary savings can be made by mobilising Landrovers to small fires in the open in lieu of a major pump. In total this trial saved £2,910. If the small fires vehicles had attended all small fires that occurred during the trial a saving of £6,397 would have been achieved.

4.5 A major appliance can have a crew of between four and six firefighters at a cumulative hourly rate of up to £90 an hour. Such vehicles have a fuel consumption of 8 miles per gallon. A Landover would mobilise with a crew of two at a combined hourly rate of £30 an hour. Landrovers have an average fuel consumption of 25 miles per gallon

4.6 The service is currently covered by eighteen Landrovers and two heavy tenders, predominantly in rural areas, and the disposition of these will be reviewed if these recommendations are accepted.

4.7 Excluding the urban areas of the county, the service responded to approximately 1,954 small fires in the open between April 2010 and March 2011. If all these fires were attended by Landrovers rather than major appliances a projected saving of £83,000 could have been achieved, excluding fuel costs and assuming each incident lasted no more than one hour.

4.8 If Landrovers attended all small fires in the open on their own station ground in current dispositions a saving of £53,172 would have been expected between April 2010 and March 2011.

- 4.9 As well as a cost saving this improved use of vehicles could have a positive impact on public perception with better utilisation of appliances and better matching of resource to risk.

5 Proposed changes

- 5.1 Landrovers are mobilised to small fires in the open with a crew of two. The crew will include a suitably qualified commander.
- 5.2 In phases 1 and 2 of the implementation all available personnel will be turned in and no separate rota or alerting system used. In Phase 3, in line with parallel projects, selective paging will be introduced. In the interim savings will still be made due to the reduced numbers claiming a turnout fee.
- 5.3 Control will have the freedom to exercise discretion on mobilisation dependent on information they have received such that they may mobilise the major appliance in lieu of the Landrover.
- 5.4 A very clear definition of a small fire in the open and mobilising criteria will be established.
- 5.5 Clear standard operating procedures must be adopted to ensure safe practices are adopted such as triggers for make ups, lone working, and scene safety.

6 Supporting our corporate aims and objectives

- 6.1 The proposals within this report support corporate objective number 3 from the 2012-2014 Service Plan, 'we will respond to small fires more effectively in rural areas.
- 6.2 These proposals also contribute to the Service's aim of saving money where possible without compromising the level of service provided.

7 Risk analysis

- 7.1 Failure to adopt the proposals contained within this report will result in continued expenditure which would otherwise be saved.
- 7.2 Under the current system major appliances will not be available for critical incidents where they otherwise might be.
- 7.3 The removal of unnecessary major appliance emergency call outs will contribute to road safety on Hampshire highways.

8 People Impact Assessment

- 8.1 There is no impact outside current operating principles and practises.

8.2 The proposals in this report are considered compatible with the provisions of the equality and human rights legislation.

9 Environmental and Sustainability impact assessment

9.1 These proposals will reduce the use of major appliances for inappropriate calls thus reducing fuel consumption and consequent pollution and carbon foot print.

10 Resource implications

10.1 Human Resources

There will be no need to vary the establishment of stations in order to implement these proposals.

10.2 Physical Resources

These recommendations have no resource implication as existing appliances and equipment will be used in their current locations.

10.3 Information and Communications Technology Resources

No implications currently, however when an appropriate alternative paging system is developed there will be a cost implication in developing and implementing a Selective Paging system.

10.4 Financial Implications

Notwithstanding the costs above it is anticipated that these changes would have an overall benefit in terms of cost reductions.

11 Consultation

11.1 Stations involved with the original trial have been consulted with, and have discussed the trial and future proposals.

11.2 Fire Control has been consulted.

11.3 A working group drawn from affected parties will be established to develop this objective.

12 Conclusion

12.1 This report concludes that the original trial had limited value due to the lack of calls and the method of implementation. The original objective is still achievable by amending the Pre Determined Attendance* for small fires in the open using existing resources.

Selective paging	Selective paging will ensure the right number of retained duty system (RDS) personnel are turned out, as required by the emergency call. This means only paging the number of staff that are needed, which will save money. It is one of the Service's efficiency proposals.
Pre Determined Attendance	Control initially mobilise resources to each incident with a specific response which is called a Pre-Determined Attendance (PDA). The PDA to an incident will vary considerably dependent on many considerations, such as: <ul data-bbox="754 660 1225 907" style="list-style-type: none">• Location• Type of incident• Type of property• Crewing (personnel) required• Equipment required