

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee

Item 7

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Development of risk based response standards and models

Report of the Chief Officer

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1 Summary

- 1.1 In April 2010 we made changes to our response standards and have subsequently implemented other actions and trials to further improve our response to incidents in terms of timeliness and weight of attack.
- 1.2 These changes are a response to our developing understanding of risk and enable us to make effective use of resources to respond to this risk safely and achieve the best outcome for those needing our services.
- 1.3 This report summarises our progress against these new response standards and other changes we have implemented. It brings together an overview of key developments to demonstrate the Service's continuing journey to operate more effectively by adapting our resources to the risks

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee acknowledge and endorse the progress being made in developing our risk based response standards and models.

3 Introduction and background

- 3.1 In December 2009 we changed our policy so that our front line fire engines had to respond with a minimum of four riders. Previously appliances had been able to mobilise with three personnel or without a qualified and assessed incident command officer with the consequence that additional resources had to be mobilised. This change enables us to get the right number of people, skills and weight of attack to an incident efficiently and operate safely when we are there.
- 3.2 In April 2010 the Service implemented new standards for responding to incidents as follows:
 - Critical incidents in under 8 minutes
 - Non-critical Incidents in under 15 minutes

- Non-emergency incidents in under an hour

A summary of the different incident types that fall within each of each response standard is shown in appendix A

- 3.3 The combination of these new standards of weight of attack (sending fire engines with at least four firefighters) and speed of response, provided a sound platform to develop future vehicles, resources and skills to meet the needs of specific incidents and risks whilst maintaining effective emergency cover.
- 3.4 In support of our objectives set through the integrated risk management process (IRMP), and stated in our Service Plan, we have undertaken the following trials and initiatives for responding in alternative ways to specific types of incidents:
- Development of small fires vehicles in urban areas
 - Development of small fires vehicles in rural areas
 - Responding to unwanted fire signals* (UFS) in urban areas
- 3.5 In addition we will be commencing the following trials in December 2011:
- Responding to road traffic collisions (RTC) differently in rural areas
 - Responding to unwanted fire signals* in rural areas

* Unwanted fire signals are calls to automatic fire alarms in non domestic properties.

4 Performance against the new response standards and models

- 4.1 The move to crewing fire engines with a minimum of four fire-fighters with the right skills has enhanced resources available at all incidents and enabled safe systems of work to be consistently applied.
- 4.2 In July 2009 an electronic Rota Management System (RMS) replaced the paper system for monitoring the availability of fire engines crewed by retained duty system staff. This has improved the accuracy of our records for when appliances are available thus enabling the Service to deploy its resources more effectively to incidents. This, coupled with an increasing establishment of retained staff and good retention levels, is supporting our work to deliver the best service possible to communities across Hampshire. Where we identify shortfalls in availability through these electronic records we are now able to examine in more detail the reasons for this and take targeted action to improve.
- 4.3 Since introducing the risk based response standards in 2010 we have seen no significant variation in performance between the 2010/11 year and the previous two years. Although response times to incidents in the three categories have remained broadly consistent with previous attendance standards, and the Service has yet to reach the targets set for critical and non-critical incidents, we are now able to distinguish between the three categories of incident and take targeted

measures for improvement.

- 4.4 This consistency in performance also confirms that the four rider crewing is not adversely affecting response standards whilst it has improved our weight of attack at incidents.
- 4.5 In the past year we have been trialling the use of a Small Fires Vehicle (SFV) in Southampton. This has increased the availability of front line fire engines for critical incidents whilst enabling us to respond more appropriately to non-critical incidents and support risk reduction activity in the community.
- 4.6 The SFV has met the target to attend non-critical incidents within 15 minutes, exceeding average Service performance. As well as supporting our approach to more accurately match resources to risk we have ensured that front line fire engines remain available should concurrent incidents occur. Our records show that so far there have been 21 occasions where this has occurred. Of these 7 were classed as critical incidents (3 fires and 4 special service calls).
- 4.7 In December 2010 the original Small Fires Vehicle was replaced by a new vehicle designed specifically to take on the role. The feedback from staff in respect of this vehicle has been positive, and where areas for improvement have been identified, they are being acted upon. Two further SFVs are on order and are anticipated to go in to service in Basingstoke and Portsmouth in April 2012.
- 4.8 This years objectives see further development of alternative methods of responding, such as our SFV trials in Ringwood and Fleet and our plans to respond differently to Road Traffic Collisions (RTC) and Unwanted Fire Signals (UFS) in urban and rural areas.
- 4.9 Our trial to respond to UFS differently in urban areas commenced in Portsmouth in April 2011. During the hours of 0900 to 1700 Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) a protection officer has responded to UFS in certain non-domestic properties. Between April and July 18 such incidents were attended, all of which were false alarms. This trial again maintains the availability of front line fire engines for concurrent calls. In addition the protection officer can explore the reasons behind the unwanted fire signal and provide advice and guidance to prevent reoccurrence and so reduce the number of these calls in the future.
- 4.10 The SFV trials in Fleet, Ringwood and Waterlooville commenced in May 2011 and will be evaluated in November 2011 when six months data is available. A review of data to date has not revealed any significant changes in response capability or against the risk based response standards. However the weight of attack is now more appropriate for the incident type and again we have increased availability of front line pumps for concurrent calls though to date there has been no occurrence of this.
- 4.11 Trials to respond in different ways to UFS and RTC in rural areas are planned to commence at Botley and Romsey in December 2011 and will be evaluated 12 months later. Both of these trials are again intended to send a more appropriate

response in relation to the incident type and associated risk.

- 4.12 Reasoning for responding to RTC differently is two-fold. Firstly to achieve an earlier intervention at the incident where there is a known life risk. Secondly to support achievement of our 8 minute critical attendance time target. A retained fire-fighter, competent in incident command, and a co-responder will directly attend the incident in their Service-provided vehicles. This will be in addition to the normal attendance we would send to the RTC. The earlier arrival of these two personnel will enable quicker assessment of the incident and provide support for any trapped persons in a vehicle.
- 4.13 As with the Urban UFS trial, the Rural UFS trial will be focused on certain non-domestic properties only. It will combine with the RTC trial at Botley and Romsey. In contrast to the RTC response, these rural UFS have a 60 minute response time by one officer in a Service-provided vehicle. This enables us to maintain the front line fire engine at the station for other calls. The officers attending these UFS will have some specific training so they can provide advice to occupiers and prevent reoccurrence of these unwanted fire signals.
- 4.14 In undertaking this range of trials we are gathering significant understanding and learning about how we can work more flexibly with our resources and staff, and learn lessons that will inform future proposals for alternative mobilising models.

5 Future developments

- 5.1 Trials in progress and those planned to start will be evaluated; the results of these evaluations will enable the Service to implement permanent provision where the evidence supports this. Of additional importance is the learning we gather from each trial that will contribute to future developments in vehicles and response options.
- 5.2 Our Community Risk Intelligence team will continue to develop our methods and tools to identify risk and analyse response options. This will support managers and the Service in identifying solutions that will best match risk.

6 Supporting our corporate aims and objectives

6.1 All of the above trials support current Service objectives as detailed below:

- Develop response vehicles to better meet risk
- Making best use of our firefighters
- Tackling small fires in a better way
- Responding to small fires more effectively in rural areas
- Responding to RTCs in rural areas more effectively
- Responding differently to automatic fire alarms in non-domestic properties

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The three response categories have enabled us to distinguish, on a risk basis, between different incident types, allowing us to match the appropriate response to that risk. When coupled with our minimum crewing of four firefighters on a fire engine and through trialling alternative response models we are able to use our resources more efficiently and effectively.
- 7.2 The progress we are now making with our trials and corporate objectives is enabling us to make the best use of our resources whilst shaping the Service to best meet the current and future needs of all of Hampshire's communities.

8 Background papers

- 8.1 There are no additional background papers

