

HAMPSHIRE RETAINED FIREFIGHTERS UNION

GETTING TO
INCIDENTS IN RURAL
AREAS FASTER

A DISCUSSIONAL DOCUMENT

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DISCUSSIONAL DOCUMENT

RESPONDING TO HFRS CORPORATE OBJECTIVE 4: GETTING TO INCIDENTS IN RURAL AREAS FASTER

INTRODUCTION

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service have recently published their draft corporate objectives for 2010 -2013 of which objective 4 is entitled “Getting to incidents in rural areas faster”

WHAT AND WHY?

The way on call firefighters currently respond to our stations does not provide the fastest response to an emergency. We will provide initial response teams and vehicles for retained duty stations to improve our response times.

HOW AND WHEN?

We will find the most suitable area in which to pilot this, to start in June 2011. We will then consider introducing this in other areas of the county.

We will look into how our firefighters can get to incidents directly from their home or place of work with the right equipment. This will mean providing smaller vehicles to respond to incidents with the right equipment for different incidents that may happen in that area.

OUR RESPONSE

Whereas the objectives aims are applauded we do not feel that the recommendation is necessarily the best solution. We therefore offer an alternative plan which delivers an arguably better response, is more robust and less costly. In addition to the primary objective we also consider the other advantages that this initiative will create.

The discussion document recognises that a similar idea is being developed within the five station review and this project although with different origins supports it.

PROPOSAL

Our proposal considers the success of the 'First Responder' system now employed by Hampshire Ambulance and HFRS and considers if this systems model could be successfully replicated to Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service RDS incident response.

A rural station would have available a 'First Response' resource which would be mobilised at the same time as the local pump. The individual who is acting as 'First Responder' would be advised via pager of the exact location of the incident and would respond from home straight to the incident.

This mobilisation of a first response would have the key benefit of getting a Hampshire Fire and Rescue resource to an incident much sooner the benefits of which would be:

- Faster casualty intervention
- Opportunity to prepare for incoming resources
- Opportunity to provide an informative to allow incoming resources to prepare whilst mobile
- Ability to call on additional resources if required much sooner
- Opportunity to prepare and communicate an effective plan and tasking crews immediately on arrival
- More likely to reach 8/80 statistics

BENEFITS

FOR THE INCIDENT

It cannot be argued that the sooner professional aid can be offered at an incident the more chance of a successful outcome. There are a number of reasons for this:

- The sooner positive action is taken the situation will have had less time to develop “the faster they (medical aid) can get to car crash victims, the better their chance of saving lives. Experts say the earlier crash notification is especially important in rural areas, where there are fewer witnesses who can report an accident and call for help. Rural crashes account for only 20 percent of the total annual vehicular crashes, but 60 percent of the fatalities (US Figures).
- Opportunity to minimise ‘do gooders’ making a situation worse (such as moving casualty, committing into a burning building etc.)
- A quicker request for more resources can be made, thus ensuring full requirements are met sooner thus resulting in an earlier successful outcome

With sufficient promotion it would be envisaged that other emergency services may call upon the Fire Service more often knowing the speed and usefulness of the response – this would ensure better and sooner casualty handling.

FINANCIAL

In addition there will be cost savings to both HFRS and the community:

- Fire continues to impose significant costs on the economy of England and Wales. In 2004, the total cost was estimated at £7.03bn, equivalent to approximately 0.78% of the gross value added of the economy (a measure of total national output).
- The average cost of a domestic fire is estimated at £24,900, of which approximately £14,600 is accounted for by the economic cost of injuries and fatalities and £7,300 is due to property damage.
- The average cost of a fire in a commercial building is estimated at £43,800, of which the cost of fire damage to property represents £27,700.
- The average cost of a vehicle fire is estimated at £4,400.
- Specifically for RDS who are paid per 1/4 hour, the less time they are in attendance will mean the less the bill to HFRS and associated vehicle running costs

8/80

The 8/80 was a component of Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Plan since 2005. Since its inception the target of attending 80% of incidents in under 8 minutes has been approached but initiatives introduced since then have actually made the statistics fall. With the reduction of AFA's which affect predominantly Wholtime stations who were attending within 8 minutes thus effectively helping the county wide average the county wide statistics now do not register as much. Consequently RDS stations who by nature of the way they turn out and size of station area find it harder to reach 8/80 now affect the county wide target more.

DISADVANTAGES

It is easy to identify why a project may work but the possible disadvantages should be recognised at an early stage to, to waypoint further development and identify real reasons why the project may not work to ensure an fair and equitable account:

- There would be an additional vehicle cost, although we consider options in the section below
- There would be a training overhead
- It would increase the number of blue light vehicles attending the incident (by one)
- We must consider the moral dilemma for attending responders and the pressures they may be put under
- Responders need to identify that being the first in attendance at a major incident may need great will power and self control to ensure they fulfil the role of first responder and not first fire fighter in attendance
- Stations with low crewing may have problems delivering an extra responder – we would need to consider if the responder is part of a four man crew (when it is in attendance) or an additional resource. Not withstanding this, the station default would always be to turn out the local pump as is current

FURTHER INVESTIGATION REQUIRED

This discussional document is designed to present the idea and create a platform on which further investigation could be based on. We expect the following reports would need to be created to continue evaluating it:

- How best to mobilise the responder, how may Regional Control affect this? (Report involving control)
- How best to transport the responder. This could be via service assets, corporate sponsored vehicles or a shared light bar. Full investigation of the costs and requirements would need to be undertaken. (Report involving First Responder department, third party suppliers)
- First Responder Apparel. It is considered that the responder would turn out in a clearly identifiable but non-pppe based apparel. Ensuring they are recognised as an official but not expected to commit.
- What training would the First Responder need? Initially we would consider ICS Level 1, Basic First Aid and ERD but would this need to be improved? For example enhanced ICS Level 1, Trauma care, triage etc? (Report involving training).
- Area covered by First Responder. Would this be station ground or would one Responder be able to usefully cover a number of station grounds and if so would the role be shared amongst stations? (Self generated report).
- 9 month Pilot Test. Run the scheme at a few stations to see how it works in the 'real world'.

CONCLUSION

This report does not set out to illustrate the whole project but to discuss the idea. With its successful inception we are sure that rural stations could provide an enhanced service, at limited cost and help the county reach its 8/80 target.

REFERENCES:

- The Economic Cost of Fire: Estimates for 2004 | ODPM Document | <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1085523.pdf>
- HFRS Draft Consultation Document | HFRS Document | <http://www.hantsfire.gov.uk/theservice/ourplan.htm>
- Motor Trend - Faster Crash Notification Saves Lives | Web Page | http://www.motortrend.com/auto_news/112_news040121_crash/index.html
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