

# **Tyne and Wear FBU** **Draft CRMP Response**

**TWFRS**

**2024-27**

***Response Review***

## **Contents**

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>2. Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>3. Line Rescue.....</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>4. Water Rescue.....</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>5. Wallsend.....</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>6. Appliance Crewing Level.....</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>7. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>Page 6</b>

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) in Tyne & Wear recognises the true potential of effective community risk management planning. This potential can and will only be realised where the mix of prevention, protection and emergency response is optimised at both Service and station levels. This is why we have taken the time to submit a comprehensive response to the draft Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), produced by the Service.
- 1.2 The prime concerns of the FBU in making our observations to the 3-year draft CRMP are for the protection of the people of Tyne & Wear, whether they are residents, visitors, or employees, as well as the protection of homes, property, and the environment.
- 1.3 'Creating the Safest Community' is - as we have mentioned in previous Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) responses - an admirable aim for the Authority; it is something that all members of the Fire Brigades Union strive to achieve. There are points within this year's draft plan (as in previous plans), that the Union could support, and we feel may enhance and improve Service delivery.
- 1.4 Staff working in the front-line of Service delivery, are clear as to the type of support they need from the Authority to improve their effectiveness in saving lives and property across the whole of the Tyne & Wear Authority area. From the professional perspective of these front-line staff, the key to effective community risk management planning, lies in the complete integration of preventative activity and robust emergency response capability at station level.
- 1.5 The Fire Brigades Union has long recognised and supported the concept of risk management planning as a process for identifying all the risks - physical, social heritage or economical - within the Authority area, and putting in place the resources or plans to mitigate against them.
- 1.6 The FBU has always welcomed and appreciated the value of a well-designed, evidence based, management of risk plan when it protects the Health, Safety and Welfare of all members of the UKFRS, and the public to whom they serve. However, we are cautious that the CRMP (and previous IRMP) processes are less about being an assessment of risk, and have moved to an assessment, based on perceived demand, and a mechanism to mitigate Treasury based financial restrictions.

## **2 Executive Summary**

- 2.1 The draft CRMP for 2024-2027 identifies a steady rise in line rescue incidents over the last 10 years; the FBU supports the proposal to increase availability to respond to line rescue incidents. We have raised concerns around line rescue incidents through our joint Health and Safety structures and welcome this response.
- 2.2 The draft CRMP also identifies the risks associated by the increase in water-based incidents and rescues; the FBU welcomes the proposal to have the fire boat and water rescue available at all times. Again, we have raised concerns around water rescue incidents through our joint Health and Safety structures and welcome this response.

- 2.3 The draft CRMP proposes to introduce a Day Crewing shift system to Wallsend Community Fire Station. In real terms, this means the only pumping appliance at Wallsend will be unavailable from 8pm every night, relying on fire cover being provided from other locations. The FBU do not believe there has been a significant reduction to the risk in the area and this proposal is based on perceived demand.
- 2.4 The FBU also believe the previous IRMP action, agreed by the Fire Authority, to remove two pumping appliances from the fleet at midnight, have not been fully impact assessed in the proposal to alter the staffing model at Wallsend.
- 2.5 The FBU recognise and welcome the inclusion of the effect of contaminants in the draft CRMP. We believe Tyne and Wear are the first Fire and Rescue Service to include contaminants in a CRMP.

### **3 Line Rescue**

- 3.1 The Service state increasing the number of firefighters on duty to allow a special appliance to be primary staffed, increases the line rescue capability from one full team to two full teams. This proposal to increase line rescue capability is supported by the FBU. If achieved, this would allow simultaneous response to two separate incidents at height which could not currently be achieved. We also recognise this requires substantial investment in training.
- 3.2 While we welcome the additional resource, we believe more needs to be done, particularly for incidents involving bridges. This proposal looks to improve on the response to such incidents, but the FBU are not aware of any preventative strategy within the Service in conjunction with partner agencies.
- 3.3 The FBU also believe incidents involving rescues from bridges should be reported in the performance data which is presented to Fire Authority Members.

### **4 Water Rescue**

- 4.1 The proposal to increase water rescue capability is supported by the FBU. Increasing the number of firefighters on duty to allow the boat to be primary staffed and have water rescue available at all times is a welcome step forward. An increase in staff at Byker Community Fire Station will enable this proposal.
- 4.2 The FBU recognise the additional training now required for rescue boats. We believe the proposed increase in the number of personnel at Byker will support the additional training requirements.
- 4.3 The FBU also believe incidents involving rescues from water should be reported in the performance data which is presented to Fire Authority Members

## **5 Wallsend**

- 5.1 Plans to introduce a Day Crewing shift system to Wallsend Community Fire Station are based on a perceived demand and not the actual risk.
- 5.2 A Day Crewing shift system leaves the only pumping appliance at Wallsend unavailable for fire cover between the hours of 8pm to 8am, as well as delayed response from 6pm – 8pm. Residents of Wallsend would then have to rely upon appliances from other stations across the Service to provide cover, despite the draft CRMP (page 40), showing a clear risk in Wallsend during the times it is proposed the appliance will not be available.
- 5.3 The proposed removal of the night-time fire appliance does not take into account the appliance availability North of the Tyne, during the same time period. Previous IRMP actions agreed by the Fire Authority mean that appliances from surrounding areas are not always available to provide cover. Two appliances are already removed from the fleet at midnight and resulted the introduction of extended days (E days).
- 5.4 Figures obtained by the FBU show that North of the Tyne appliances were unavailable on 303 occasions due to E days, and a further 76 occasions due to staffing issues within the last 12 months.
- 5.5 The proposal to move to a Day Crew shift system at Wallsend is not supported by the FBU.

## **6 Appliance Crewing Levels**

- 6.1 The FBU has a longstanding position that pumping appliances should have a minimum crewing level of no less than five. This position is backed by the FBU in every Service in the United Kingdom and has been re-affirmed at FBU National Conference many times.
- 6.2 Over previous IRMP's during austerity, proposals were put forward to reduce crewing levels on TWFRS pumping appliances, at all locations, to 4. The last of these proposals was to reduce crewing levels on one pump stations to 4. When accepting the proposal, the Fire Authority made a commitment to reviewing this decision and reversing it if the financial situation of the Authority improved.
- 6.3 We remind the Service and the Authority of its commitment to review the crewing arrangements on one pump stations and urge they be returned to a minimum of five as a matter of urgency. Through prudent financial planning and governance, the position has indeed improved.
- 6.4 The FBU recognises there is no new money available to the Service or Authority and the Government is unlikely to improve the financial position over the next few years. We still however urge the Service to explore every avenue to meet this goal.

## 7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The FBU recognises that the FRS is unique in that it plans for risk and not demand. To continually improve Service delivery requirements and support national resilience, government needs to support TWFRS with long term planning and investment for capital, revenue and transformational funding.
- 7.2 Finally, in conclusion can we take this opportunity to remind elected members that whilst the CRMP proposal has been designed and written by the CFO, senior Managers and advisors, it can only be approved by members of the Fire Authority. In doing so elected members take ownership and responsibility for the contents of the document.

On behalf of FBU Tyne and Wear Brigade Committee

Wayne Anderson  
FBU Brigade Secretary

Christopher Cook  
FBU Brigade Chair



THE PROFESSIONAL VOICE  
OF YOUR FIREFIGHTERS

