

# **Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service**



## **INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN Dual Staffing Review 2009**

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The current Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Annual Action Plan for 2009/2010 has, as one of its action points, a commitment to review crewing arrangements on the Special Appliances contained within the Service's fleet of operational vehicles.

1.2 This builds upon work undertaken as part of a previous IRMP Annual Action Plan that examined the crewing levels on the Aerial Platforms. That study culminated in a move to dual staffing of the Turntable Ladder based at Byker Community Fire Station in 2006.

1.3 The purpose of this report is to further consider the issue of crewing levels on Special Appliances, with particular reference to the Emergency Tender (ET), based at Colby Court Community Fire Station and the Special Rescue Tender (RT), based at Hebburn Community Fire Station, both of which are primary crewed at present.

**2 BACKGROUND**

2.1 Since April 2004, all Fire and Rescue Authorities have been required to produce a local IRMP that sets out their risk assessment and reduction strategy in collaboration with other agencies with the specific intention of:

- Reducing the number and severity of fires, road traffic accidents and other emergency incidents occurring in the area for which it is responsible.
- Reducing the severity of injuries in fires, road traffic accidents and other emergency incidents.
- Reducing the commercial, economic and social impact of fires and other emergency incidents.
- Safeguarding the environment and heritage (both built and natural).
- Providing value for money.

2.2 In essence, each Fire and Rescue Authority must have in place an IRMP which reflects local needs and which sets out plans to tackle effectively both existing and potential risks to communities. They should also:

- Produce annual action plans on which they have fully consulted their local communities, allowing twelve weeks for the consultation.

- Have regard to central government guidance in producing their plans.
- Make efficient and effective use of resources to implement the IRMP and the Annual Action Plan, including using more efficient working practices where appropriate.

- 2.3 Tyne and Wear Fire and Service continues to comply with this requirement and recently produced an IRMP strategy document, covering a three-year period from April 2009 to March 2012 together with an associated Annual Action Plan covering the period 2009/2010.
- 2.4 This draft document was presented at the Authority meeting held on 15 September 2008 where Members considered, and subsequently approved, the 2009/2012 Draft IRMP and the 2009/2010 Draft Annual Action Plan for public consultation (Minute 51 (ii)/2008 refers).
- 2.5 The response to this public consultation exercise, whilst limited in numbers, was very positive, with 90% of those responding indicating both that the consultation information provided was easy to understand and also supporting the overall aim of the draft IRMP strategy document. This high level of approval also applied to all of the specific action points contained within the 2009/2010 IRMP Annual Action Plan.
- 2.6 One of the action points contained within the 2009/2010 Action Plan related to a proposal to review the crewing levels on Special Appliances aimed at ensuring that the Authority continues to respond appropriately to risks whilst also ensuring that the service provided to the public becomes even more cost effective. This specific proposal

was approved by 93% of those responding to the IRMP consultation exercise.

- 2.7 Following the twelve week period of public consultation the draft document was re-presented to Members at the Authority meeting held on 16 March 2009, where they considered the outcome of the public consultation exercise and, following careful deliberation, subsequently approved the 2009/2012 IRMP strategy document and associated 2009/2010 Annual Action Plan. (Minute No 114/2009 refers).
- 2.8 Consequent to this, in order to fulfil the specific action of reviewing crewing arrangements, an examination of current crewing practices on the Special Appliances commenced in order to ascertain whether they were appropriate in relation to the levels of operational activity they undertake, or whether there was scope for a further extension of the dual staffing arrangements currently operating within Tyne and Wear.
- 2.9 Those appliances that are currently dual staffed are the Incident Command Unit (A07), the Turntable Ladder (F03), the Fireboat (F08) and the High Volume Pump (P60). In addition the Operational Support Unit (V05) and the Aerial Platform (V03), which are both based at Gateshead Community Fire Station, share a two person crew between them.
- 2.10 There are also a number of New Dimension resilience assets which are dual staffed. These comprise of three USAR prime movers and five associated modules, (Dual staffed by two personnel), one re-robe module, one disrobe module, one incident response unit and one detection, identification and monitoring vehicle.

- 2.11 The vehicles which remain primary staffed, and to which this report refers, are the Emergency Tender, based at Colby Court Community Fire Station and the Rescue Tender, based at Hebburn Community Fire Station. There is an Aerial Platform at Fulwell Community Fire Station which is also primary staffed, however this appliance has not been considered within this report for operational reasons.
- 2.12 When Special Appliances, such as the Emergency Tender and the Rescue Tender, are primary staffed they are allocated a crew of two personnel, namely one Crew Manager and one Firefighter. Taking into account the requirement for 24 hour provision, 365 days per year, the actual staffing requirements amount to a total of twelve personnel per Special Appliance which, in turn, incurs a staffing cost of approximately £460,000 per annum, per appliance.
- 2.13 Given this relatively high cost it is essential that the operational utilisation rates are sufficient to justify the primary crewing provision. However, it should be noted that there are no specific rules or guidelines governing the relationship between activity levels and crewing arrangements, therefore it falls to the Chief Fire Officer to determine, in the light of data relating to operational incidents, the appropriate crewing arrangements subject to the approval of the Fire Authority.
- 2.14 Consequently, the key issue to be examined in this report prior to arriving at a conclusion as to the most appropriate crewing arrangement for both of these vehicles, is that of the utilisation rates of the Emergency Tender and the Rescue Tender at operational incidents.

### 3 **METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 To undertake this work it has been necessary to interrogate the Management Information System (MIS), from which data has been
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retrieved for the mobilisation rates of the Emergency Tender and the Rescue Tender for the calendar years 2007 and 2008, which coincides with the full introduction of revised Pre-Determined Attendances (PDA's) to incidents.

- 3.2 The term PDA refers to the pre-arranged operational response that is automatically mobilised to a defined range of incidents by the control room command system. These PDA's had grown significantly over the years without a comprehensive review of their purpose or their effectiveness being undertaken.
- 3.3 However, the introduction of Integrated Risk Management Planning to the service provided the catalyst to undertake a review of the PDA's in line with best practice. The result of this work was that a decision was taken to remove Special Appliances from a large number of the existing PDA's and place these vehicles on a request-only basis instead. As a result of this change in policy there has been a significant overall reduction in the number of mobilisations to incidents by Special Appliances in general.
- 3.4 The analysis of the MIS data also allowed the number of mobilisations still being undertaken by the Special Appliances to be identified, together with information relating to how often the appliances actually arrived at the incidents following mobilisation. As this report was aimed at indentifying the actual operational use of these vehicles at incidents, those occasions where the MIS identified that Special Appliances where mobilised but then returned to their former duties before reaching the operational incident to which they had responded were excluded from the analysis.
- 3.5 In addition, in further analysing the data with regard to how frequently the Special Appliances were actually used once they were in attendance at incidents it was also necessary to make an appropriate timeline assumption. This was due to the fact that the MIS does not

automatically record usage rates of any appliances at incident, merely the fact that they are in attendance.

- 3.6 Consequently a judgement was made to the effect that a Special Appliance in attendance at an incident for less than 20 minutes prior to being returned to former duties will not have been required operationally, whereas an attendance of more than 20 minutes was taken to indicate that the vehicle and its equipment will have been utilised.

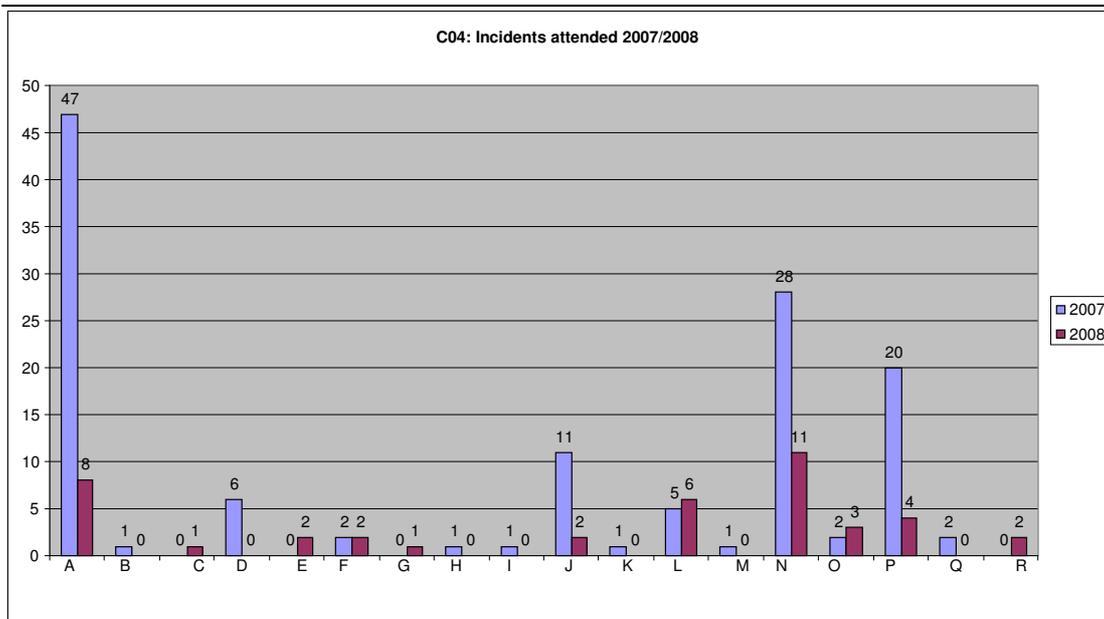
#### 4 **THE FINDINGS**

- 4.1 Based on the above assumptions, the data set out in the table on page 10 shows the number of occasions the Emergency Tender was utilised at operational incidents. As stated earlier the data used covers the calendar years 2007 and 2008.
- 4.2 From this information it can be seen that the Emergency Tender was used at 170 incidents over the two year period in question. It can be seen from this that there has been a significant drop in the number of fires and road traffic collisions which the Emergency Tender traditionally attended.
- 4.3 The change in these attendances at operational incidents can be accounted for by the revision in the PDA's in relation to operational logistics requirements and by the fact that operational personnel on front line fire appliances have been provided with upgraded cutting and lifting equipment as the cost of this specialist equipment has gradually fallen, which has resulted in the Emergency Tender being required less frequently than was the case in the past.

Emergency Tender			Year		
Inc Type	Inc Code	Sub Type	2007	2008	Totals
FDR1 Fire	A	FDR1 Fire	47	8	55
<b>FDR1 Fire Total</b>			<b>47</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>55</b>
Secondary Fire	B	Tree/Fence/Lamp	1		6
	C	Grass/Heath/Railway		1	1
	D	Derelict Building	6		1
<b>Secondary Fire Total</b>			<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>
Spec Serv	E	Aircraft Incident		2	2
	F	Assistance to Police	2	2	4
	G	First Aid		1	1
	H	Industrial Accident	1		1
	I	Lift Release	1		1
	J	Making safe	11	2	13
	K	Officer and Appliance	1		1
	L	Person Rescue/Release	5	6	11
	M	Remove Obj. from People	1		1
	N	RTA - Persons Extricated	28	11	39
	O	RTA - Service Only	2	3	5
	P	Spills and Leaks	20	4	24
	Q	Standby at Hazard	2		2
R	Water Removal/Provision		2	2	
<b>Special Service Total</b>			<b>74</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>128</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>170</b>

4.4 The chart on page 11 provides an alternative view of the data from the command and control system which presents a clearer image of how the number of incidents attended has fallen across the two years in question and how they are distributed across a range of incident types.

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4.5 The data contained in the table on page 12 relates to Rescue Tender, based at Hebburn Community Fire Station. From this information it can be seen that the appliance was used at operational incidents on 200 occasions over the two year period in question.

4.6 What this data set demonstrates is that, whilst the Rescue Tender has been utilised on more occasions than the Emergency Tender and that the number of incidents have remained broadly similar across the two years in question, the overall frequency of its operational use is limited.

4.7 This effectively highlights the fact that these vehicles and their associated equipment are for use at unusual and complex incidents which, by their very nature, do not occur on a frequent basis.

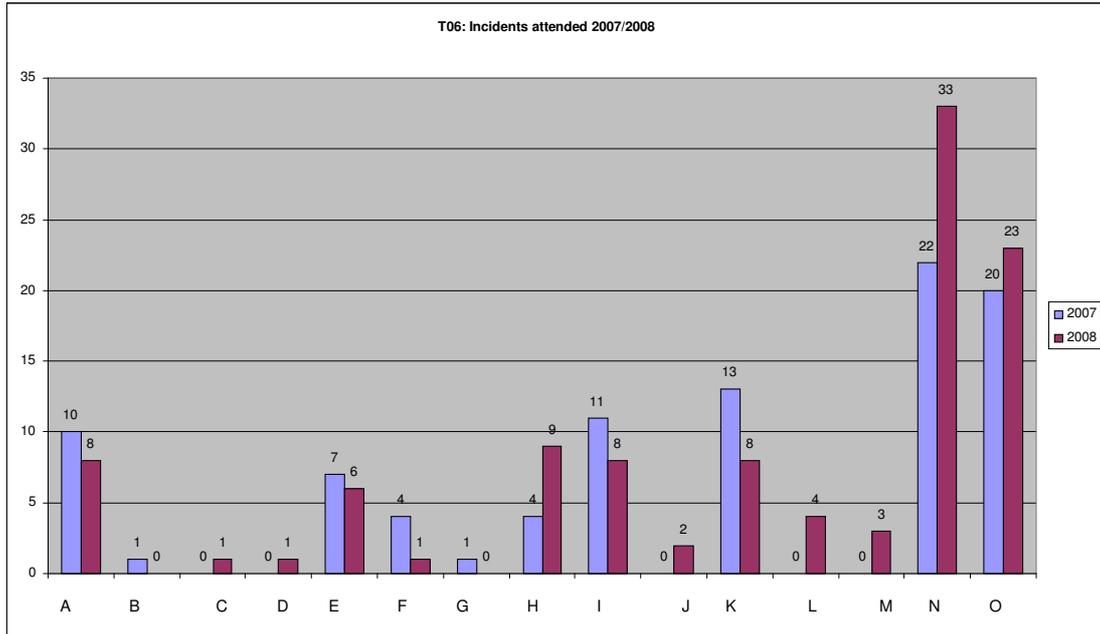
Rescue Tender			Year		
Inc Type	Inc Code	Sub Type	2007	2008	Grand Total
FDR1 Fire	A	FDR1 Fire	10	8	18
<b>FDR1 Fire Total</b>			<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>18</b>
Secondary Fire	B	Derelict Building	1		1
	C	Derelict Vehicle		1	1
	D	Refuse/Container		1	1
<b>Secondary Fire Total</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Special Service	E	Animal Rescue	7	6	13
	F	Assistance to Police	4	1	5
	G	Lift Release	1		1
	H	Making safe	4	9	13
	I	Person Rescue/Release	11	8	19
	J	Railway Accident		2	2
	K	RTA - Persons Extricated	13	8	21
	L	RTA - Service Only		4	4
	M	Spills and Leaks		3	3
	N	Suicide/Attempts/Threats	22	33	55
	O	Water Removal/Provision	20	23	43
<b>Special Service Total</b>			<b>82</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>179</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>93</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>200</b>

4.8 Once again the data in the table has been presented in a chart format on page 13 which assists in highlighting the type of activity and the frequency of activity of the Rescue Tender.

4.9 It can be clearly seen from the chart that the two main categories of incident the Rescue Tender attends relate to potential suicides and to domestic flooding incidents and that these have increased in frequency slightly over the two years in question.

4.10 Nevertheless the overall number of such incidents remains relatively small and the operational nature of these incidents are such that a ensuring a response time in line with that of the front line pumping

appliances is not the key determinant in ensuring a successful outcome to incidents such as these.



4.11 If the figures for both appliances were aggregated and averaged over one year then the activity level would only be 92 incidents per annum, per appliance. This is in marked contrast to the average incident level of a primary crewed front line fire appliance which runs at approximately 430 operational incidents per annum, which is the second busiest utilisation rate in the England as highlighted in the Audit Commission’s national report ‘Rising To The Challenge’ and the associated data profiles contained on their Website.<sup>1</sup>

## 5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Taking the above information into account, when considering the use and cost of the Special Appliances, it is difficult to justify the current practice of primary staffing the Emergency Tender and the Rescue Tender.

<sup>1</sup> [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)

5.2 The two appliances could be dual staffed in line with the other Tyne and Wear Special Appliances already operating this system. This would realise efficiency savings once the revised crewing arrangements were fully implemented.

5.3 The two Special Appliances in question would continue to be operationally available from their current Community Fire Station locations but would rely on the pumping appliance crews on those stations to operate them rather than have crews solely dedicated to them.

## 6 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 It is recommended that the Service progressively introduces dual staffing for the Emergency Tender and the Special Rescue Tender commencing with the Emergency Tender from April 2009 and the Rescue Tender from March 2010. This phasing will enable the staffing reductions to be accommodated with the annual staffing turnover.

6.2 It is also recommended that, if dual staffing of the Emergency Tender is approved and implemented, the impact of this change is regularly monitored over the succeeding months in order to ensure that there is no significant impact on the level of service provided, prior to implementing the dual staffing arrangements on the Rescue Tender in March 2010