



DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	CSCP/10/5
MEETING	COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CORPORATE PLANNING COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	25 MARCH 2010
SUBJECT OF REPORT	SPECIALIST RESCUE - PROGRESS
LEAD OFFICER	Director of Service Support
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That the report be noted</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	The report sets out the progress that has been made to date with the implementation of specialist rescue activity.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	As previously reported to the Committee
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	None indicated
APPENDICES	None
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	None

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The specialist rescue implementation project is now entering its third year since being initiated shortly after combination in 2007. All project milestones, to date, have been achieved within the original timescale.
- 1.2 At the commencement of the project the Service had an extremely limited specialist rescue capability, with a faltering water rescue provision based on three stations in the East of the Service, and two specialist rope teams in the far West of the service providing a disproportionate and uneven spread of capability across the Service area.
- 1.3 In addition, the Service was in the vulnerable position of having a level one water rescue capability on all frontline appliances, yet regularly mobilising appliances to level two and three incidents; potentially putting crews into hazardous situations for which they were not adequately trained.
- 1.4 The Service was also experiencing ever more frequent flooding and adverse weather events and had no specialist incident management capability in place for this type of incident. (It is interesting to note that in the three years that the project has been running water rescues have risen from 20-30 per year to around 200 per year.)

2. OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The project set out to achieve the following objectives:
- Train all operational personnel (approx 2,200 in total) to water rescue level two over a three year period. This would give all crews the ability to conduct rescues by entering shallow, slow moving water (eg from vehicles in flood water).
 - Train a team of specialist officers in flood and adverse weather management.
 - Establish four specialist rescue teams trained and equipped to level three water and rope rescue in order to provide a more specialist capability, and to provide vital support to teams engaged in level two water and rope rescue activities.
 - Provide each specialist rescue team with a powered rescue boat capability. (This is not only an essential element for a true flood rescue capability, but is also necessary to provide support for teams operating at level two.)
 - To provide each specialist rescue team with a suitable, dedicated vehicle that can meet the requirements of both water and rope rescue, and have the ability to transport the rescue boats.
 - To train and equip the specialist rescue teams to provide a specialist large animal rescue capability.

3. PROGRESS AGAINST THE OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The first of these objectives, to train all personnel to water rescue level two, is now nearing the end of its second year and is well on target to be completed by March 2011. Approximately 1,500 people have now been trained. This training has been very well received by all those who have attended the course and the skills and competence of crews, and therefore the capability of the Service, has increased significantly.

- 3.2 A team of 15 officers have now finished an 18 month period of development to enable them to act as specialist rescue advisors for incidents involving: flooding, adverse weather, rescues from height, depth and confined spaces, and large animal rescues. This aligns with the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) proposal to provide a national capability for flood response. The Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (DSFRS) has already declared its capability and is registered on the national interim flood assets register. A further five officers are due to commence training this month, which will bring the team strength to 20.
- 3.3 Four stations were selected to be upgraded to specialist rescue team status: Camels Head, Barnstaple, Bridgwater and Special Operations; a total of 140 personnel. All four stations have now completed water and rope rescue level three training, and now have their water rescue capability 'on the run'. Camels Head is also on the run with rope rescue, and the remaining three stations are currently working through the 4-6 month rope rescue development period. It is anticipated that the remaining three stations will have rope rescue on the run by the end of the year.
- 3.4 Powered rescue boats, engines and trailers have been purchased and it is hoped that training will commence early 2011, with the capability coming on line mid-way through the year.
- 3.5 Four specialist vehicles have now been ordered and will provide a single vehicle which can accommodate both water and rope rescue, as well as being capable of transporting the powered rescue boats. The vehicles are Iveco Daily 4x4s and have a crew capacity of six. It is hoped that all four of the vehicles will be completed and ready to go on the run by the beginning of next year (2011).
- 3.6 Equipment has been purchased and training is now underway to provide a large animal rescue capability. This is an area of operations which forms a significant amount of the Service's specialist rescue work, and was due an overhaul. A subgroup of CFOA has completed this review and has issued new guidance on good practice. The guidance recommends the adoption of new equipment and procedures, and DSFRS has been quick to adopt these recommendations. The Service has purchased additional equipment and commenced a programme of training on three levels for all operational personnel. Eight people have already been trained as large animal rescue instructors and will shortly commence the training of the specialist rescue teams who will take on the role of specialist animal rescue. More basic training will also be provided to all station personnel, providing the Service with a staged and integrated response to incidents of this nature.
- 3.7 It would be true to say that, once the project is complete, DSFRS is likely to have one of the most comprehensive specialist rescue capabilities of any fire and rescue service (FRS) in the country, and will be a flagship FRS in this respect. Whilst most FRSs recognise the importance of specialist flood managers and the need to train and equip all operational personnel to water rescue level two standard most have yet to start training their staff in these areas. It is also true to say that whilst some FRSs have a powered rescue boats, few will have such a comprehensive and resilient capability.

- 3.8 Work continues with Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) emergency and resilience planning, and it has long since been written into flood plans and major incident plans that DSFRS will provide a rescue capability at this type of incident. Only when the project is complete would it be true to say that we fully have that capability. The Service continues to Chair both the regional Water Rescue Group and the regional Work at Height Group, and represents the SW region on the National Water Rescue and Work at Height groups. The Service is seen as something of a leader in this field within the region, and regularly provides advice and training to neighbouring FRSS.
- 3.9 These new capabilities will be formally launched towards the end of 2010 following the delivery of the first specialist rescue vehicle. The launch will include a demonstration of all the newly acquired skills and equipment, and it is hoped that there will be good media coverage of this event.

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