



DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	CSCP/13/2
MEETING	COMMUNITY SAFETY & CORPORATE PLANNING COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	6 FEBRUARY 2013
SUBJECT OF REPORT	SPECIALIST RESCUE PROVISION UPDATE
LEAD OFFICER	Director of Service Support
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That the report be noted.</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (the Service) has, since combination, established a Specialist Rescue capability enabling it to deploy specialist trained teams with dedicated equipment to incidents involving rescues from height, rescues from water and large animal rescues.</p> <p>The locations and compositions of the teams are designed to ensure that during normal operational response conditions a Specialist Rescue Team can be in attendance at an incident within 40 minutes of the time of call for 90% of the Service area. Specialist Rescue Teams are supported at all incidents by a Specialist Rescue Advisor (SRA) and the Service will have a SRA available at all times. The use of Specialist Rescue Teams reduces the risks to operational crews, casualties and the public.</p> <p>Further developments of the Specialist Rescue capability is planned and underway to meet the ever increasing demands being faced both locally and for national resilience, specifically with regard to water rescue flood response.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	Not applicable.
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS (ERBA)	Not applicable.
APPENDICES	None.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	None.
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1. **BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Prior to combination there was only limited specialist rescue capability in the former Devon and Somerset fire and rescue services. Specifically, Devon had two Line Rescue Teams (rescues from height) and limited Water Rescue capability whilst Somerset had three stations equipped for water rescue and no capability for rescue from heights in excess of 30 metres..
- 1.2 Following combination it was identified that specialist rescue capabilities needed to be harmonised, equipment standardised and levels of capabilities enhanced across the Service to meet the requirements for working at height, water rescue levels of response/training and provide a co-ordinated response to large animal rescue incidents.
- 1.3 A target response time 40 minutes was applied from time of call to arrival at an incident for a specialist rescue team. This target response time was used to establish the best location for the teams, as specified in Section 2 below. In light of the training implications for acquiring and maintaining the skills required for specialist rescue, all specialist rescue teams comprise whole-time staff. Training has been on-going over the last three years in all specialist rescue disciplines and the last of the capabilities powered rescue boat became available July 2012.

2. **SPECIALIST RESCUE STATIONS CAPABILITIES**

- 2.1 The current location and provision of Service specialist rescue capability is as set out below:

Station 01 Barnstaple

*Level 3 Safe working at Heights and Confined Space (SHACS) line rescue
Large Animal Rescue
Type C Swift Water Rescue
Type B Powered Rescue Boat*

Station 48 Camels Head, Plymouth

*Level 3 Safe working at Heights and Confined Space (SHACS) line rescue
Large Animal Rescue
Type C Swift Water Rescue
Type B Powered Rescue Boat*

Station 60 Special Operations, Service Headquarters Exeter

*Level 3 Safe working at Heights and Confined Space (SHACS) line rescue
Large Animal Rescue
Type C Swift Water Rescue*

Station 62 Bridgwater

*Level 3 Safe working at Heights and Confined Space (SHACS) line rescue
Large Animal Rescue
Type C Swift Water Rescue
Type B Powered Rescue Boat*

- 2.2 The Service also has a network of 23 Specialist Rescue Advisors (SRA's) – flexible duty response officers specially trained to support the Specialist Rescue Teams in their operational activities. These officers are also trained as wide area search managers and flood incident managers.

3. OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY

Animal Rescue

- 3.1 Specialist Rescue teams are regularly mobilised to large animal rescue incidents to work with the nearest supporting appliance to achieve a rescue. The definition of a large animal is an animal of the size of a large dog (Labrador) or larger and an animal trapped is defined as an animal which is unable to get itself to a place of safety unaided. Activity has ranged from cattle or horses trapped in ditches, watercourse or mud, horses or cattle trapped in stables or stock pens to animals (wild or domestic) trapped at height or underground.

Line Rescue/Rescue from Height

- 3.2 Specialist Rescue Teams are equipped and trained to undertake all aspects of rescue from height meeting all industry safety standards for working in the area. Level 3 Safe working at Heights and Confined Spaces (SHACS) is part of an integrated Service-wide approach to working at height. Initially, one of the Service's 22 Level 2 teams would attend to access, stabilise and secure some casualties. Level 3 teams provide support at the incident and can access all casualties and rescue either by a lower or raise of the casualty. Teams have been mobilised to rescue injured or stricken climbers and walkers who have found themselves stuck without means of self-rescue in places such as Hay Tor on Dartmoor and Cheddar Gorge on the Mendips. Teams have also utilised their working at height skills to rescue animals that have become stuck on cliffs and quarries.

Water Rescue

- 3.3 Specialist Rescue Teams are mobilised to all reports of persons trapped in water to work alongside crews from the nearest station who can undertake only limited rescue work if appropriate or safe. During normal operational requirements this is generally due to an accident or event resulting in a person at danger from water. Water rescue activity has increased dramatically during the past year due to some wide scale flooding events (July 2012 South Devon and Somerset, September 2012 North Devon and West Somerset, November 2012 service wide, December 2012 service wide). During each of the flooding events Specialist Rescue Teams were available and moved to strategic locations to provide a response to the worst affected areas during spate conditions. During 2012 1,392 resources were mobilised to flooding/water related incidents and the Service Fire Control exercised caller questioning and an assessment of public personal risk undertaken (especially during spate conditions) to ensure mobilisation was to life risk incidents only. During 2012 the Service rescued 294 people from flooding/water related incidents.

4. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- 4.1 The Service has developed a number of partnerships and close working arrangements around specialist rescue enabling it to work closely with experts and other rescue organisations to enhance the its Specialist Rescue provision. Examples of this include:

Animal Rescue

- 4.2 All animal rescues involving horses attract the attendance of a British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) vet at no cost to the service. The BEVA vet ensures the animals welfare and if required sedates the horse thereby assisting crew safety. Associated costs are recovered either from the owners or are absorbed through a charitable trust.

Rescues from Height

- 4.3 Specialist Rescue teams work very closely with the Police, HM Coastguard and SWAST HART Teams and other bodies such as the voluntary Dartmoor Search and Rescue organisation. Joint training and exercising with these bodies enable Service crews to have a full understanding of inter-agency working, thus enabling crews to work together to achieve the tasks required.

Water Rescue

- 4.4 The Service has worked closely with water rescue teams from other fire and rescue services such as Merseyside and Greater Manchester during recent flood events within the service area. In addition, Specialist Rescue Teams have worked alongside RNLI Flood Response Teams during the December flood event rescuing a number of persons that were trapped in floodwater. Further training exercises are planned with RNLI crews to promote a better understanding of skills and capabilities in dealing with wide scale flood events.

5. NATIONAL ASSETS

- 5.1 All of the Service's water rescue resources are declared on the DEFRA Flood Response National Assets Register. This Register was developed following the serious wide scale flooding event in Gloucester in 2007 and holds details of all assets, trained and equipped to a set national standard, available for national deployment in response to a flood event. All assets declared on the register should be available for up to a 4 day deployment. The Service has called on the National Asset register twice in response to the flood events of November and December 2012. The Service has 3 Type B powered rescue boat teams and 4 type C swift water rescue teams declared. There are 44 type B powered boat teams declared on the register.

6. FUTURE FURTHER SPECIALIST RESCUE RESOURCES

Animal Rescue

- 6.1 The Service has invested in a mechanical tele-handler for the Specialist Rescue Team located at station 60 Special Operations to assist when undertaking animal rescues. Tele-handlers have proved invaluable when rescuing horses and cattle as they can provide an extended lift capability in raising the animal. Crews are currently limited to trying to secure the use of a tele-handler or tractor from a local farmer or contractor. Whilst the service has not encountered any costs for the use of such equipment, crews are placed at a heightened risk in using equipment for which there is no record of safe use or servicing and being driven by members of the public not aware of our operating procedures. The use of a Service-provided vehicle will greatly reduce the risks to our crews and ensure the availability of a suitable lifting vehicle to aid in the rescue.

Water Rescue

- 6.2 The service is in the process of introducing an additional water rescue capability at station 33 Exmouth. The new capability will be a powered rescue boat team as well as a swift water rescue team. This will greatly enhance the Service's water rescue and flood response assets, with a reduced response time to a high flood risk area of East Devon. The project to establish the team is underway. Crews are being trained and equipment procured with the associated costs being met from within existing resources. It is planned that the new team will go live operationally in October 2013 at which point the additional assets will be declared on the National Asset Register.

ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER TREVOR STRATFORD
Director of Service Support