Fire and Rescue Service Circular

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This circular is For information  No response required
This circular is Relevant to the National Framework
Status This circular informs Fire and Rescue Authorities and senior staff in the Fire and Rescue Service of progress with the Fire and Resilience Programme.

Fire and Resilience Programme Highlights – August/September 2008

Issued by:
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Programmes, Finance and Performance Division

Addressed to:
Please forward to:
The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Chief Executive of the County Council
The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Clerk to the Combined Fire and Rescue Authority
The Commissioner of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority
The Chief Fire Officer

Summary
This continues the series of monthly 'highlights' notes to inform Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) and senior staff in the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) of progress with the Programme.

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1.0 New Dimension

1.1 The long-term maintenance contract for the New Dimension fleet goes live on 1 October. VT Critical Services, the contractor, and Firebuy have been holding regional road shows with FRAs in the run-up to this.

1.2 CLG will shortly be issuing a further Fire Service Circular clarifying some of the cost issues relating to the contract, including those connected with unfair wear and tear, raised during the regional road shows.

1.3 On 15 September Fire Minister Parmjit Dhanda handed over the keys to the first Enhanced Command Support Vehicle to Terry Standing, CFO Gloucestershire and Chair of the New Dimension Transition Board. All nine vehicles are expected to be fully operational this winter.

2.0 Firelink

2.1 To support FRAs in communicating key information to personnel, the two remaining projects in the Fire and Resilience Programme have been producing material that they can request for distributing in their regions.

2.2 The two new leaflets about Firelink and FiReControl have received some positive initial interest. A number of FRAs have asked for stocks of the leaflets to include in their mailings.

2.3 Also available are two high-quality A2 event posters, providing a professional synopsis of the Programme at a glance. The South West Local Authority Control Company (LACC) has already benefited from using the posters at some of its events:

"We recently held an event where local civic dignitaries visited South West Fire Control. Firelink supplied us with high quality posters which we put up in the control room. They were informative, with the right level of information for our guests, and also looked really professional and well-designed. We're looking forward to being able to use them at future events."

2.4 To book the laminated posters for use at your events, please contact 01273 365213 or email rebekah.ford@communities.gsi.gov.uk. You can also request paper versions of the posters to pin up in localities of your choice. To request copies contact Alex Conder on 020 7944 4199 or email alex.conder@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

3.0 FiReControl

3.1 CLG has set up voluntary national training for LACC Directors which will take place on 30 October.

3.2 An FRS Circular (41/2008) was issued setting out CLG proposals for apportioning FiReControl shared costs amongst the regions of England. CLG has asked for comments by the end of October.

3.3 The Facilities Management contract for the RCCs has been signed and is being already used in the South West, with the rest of regions due to start using it from October (apart from London, where the building is yet to be constructed).
3.4 The East of England Regional Control Centre is scheduled for practical completion on 1 October. Early IT has been provided in the West Midlands, and will be installed in the South East, North West, Yorkshire and Humber from October/November.

3.5 In July, CLG published part 1 of the FiReControl Business Case (covered in the last edition of FRS Highlights). The deadline for responses to this is 30 September.

4.0 Fire and Resilience Programme National Functions

4.1 The consultation on the National Procurement Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service 2008-11 was published in August (see FRS Circular 45/2008). It noted that Firebuy Ltd had been engaged to procure and manage the national service contract for New Dimension and that future contract management for the Firelink and FiReControl projects was being considered, including what functions needed to be undertaken at a local or regional level and what needed to be undertaken centrally/nationally and by whom.

4.2 It asked:

- Q21. What are your views on the development of the current national procurement function/role to take on identified national contract management etc. requirements for the resilience programme?
- Q22. What role might Firebuy Ltd undertake for the Firelink/FiReControl projects?

4.3 The closing date for responses to the consultation is 14 November.

5.0 National Resilience Extranet

5.1 In the July ‘Highlights’, we reported on the joint work by CLG and the Cabinet Office to develop a National Resilience Extranet (NRE) as a means of securely sharing information between all local, regional and national responders.

5.2 Following a thorough procurement process, CLG and Cabinet Office have just awarded the contract for the NRE to the selected suppliers BT/Datel.

5.3 The project will be a joint undertaking between CLG and Cabinet Office (CCS). Development of the system will commence this month with launch of the service scheduled for third or fourth quarter 2009. Further details can be found at http://www.ukresilience.gov.uk/preparedness/resilient_telecommunications/govt_strategy.aspx

5.4 Initial development and delivery costs of the NRE will be paid for by Cabinet Office. Thereafter the service will be provided on a subscription basis to users. The subscription for the core (collaborate) service will be £85 per user per annum, with additional subscription for optional upgrades.
5.5 The service will provide a resilient browser based tool to enable efficient and secure (accredited to RESTRICTED) exchange of information both for routine planning and during the response to emergencies. It is intended to store on the system RESTRICTED planning information currently cascaded to responders, plus much more that we cannot currently cascade electronically about risks, planning assumptions and delivery programmes. In an emergency, it is intended to use the NRE to enable the timely communication of information (e.g. the Common Recognised Information Picture (CRIP) and SitReps we use in COBR) across the resilience community.

5.6 There has been significant interest in this initiative across a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including central government departments, local authorities, the emergency services and utilities. Further updates will be given as the project develops.

6.0 Changes in Communities and Local Government

6.1 Susan Scholefield, who was the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for the Fire and Resilience Programme, has moved from CLG to become Director-General, Human Resources and Corporate Services at the Ministry of Defence. The Cohesion and Resilience Group, which she headed, has been reshaped as the Communities Group, bringing together key communities-focused policies in the Department.

6.2 CLG’s Director of Empowerment, David Rossington, has been appointed as the acting Director-General of Communities, pending the recruitment of a new Director-General. David is the current SRO for the Programme.

6.3 As announced in the June ‘Highlights’, Shona Dunn, previously the Head of the Department’s Sustainable Buildings Division, has been appointed as Director of Fire and Resilience. Shona took up post at the beginning of September and is SRO for New Dimension, Firelink and FiReControl.

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