

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**6 SEPTEMBER 2010**

1. **FIRE APPLIANCE ATTENDANCE TIMES**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

THAT the Committee notes the performance of fire appliance attendance times to emergency incidents for the financial year 2009/10.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to inform the Committee of the performance of the Service against its targets for fire appliance attendance times at emergency incidents for the financial year 2009/10.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The standards set by West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) for the speed of response of its fire appliances, is a key factor in the delivery of its service to the public. The first WMFS Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) released in 2003, stated that the Brigade would aim to achieve an average attendance time of 5 minutes for the first fire appliance to all emergency calls, and an average of 7 minutes for the second, when a further appliance/s is mobilised.
- 3.2 During 2009, WMFS introduced two new vehicles called Targeted Response Vehicles (TRVs) to deal specifically with low risk, outdoor fires involving grass or refuse, using a smaller firefighting vehicle. At that time, the response time standard for attending fires of this type was set at 20 minutes to reflect the low level of risk attached to such calls and to enable the TRVs to respond across a wider area.

- 3.3 Appendix 1 provides a summary of WMFS' current report on performance against its attendance time standards when responding to emergency calls, for the period of 2009/10, with figures for 2008/09 provided for the purpose of comparison.
- 3.4 Attendance time standards have a significant impact on the Service, as the level set dictates the number and locations of fire appliances that are typically required to achieve a given response time. This in turn can influence the chances of survival of persons who are trapped or awaiting rescue and the amount of damage likely to result from a fire.
- 3.5 The time reported upon, is the time between a fire appliance/s being mobilised to a call and the time it arrives at the scene.
- 3.6 Research carried out nationally by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) has shown that in recent years, the volume of traffic in metropolitan areas has had a significant impact on the ability of fire appliances and other emergency vehicles to arrive quickly, with performance overall on the decline.
- 3.7 Appendix 1 shows that during 2009/10, WMFS improved its performance, compared to the previous 12 month period, with average times of 5 minutes 29 seconds for the first fire appliance and 7 minutes 2 seconds for the second, at those incidents requiring more than a single appliance. When responding to Secondary Fires (minor fires involving grass and refuse for example) the Service achieved a 100% success rate against the 20 minute standard.
- 3.8 During November 2008, coinciding with the move to Vauxhall Road, Fire Control was given access to a new Command and Control system, used to mobilise fire appliances to incidents. The Fortek 'Vision' Command and Control system enables Fire Control to mobilise the nearest and fastest response to all incidents, utilising an Automatic Vehicle Location System (AVLS) to show the precise location and availability of every appliance at all times as well as the fastest route, via the road network.
- 3.9 Since the adoption of AVLS, attendance times of appliances have gradually improved and at least a part of this overall improvement in performance can be attributed to the adoption of the updated Command and Control facility.

- 3.10 An example to illustrate some of the benefits derived from the Vision AVLS system, is provided in Appendix 2, where a life-threatening incident was attended faster due to the use of this particular technology.
- 3.11 WMFS currently sets out to achieve a high standard of attendance time performance to all emergency calls and, apart from secondary fires, makes no distinction between the varying levels of risk presented by different fires and emergencies.
- 3.12 It is likely that increasing financial pressures, combined with the Brigade's notable success in driving down incident numbers in recent years, will bring about a situation where the attendance time standards will need to be reviewed.
- 3.13 In view of the above the Authority may wish to consider the creation of a range of performance measures against which to monitor progress, with incidents presenting a lower risk of injury or damage being given a longer attendance time standard, than those where rapid intervention is critical to success.
- 3.14 Further research will be conducted on this issue, and a further report will be presented to Members in due course.

#### 4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out as the matters contained in this report do not relate to a change of policy.

#### 5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 provides the statutory basis for the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-2011. The Framework sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for the Service. Chapter 1 of the Framework deals with prevention, protection and response and covers the core business of the Fire and Rescue Authorities in analysing risks and taking action to meet and mitigate the effect of those risks. Integrated Risk Management Planning enables the Authority to evaluate the risk to communities and to use its resources (including fire appliances) more flexibly in prevention, protection and response measures and deliver better outcomes for communities.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications arising out of the content of this report.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Review of Fire and Rescue Service Response Times, CLG Fire Research Series 1/2009.

Traffic Flow Statistics, Department for Transport 1993-2008.

WMFS Integrated Risk Management Plan 2003.

VIJ RANDENIYA  
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

## Theme : Attendance Times

**Definition:** 'Attendance Time' is calculated by adding the 'Reaction Time' (the time from the call being sent to the fire station/appliance, to the point where the appliance books mobile) to 'Travel Time' (the time taken from the appliance booking mobile to booking in attendance at an incident).

## The Statistics

Current targets in relation to WMFS attendance times for all incidents excluding secondary fires are an average of five minutes for the first appliance and an average of seven minutes for the second appliance.

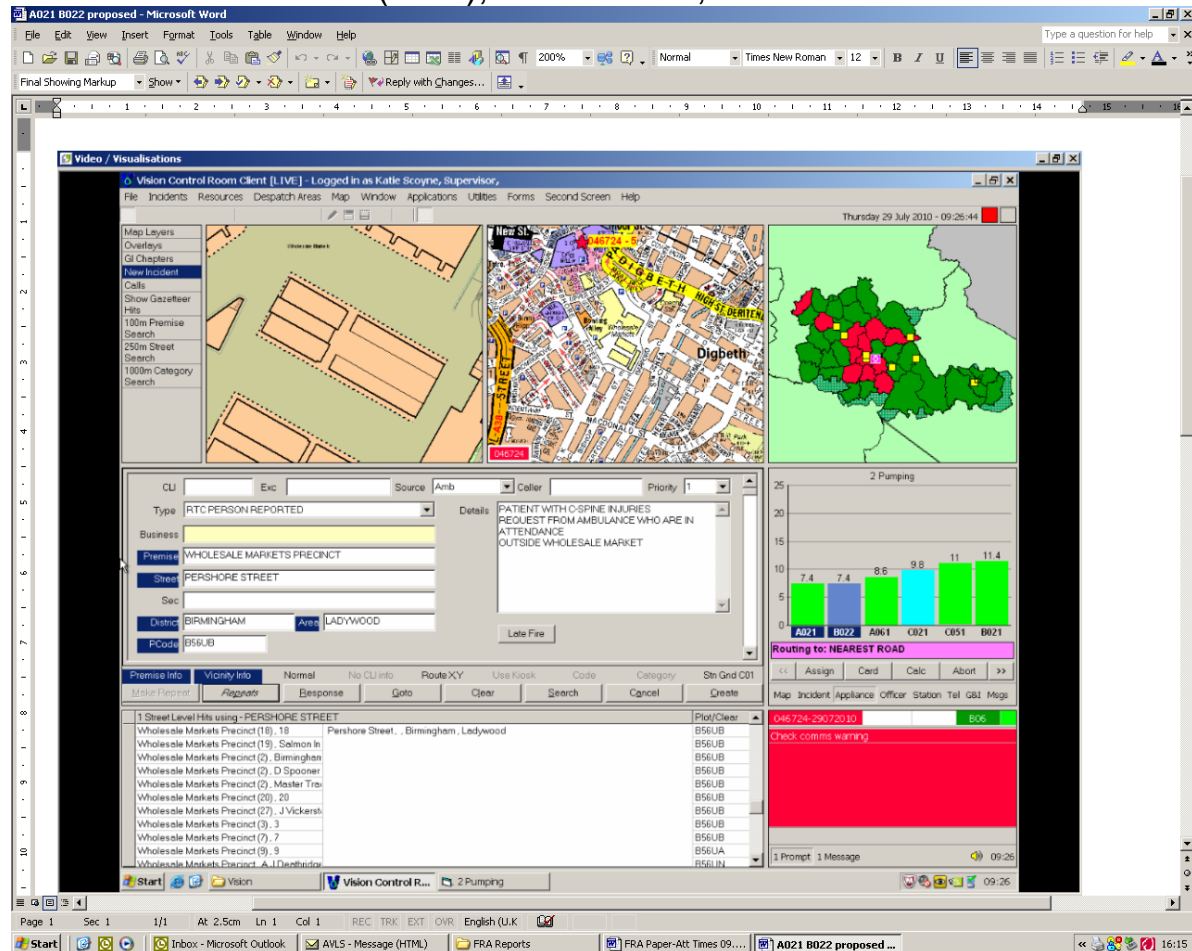
- The average **first appliance attendance time** (to all incidents except secondary fires) in 2009/10 has shown a slight reduction of 6 seconds (1.0%) when compared to the previous year (from 5 minutes, 35 seconds in 2008/09 to 5 minutes, 29 seconds in 2009/10).
- The average **second appliance attendance time** (to all incidents except secondary fires) in 2009/10 has shown a reduction of 11 seconds (1.5%) when compared to the previous year (from 7 minutes, 13 seconds in 2008/09 to 7 minutes, 2 seconds in 2009/10).
- Analysis of WMFS performance against its attendance time target (to all incidents except secondary fires) in 2009/10 indicates the following:
  - The **first appliance** was in **attendance** at an incident in **5 minutes or less on 46% of occasions**.
  - The **second appliance** was in **attendance** at an incident in **7 minutes or less on 56% of occasions**.
- Research conducted by the CLG<sup>1</sup> found that attendance times are gradually increasing on a national scale, particularly amongst Metropolitan Brigades, whose attendance times had increased by 23% between 1996 - 2006.

<sup>REF</sup> (1) *Review of Fire and Rescue Service Response Times, CLG Fire Research Series 1/2009*  
 (2) *Traffic Flow Statistics, Department for Transport 1993-2008*

## APPENDIX 2

### Incident 46731 29/07/2010

#### Road Traffic Collision (RTC), Pershore St, Wholesale Markets Precinct.



West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) reported a Road Traffic Collision (RTC) involving a patient with spinal injuries, at the Wholesale Market in Birmingham.

However, at the same time, the nearest 5 fire appliances were already committed to an incident in the Bull Ring Centre, so the nearest available appliances (Aston and Sheldon) were mobilised, with an expected arrival time of more than 7 minutes.

It then transpired that the Bull Ring incident was scaled down, so that two appliances from Highgate were flagged as being available with an arrival time of one minute.

Both of Highgate's appliances were mobilised to the RTC and arrived in less than 1 minute, allowing the appliances from Aston and Sheldon to be stood down and become available for re-deployment. A man was successfully extricated from the RTC.