



This matter is being dealt with by: [REDACTED]

Ext: [REDACTED]

Date: 23 April 2015

Our Ref: [REDACTED]

Your Ref:

Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters,
Belmont Business Park, Durham, DH1 1TW

Chief Executive: Susan Johnson

Mr Tweddle
Senior Coroner
HM Coroners Office
PO Box 282
Bishop Auckland
County Durham
DL14 4FY

27 APR 2015

Dear Mr Tweddle,

Following the Regulation 28 Report to Yorkshire Ambulance Service dated 19 March 2015, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) have conducted a review of policies and procedures for liaising with over the border Blue Light Services when incidents occur on or near those adjoining borders.

The concerns raised in the Regulation 28 Report have been considered and our comments are below.

1 Inability to Dispatch Resources without Identifying Exact Location on Mapping System

In December 2014 CDDFRS introduced a new state of the art mobilising and communications system into their emergency control room. Prior to the introduction of this system control personnel would extract incident location information from callers using interrogation techniques given to them during initial training and induction.

The new system with its integral mapping system displays an approximate location of the caller which is based upon the triangulated position of the cell phone in use. This not only allows a fire appliance to be despatched to a more accurate location than previously but it also allows the control operator to view the possible location of the incident and use it to extract more accurate information from the caller. Policy dictates that, if control operators are unable to get an exact location from the caller, resources must be mobilised to initial location information whilst operators continue to interrogate the caller to gain further information.

Should the location displayed on the map indicate that the incident is on or near the border of another emergency service area the fire control operator would inform the appropriate emergency service immediately using a priority telephone contact number.

2 **Failure to Record All Communications**

Audio, whether it be radio or telephony is recorded at all operator workstations; the recording is activated as soon an operator opens up an audio channel at that workstation. Under normal circumstances emergency calls are monitored by a Supervisor thereby creating a dual record of the call at both operator positions. Recordings are kept indefinitely.

3 **Urgent Advice from a More Local Agency**

County Durham and Darlington FRS have good working relations with adjoining Fire and Rescue Services and would where necessary ask for further advice regarding location information whilst, where appropriate, keeping the caller on the line. Policy dictates that control operators must immediately inform other emergency services where it is indicated that their services may be required.

4 **Transferring Calls from One Emergency Service to Another**

Currently it is not technically possible to transfer an emergency call from one emergency service to another. When calls are received in error for another Emergency Service, the Fire Service control room will log the call and take as many details from the caller as possible; at the same time another fire control operator will inform the relevant emergency service. Where necessary, and as appropriate, control operators will continue to speak to callers until it is known that assistance, from the attending emergency service, has arrived at the incident.

5 **Communications between Emergency Services**

Although primary communications with other emergency services is via the telephone there are a number of other contact paths available:

- Airwave radio hailing channels, monitored at all times in the control room (other Fire & Rescue Services)
- Airwave radio hailing channel (North East Ambulance Service)
- Airwave radio hailing channel (Durham Constabulary)
- Email
- Fax

Direct Electronic Incident Transfer (DEIT) between emergency services is not as yet available as computerised mobilising/ incident recording systems within the individual control rooms are not compatible. Investigations into possible solutions are being investigated and pilots are being undertaken with various emergency services. CDDFRS are currently in talks with their mobilising system supplier to help deliver this functionality.

6 **Dispatching Resources from another Emergency Service**

Due to the disparate nature of I.T systems in operation in other Fire and Rescue Services it is not possible to directly dispatch their resources. In addition, currently there are no protocols in place to view the locations of their resources in order to be able to mobilise them. Effective mutual assistance arrangements are, however, in place with all adjoining Fire and Rescue Services.

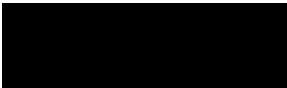
7 **Review of Call Handling Procedures**

Following receipt of the Regulation 28 Report CDDFRS have reviewed their call handling procedures for all adjoining Police and Ambulance Emergency Services. Letters have been sent to all adjoining Police Forces and

Ambulance Trusts outlining changes to the way calls would be processed in the future, this included exchanging and updating all direct primary access telephone numbers for each adjoining emergency control room.

As mentioned previously there are already good communication protocols and effective mutual assistance arrangements in place between each of the five adjoining Fire and Rescue Services. In addition CDDFRS have remote buddy arrangements in place with Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service who will, where necessary, take calls for CDDFRS and pass them back to the control via agreed routes. These buddy arrangements only come into force if spate conditions, usually associated with adverse weather conditions, affect the whole of the North East Region.

Yours sincerely



Assistant Chief Fire Officer