

By: Director, Operational Policy and Resilience
To: Planning and Performance Committee - 5 July 2012
Subject: OPERATIONAL POLICY AND RESILIENCE UPDATE
Classification: Unrestricted

FOR INFORMATION

SUMMARY

This report updates Members on developments within the Operational Policy and Resilience branch, with particular reference to the Channel Tunnel, the regional Ways of Working project and the recent Coroner's ruling in Hampshire following a fatal incident at a boating lake. It also provides short updates on the Joint Fire/Police Control Centre and on the arrangements for marine response.

CONCLUSION

Members are requested to:

1. Note the contents of this report.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

COMMENTS

Background

1. This report updates Members on developments within the Operational Policy and Resilience branch, with particular reference to the Channel Tunnel, the regional Ways of Working (WoW) project and the recent Coroner's ruling in Hampshire following a fatal incident at a boating lake. It also provides short updates on the Joint Fire/Police Control Centre and on the arrangements for marine response.

Channel Tunnel Developments

2. As part of the Authority's input into the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority (CTSA), officers from the Authority are actively involved in a number of European projects which include the revision of interoperability standards (TSI) for safety in railway tunnels (SRT), the revision of the Channel Tunnel rules and the approval process for a new fixed installation extinguishing agent (STAT –X) to replace Halon 1301 on Class 373 (Eurostar) train sets.
3. The SRT TSI are currently under review and a European team made up of industry experts, CTSA representatives and representatives from other regulatory bodies are examining the existing TSI to harmonise EU member state rules into the revised TSI. UK representatives from a number of agencies are endeavouring to ensure that the current high standards which have served the UK well over a number of years are not replaced by a lesser standard.
4. Prior to 2011, the Channel Tunnel safety rules, which had been in force since 1994, had remained unchallenged and had been able to dictate a higher level of safety standards due to the unique nature of the Tunnel's infrastructure. In the main, the higher standards require a train to be able to run for a minimum of thirty minutes to enable it to exit the tunnel and to be built to a thirty minute fire resistance standard, and prohibit the use of diesel locomotives save for emergency use and maintenance.
5. The revision of the SRT TSI has once again questioned the need to maintain higher standards within the Tunnel. A recent development since the installation of SAFE (water mist suppression system) is the recent approval by the CTSA for national freight trains to deviate from the higher Channel Tunnel running time standard in the event of a fire (30 minutes) in favour of the TSI standard which is 15 minutes. Given that approval, it is likely that more challenge will come in the future to adopt the lower standard for existing and new Train Operating Companies (TOC) in relation to passenger trains.
6. In relation to the Halon replacement project for Class 373 trains, officers from the Authority have assisted CTSA by developing a fire test protocol, an action plan for implementation, assisting with the initial fire tests and advising on system

development. Full scale fire tests were carried out at the French fire test centre in February 2012. These fire tests were successful and the CTSA has now approved STAT –X as a suitable replacement. Eurostar will commence the changeover from Halon to STAT-X as part of its mid-life refurbishment of Class 373 trains which is due to start in June 2012 and be completed by 2014.

Hampshire Boating Lake Incident – Coroner’s Ruling

7. In March 2011, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, along with local police and ambulance responders, attended an incident at a boating lake in Gosport where a member of the public drowned. Following the recent inquest, the Coroner has issued correspondence to the local emergency services under the specific powers contained within Coroner’s Rule 43.
8. Coroner’s Rule 43 states:

That where evidence at an inquest gives rise to concern that circumstances creating a risk of similar deaths could occur in the future and that, in the Coroner’s opinion, action should be taken to prevent this, the Coroner may report to those with the authority to take the necessary action by means of a letter.
9. The incident and subsequent inquest were heavily reported in the media and much was made of the crews’ actions being constrained by health and safety considerations. The Coroner concluded that there was inconsistency between the three emergency services’ guidance on survivability times at such incidents, and the issue of which emergency service should take command at the scene was unclear. The Rule 43 letter required that a joint protocol be established between Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, Hampshire Constabulary and South Central Ambulance Service to cover these issues.
10. The situation in Kent and Medway is that the Authority works to the same survivability protocols as the South East Coast Ambulance Service (SECAMB). All casualties in water-related incidents will be treated as having suffered survivable injuries for up to 90 minutes following discovery. Unlike the Hampshire situation, the Authority would only ever mobilise a crew to a water-related incident which had the necessary skills to enter water and carry out a rescue.
11. All fire engines carry as a minimum life jackets and a safety line that can be thrown to those in difficulty in water. There are four water safety teams who have the ability to rescue casualties in fast flowing water and can also operate an inland rescue boat. All full-time firefighters are trained to enter water but subject to strict operational procedures.

12. The Authority has arranged a meeting in early July with both Kent Police and SECamb with a view to establishing a joint protocol for water-related incidents in Kent and Medway. Members will be updated on progress at a future meeting.

Regional Ways of Working

13. The Regional Ways of Working (WOW) project was originally intended to provide the means to standardise operational procedures across the nine South East Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) as part of the Regional Control Centre project. Its aim was to increase interoperability by standardising both mobilising protocols and what firefighters actually do when they arrive on scene. At the start of the project in 2008 there was no definitive national list of the types of incidents that FRAs attend. An agreed national incident type list for standard operating procedures (SOPs) was produced by the Government and has now been developed further as part of this project. With sub categories, it currently numbers 116 incident types. Each incident type will have a suite of documents underpinning it which include;
 - People Impact Assessment
 - Risk Assessment (RA)
 - Task Analysis (TA)
 - Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)
 - Training Package
14. To date, within the regional project, a number of SOPs have been completed and agreed by all partners, with the remaining SOPs due for completion and agreement over the next 12 months. The new SOPs will need to be embedded into the new Operational Policy Framework, which is reported earlier in this agenda. The extent of implementation ranges from accepting the procedure on paper, to adopting the RA, TA, and SOP. The next phase is to change the mobilising arrangements and upload all data onto the Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) contained in the cabs of fire engines.
15. The Authority should be in a position to adopt all 116 SOPs and associated documentation by end of March 2013. It will not be in a position to upload and go-live with any data for the MDTs until new units are installed in September 2013, as the current MDTs are not able to accept any new data due to capacity issues. Members will be updated on progress with implementation at future meetings.

Control Update

16. Before the start of this meeting some Members will have visited the on-duty watch of fire control operators at the Joint Fire/Police Control Centre at Police headquarters. It is hoped that this visit will have shown Members that the Authority's Control staff are working together well with their Police colleagues. Organisationally, there have already been some tangible benefits from the co-location of Controls. For example, at

a recent incident in the Thanet area, Control staff were able to watch a developing house fire through the CCTV network as crews were en route, and could advise them accordingly.

17. Some initial scoping work has begun for Phase 2 of the Control project, which is the replacement of the Authority's current mobilising system and other systems related to it. This will be an extensive and challenging piece of work that is fundamental to how the Authority mobilises fire engines and crews to emergency incidents in the future. A shared mobilising platform with Kent Police would deliver organisational benefits in terms of sharing information, resilience and joint working at Gold Command level for major incidents.

Marine Response Developments

18. Members will recall that there have been changes to the national arrangements for marine response, following the decision of the Department for Transport (DfT) to withdraw central funding for the Maritime Incident Response Group (MIRG). Further discussions are taking place at a national level between the Chief Fire Officers' Association, Local Government Association and the Department for Communities and Local Government to explore the potential for future funding.
19. At a local level, this Authority is still maintaining a marine response capability, as agreed previously by Members, as are three other FRAs. The training arrangements for this specialist team are being reviewed and local mobilising arrangements with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency are being developed.
20. Members have also been briefed previously on a collaborative European Union project which is focused on marine response. This Authority, together with fire services in France, Belgium and The Netherlands, applied for funding through INTERREG (an EU funding programme that supports cross-border cooperation between neighbouring regions) to assist in sharing best practice on marine firefighting operational procedures and training, and eventually to establish a Maritime Incident Response Group EU (MIRG EU).
21. Members will be pleased to note that this funding bid was successful and the project is now under way, with completion of the work due by November 2014. The project is split into four key areas of activity: operational procedures; training programmes; marine equipment; and, finally, a full scale marine exercise which will involve specialist marine firefighters from all four Member States working together on a simulated casualty ship in the English Channel.
22. Outcomes from this project will potentially help reduce casualties and economic/environmental damage caused by incidents on passenger ships and cargo vessels. By developing a uniform international approach, the teams will be able to

assist each other in the event of long-term large-scale maritime incidents and access support for training and development costs from the European Civil Protection Scheme.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

23. All the areas within this update paper have been covered by impact assessments in their respective areas.

CONCLUSION

24. Members are requested to;
 - 24.1 Note the contents of this report.