

## Fire and Rescue Service

**Patrick Mercer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the (a) average and (b) target response time is for fire services attendance at the scene of an incident following a 999 call. [110258]

**Angela E. Smith:** Fire and rescue authorities are required by the fire and rescue service national framework to have in place and maintain an integrated risk management plan (IRMP) which reflects local need and sets out plans to tackle effectively both existing and potential risks to communities, including appropriate response times to 999 calls. It is, therefore, for each fire and rescue authority to determine its target response.

The average response times to primary fires, measured in minutes from first call being received in the control room to time of arrival of an appliance at the fire ground, for each fire and rescue authority in England in the calendar year 2005 were as follows:

	<i>Minutes</i>
Avon	7.82
Bedfordshire and Luton	6.97
Royal Berkshire	7.47
Buckinghamshire	8.17
Cambridgeshire	9.18
Cheshire	7.30
Cleveland	5.34
* Cornwall	9.53
Cumbria	8.94
Derbyshire	7.46
Devon	8.10
Dorset	7.42
County Durham and Darlington	8.14
East Sussex	6.54
Essex	7.49
Gloucestershire	8.55
Hampshire	7.25
Hereford and Worcester	9.01
Hertfordshire	6.99
Humberside	6.12
Isle of Wight	6.57
Kent	7.69
Lancashire	6.54
Leicestershire	6.99
* Lincolnshire	9.92
Norfolk	8.62
North Yorkshire	8.54

Northamptonshire	7.35
Northumberland	8.59
Nottinghamshire	6.61
Oxfordshire	8.77
Shropshire	8.22
Somerset	9.49
Staffordshire	8.33
Suffolk	9.42
Surrey	8.51
Warwickshire	7.83
West Sussex	8.76
Wiltshire	9.39
Isles of Scilly	n/a
Greater Manchester	6.02
Merseyside	6.17
South Yorkshire	6.80
Tyne and Wear	5.26
West Midlands	5.97
West Yorkshire	6.81
London	5.46
England	6.98
<i>Source:</i>	
FDR1 returns from fire and rescue services to the Department for Communities and Local Government	

With reference to the IRMP Service Plan 2005/6

I write to comment on the aforesaid Service Plan, in particular to section 7.2 'Changes to Standby Arrangements at Camborne and Falmouth Fire Stations'. As I have little experience of the situation at Falmouth, I will confine this response to the situation at Camborne in relation to the proposed changes.

The 2003 incident statistics used within the IRMP Service Plan 2005/6 reveals that Camborne is second busiest Fire Station in Cornwall, with 779 incident during the aforementioned calendar year. This 779 incidents comprise of 162 fires (being the highest for any station during 2003), 216 secondary fires (again the highest for any station during said year), 193 false alarms (third highest in said year), 23 chimney fires (second highest in said year), 129 Special Service Calls (second highest in said year) and 57 reinforcing moves (Data from IRMP Service Plan 2005/6, p21).

This statistical data demonstrates the large number of actual fires attended by Camborne is significantly higher than most other Fire Stations. Actual fires attended by Camborne Fire Station is 563, next highest being 240 by St Austell Fire Station). Alongside this consideration needs to be given to the 129 Special Service Calls attended by Camborne Fire Station, a large percentage of which being Road Traffic Accidents (bearing in mind that Cornwall experiences more fatalities due to Road Traffic Accidents than fire).

Although the above statistical data necessitates special consideration be given to Camborne Fire Station in relation to its operational cover, another consideration is that Camborne is the only Fire Station in Cornwall covering two main towns, being Camborne and Hayle. In relation to Camborne Fire Station's statistical data, 29 of the 162 fires occurred in the Hayle area, as did 31 of the 216 secondary fires; 28 of the 192 false alarms; 4 of the 23 chimney fires; and 27 of the 129 Special Service Calls. This equates to some 119 actual incidents occurring in Hayle area area during 2003. This being more than the individual incident totals at the fire stations at Fowey, Looe, Mevagissey, Mullion, Padstow, Polruan, St Kevern, St Mawes and Wadebridge, and more than the individual station incidents attended by fire stations at Lostwithiel, Perranporth, St Columb and St Just, if 'reinforcing moves' were deducted from the equation.

The current crewing at Camborne Fire Station gives due consideration to the fact that it is a busy station covering two major towns, thus it is staffed by a 'wholetime' crew 24 hours a day. At present, when wholetime crews are at incidents, the local retained firefighters are called to the fire station to 'standby', which allows immediate cover should another incident occurs, if these are called upon then a 'reinforcing move' occurs, whereby a fire appliance is brought into the station to cover the station should another incident occur, and so on. This ensures that immediate cover be given from station 24 hours per day. This has always been necessary for the Fire Authority to meet the specified times of Fire cover.

The IRMP Service Plan 2005/6 states 'At Camborne fire station we propose to only bring in retained standby cover arrangements when the wholetime fire appliance has been mobilised outside the Camborne town area', it goes on to state, 'This arrangement at Camborne is to ensure the promptest attendance at any subsequent

emergency in the Hayle area'. An evaluation of these statements in relation to the current provision, whereby the retained are called in to cover the fire station 'giving the promptest attendance at any subsequent emergency' whether in Hayle or anywhere else, equates to a lesser, proposed 'promptest attendance'. The premise of the proposal that Camborne Fire Station should only be covered in the event that the wholetime crew are mobilised to an incident 'outside the Camborne Town area', is logically inconsistent and fundamentally flawed. This premise presumes that Hayle requires cover if the wholetime appliance is attending an incident outside the Camborne Town area, but not if the wholetime appliance is attending an incident with Camborne Town area. It erroneously masks that fact that if an appliance is mobilised to an incident, wherever it be, the promptest cover can only be given to Hayle town if a crew is called in to be on station, to respond from station. If such cover is required if a wholetime appliance has been mobilised to an incident outside Camborne Town area, it is logical necessity for the same to occur should a wholetime appliance be mobilised to an incident within Camborne Town area. Only by this logical consistency can the 'promptest attendance at any subsequent emergency in the Hayle area' be achieved.

Thus, given the busyness of Camborne Fire Station, its uniqueness in covering two main town areas, the number of incidents within the Hayle area and the desire to provide the 'promptest attendance at any subsequent emergency', especially within the Hayle area, I would urge that this particular proposal be amended to maintain the present arrangement whereby the retained are called in whenever a wholetime appliance is mobilised from Camborne Fire Station. Only by this provision can consistent provision be made, especially for the Hayle area.

Yours sincerely

Mike Hooper

(on behalf of the Retained at Camborne)