

## **Duty Systems at Droitwich Fire Station**

- The Service currently maintains a Day Crewed (DC) fire station in Droitwich. This is where the fire station is crewed for an immediate response 10 hours during the day by an on duty crew working at the station, between 08.00 and 18.00hrs. The remaining 14 hours in this 24 hour period the same crew are On-call to respond within 5 minutes of a 999 call. To achieve this most staff provide a family home base and reside in Droitwich, to respond from locally, for which they receive an additional allowance in their salary.
- The DC wholetime staff normally consist of 14 personnel working in two 7 person shifts or Watches. This shift system is also in place in Malvern and Evesham.
- On the same site is a complement of 14 wholetime Urban Search and Rescue Technicians (who are also qualified firefighting staff) and work essentially the same shift system as the Droitwich DC firefighters, with the significant difference is that their On-call (night time) cover is to respond within 30 minutes
- Both Droitwich and USAR units are supported by two groups of On-Call (Retained Duty System) staff. USAR On-call has approximately 18 staff and Droitwich fire station On-call have approximately 14-16 staff. On-call staff respond to emergency calls from their home or place of work - as long as they can get to their Fire Station within 5 minutes of being alerted to a 999 call for fire station On-call staff and 30 minutes for USAR On-call staff.

## **Explanation of the Urban Search and Rescue Function (USAR)**

The USAR function makes up one part of the overall National Resilience Strategy for dealing with large scale local, regional and national disasters.

### **UK National Resilience**

The Government's aim is to reduce the risk from emergencies so that people can go about their business freely and to make sure the UK is equipped to deal with major emergencies, like natural disasters or terror attacks.

Since 2001, the Department for Communities and Local Government has invested £300m through its Fire and Resilience Programme to increase resilience and enhance the capabilities of the UK Fire and Rescue Service to improve emergency preparedness.

The New Dimension (now referred to as National Resilience) Programme consists of a number of distinct capabilities:

- Chemical, Biological, Radiological contamination Mass Decontamination (IRU) (Held within HWFRS)
- Detection Identification and Monitoring (DIM) of Hazardous substances (Not held in HWFRS)
- Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) (Held within HWFRS)
- Water and High Volume Pumping (HVP) (Held within HWFRS)
- Command and Control, Enhanced Logistics Support (ELS) (Not held in HWFRS)

The delivery of these functions is funded directly by central government in the form of an additional grant to each Fire and Rescue Service directly related to the assets held with that

Service, this is referred to as the Section 31 Grant or National Resilience grant. HWFRS receive just over £1m annually to deliver the various functions held in the Service.

These functions are measured against a set of nationally prescribed indicators. These indicators do not mandate how these functions are delivered, but merely set targets for team size, capability and response times.

Whilst all the assets and vehicles were originally purchased and owned by the Government through the National Resilience program, ownership of these assets was subsequently transferred to individual Fire Authorities some years ago. The on-going maintenance and refresh of these assets still sits with government and is discharged through the National Resilience Board (NRB).

These functions are spread evenly across the country to support a national deployment model based upon regions. HWFRS falls under the West Midlands region, but also supports parts of the Welsh and South West regional deployment models.

### **Urban Search & Rescue (USAR) capabilities:**

- Collapsed Building or Other Structure
- Heavy Transport Incidents Involving Large Lorry's, Trains, or Aircraft
- Working on water, with ropes from height, and/or in confined spaces

USAR Technicians have the ability and skills to; be able to support and stabilise large objects (buildings or vehicles), gain entry through confined spaces or via rope access (up or down), to work on and in water, and break into or cut materials (concrete or steel) to effect rescues or make safe an unstable structure. These USAR trained staff understand they may be deployed anywhere nationally (and possibly globally) for up to, and in excess of seven days, and will usually work under arduous and poor conditions for extended periods of time with limited support.

As well as the national and regional role for major disasters, the USAR capability is utilised within HWFRS to support normal operations including Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) involving large vehicles, or fires and RTCs where vehicles or buildings have become unstable. USAR also provide internal resilience for Rope Rescue and Water Rescue functions as these skill also form part of the skillset held by USAR trained Technicians

### **USAR Equipment**

The equipment provided is transported utilising demountable modules and prime mover vehicles. There are five modules within each USAR unit which contain bespoke equipment, these are:

#### **Module 1:**

Initial response for structural collapse and technical search containing a variety of heavy duty tools and search equipment.



#### **Module 2:**

Heavy transport incidents, Hot Metal Cutting, Confined Space.



### Module 3:

Support module for Breaking & Breaching, Shoring and Timber Cutting.



### Module 4:

Drop sided module containing multi-purpose vehicle for moving rubble or palletised equipment, and an air support structure.



### Module 5:

Flatbed module containing 13 tonnes of assorted pre-cut timber for building temporary structures and supporting partially collapsed buildings..



Another provision under the National Resilience programme to support the Urban Search & Rescue capability is a national network of search dogs:

### Canine Support:

One live scent canine with trained handler transported via bespoke dog van (can also be delivered via air asset).

