



**Hampshire
& Isle of Wight**
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Information Compliance Team

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Sent by email to:

[REDACTED]

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Date: 13 August 2024

Our Reference: FOI 054 24-25

Enquiries to: Information Compliance Officer

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Dear [REDACTED]

We are writing in respect of your application for the release of information held by the Service, which we received on 16 July 2024. We can confirm that we have now completed our search for the information requested.

You asked:

I am writing to request any report(s) of investigation(s) into the cause(s) of the chemical spill at the Royal Hampshire County Hospital in November 2022 and the response(s) to the spill held by the Service.

I am also writing to request any report(s) of lessons learned as a consequence of the above and how these lessons have been implemented.

Our answer:

We can confirm we hold a copy of the report for the incident, please find it attached. We do not hold any of the other information requested as per Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Please be aware that we have redacted the incident report as per Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This information would be unfair to release to the public at large in response to your request. This includes not only information relating to the names and ranks/roles of our staff, but also their individual callsigns where one has been assigned.

National Security

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (HIWFRS) holds callsigns information for our vehicles and personnel, information relating to the location of our vehicles (both in transit and their base station), information relating to our communications arrangements at incidents and changes to our pre-determined attendance plans.

However, this information is exempt under section 24(1) National Security of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Section 24(1) provides that information is exempt from Section 1(1)(b) if it is required for the purposes of safeguarding national security. The national security exemption is based on the effect the disclosure would have, not on the content or source of the information.

Callsign information is used to identify vehicles and personnel in transit and in attendance at incidents. This information is therefore of use to persons wishing to impersonate Service vehicles and personnel to gain access to incidents and secure sites. Additionally, this information could be used to disrupt operations and call off appliances and personnel from attending incidents should malicious individuals infiltrate our communications systems. Further this information can be used to identify and target vehicle for attacks.

As you may be aware, disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act is a release to the public at large. While we are not questioning the motives of the applicant, releasing the above information would increase the severity, impact and risk to lives in the event of an attack, would be to the detriment of providing an efficient emergency service and a failure in our duty of care to all members of the public.

Health and Safety

Further, we are refusing to provide the locations of our vehicles on the grounds that it would be likely to endanger the health and safety of individuals, as per sections 38(1) (a) and (b) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

While we are not questioning the motives of the applicant, a disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act is deemed to be to the world at large. Criminals can use this information to target valuable equipment at stations for theft and targeting of vehicles to prevent response. This would lead to an increased risk to the safety of operational staff, staff from other agencies and other people who operate at or are visiting the station. This would also have consequences for the public as it would impinge on our ability to respond to incidents.

Public Interest Test

For these exemptions to apply, the public interest in maintaining these exemptions must outweigh the public interest in disclosing the information.

Public Interest for Disclosure

There are several reasons in favour of disclosure to the public at large as follows:

- it promotes transparency, showing that we have appropriate vehicles/ capabilities to tackle incidents.

- it shows we record information necessary for us to provide an effective response to incidents.

Public Interest Against Disclosure

There are also significant reasons why providing the information is not in the public interest as it:

- would be likely to endanger the safety of our staff in our vehicles and both staff and visitors to our stations were such an attack to take place.
- would be likely to be used to facilitate and increase the effects of terrorist activities in our area and attacks on our vehicles and stations.
- would be likely to be used to plan secondary attacks, or other disruption activities, against our responding crews delaying and potentially preventing their arrival leading to loss of life.
- would be likely to lead to an increased risk of theft of equipment from our vehicles. This would negatively affect our ability to conduct our life-saving work and lead to increased public costs in replacing the equipment. This would not be an efficient use of taxpayer funds.

Conclusion

Public safety and the ability to deliver an effective response to emergencies are of paramount importance to HIWFRS. Disclosing this information would be likely to compromise our ability to respond to criminal/terrorist activities and would endanger the health and safety of those involved in incidents and at our stations. Therefore, we believe that the balance of public interest favours not disclosing this information.

The above concludes our investigation into this matter.

Any future correspondence with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service in relation to this matter should be sent to the Information Compliance Officer at the above address.

If for whatever reason you are unhappy with our response you may request an internal review by contacting DP@hantsfire.gov.uk or by writing to the Data Protection Officer at the above address.

Should you remain dissatisfied you can appeal against the internal review decision by contacting the Information Commissioners Office. This can be done online at www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints or by post to The Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

Information Compliance Officer
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service