



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

Information Compliance Team
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Sent by email to:

[REDACTED]

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Date: 8 October 2024

Our Reference: FOI 084 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 26 September 2024. We can confirm that we have now completed our search for the information requested.

You asked:

Brecon House, 60 Victoria Road, Woolston, Southampton SO19 9TZ. There was a fire in the basement car park at Brecon House, 60 Victoria Road, Woolston, Southampton SO19 9TZ. The fire could have been started between the late evening of 20/09/2024 or the early hours of 21/09/2024. I am hoping you could furnish me with any reports, findings and documentation surrounding this fire for my records.

Our answer:

We can confirm that we hold a report completed after the incident, please find this attached. Please note that the fire report relates to Ledbury House which is the address to which we were called.

Personal data

The report includes information that identifies individuals, both directly and indirectly.

This information is, therefore, personal data within the meaning of the UK GDPR. It would be unfair for us to release this information to the world at large in response to your request. We

have assessed that the protection of the individual's rights and freedoms outweighs the legitimate interest being pursued in this case. Consequently, we are refusing to provide this information per Section 40(2) (3A) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Article 5(1)(a) of the UK GDPR 2018.

National Security

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (HIWFRS) holds the callsigns of our appliances and staff within these reports, as well as some information relating to our communications systems. 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.

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 callsigns could assist criminals/terrorists in impersonating fire employees and vehicles to facilitate criminal/terrorist activity. Additionally, providing information about the communication methods use would enable malicious actors to identify and compromise those channels impacting our ability to effectively respond to incidents. It would also enable individuals to send messages preventing us from attending incidents, divert our resources from where they are needed and otherwise interfere with the clear communication essential to life saving operations.

This 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 Exemption

The reports also include information about the base stations of our vehicles. We are refusing to provide this information 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. This information can be used by criminals to target valuable equipment at stations for theft. 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, our stations. This would also have consequences for the public as it would impinge on our ability to respond to incidents.

Public Interest Test

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

Public Interest in Disclosure

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

- it promotes transparency.
- shows we have callsigns put in place for when needed.
- there is a general interest in our vehicles which has been expressed by several members of the public.
- It evidences that we have appropriate technical measures in place to protect our systems and the information (including Personal Information) that they store.
- It shows we have appropriate secure communication methods to facilitate rescue operations.

Public Interest Against Disclosure

There are several reasons against the disclosure to the public at large as follows:

- be used to facilitate and increase the effects of terrorist activities in our area and attacks on our vehicles and stations.
- 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.
- lead to an increased risk of theft of equipment from our vehicles.
- This would negatively affect our ability to carry out 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

Making sure the public and members of our service are safe is a top priority to us. Releasing this information would be likely to compromise our ability to respond to criminal/terrorist activity as well as endangering our staff. Consequently, we believe that the balance of public interest is in favour of 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