



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

**Information Compliance Team**  
Headquarters  
Leigh Road  
Eastleigh  
Hampshire  
SO50 9SJ

Sent by email to:

[REDACTED]

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t. 02380 644000  
e. DP@hantsfire.gov.uk  
w. hantsfire.gov.uk

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Date: 20 March 2024

Our Reference: FOI 141 23-24

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 22 January 2024. We can confirm that we have now completed our search for the information requested.

#### ***You asked:***

*I am making the following request under the Freedom of Information Act.*

*1. How many Airwave/ESN radios and terminals are operated by your organisation?*

#### **Our answer:**

We can confirm that we hold the information requested, there are 340 radios/ terminals operated by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service.

#### **You asked:**

*2. What make(s)/models of Airwave/ESN radio terminals are used by your organisation?  
Please provide a breakdown of these by quantity, type and model if possible.*

#### **Our answer:**

Motorola Terminals  
279 - MTM800

61 - MXP600 - we are aiming to replace these with MTH800 models by the end of February 2024.

**You asked:**

*3. In the last 12 months, how many Airwave/ESN radio terminals have been lost/stolen or cannot be located?*

**Our answer:**

1

**You asked:**

*4. Are Airwave/ESN radio terminal users allocated on a personal basis, and if so, what is your policy on use off duty and taking home of radio terminals and their use by staff working from home?*

**Our answer:**

We currently issue these devices to individuals but do not hold, as per Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, a policy regarding their use. Following this request, we are now developing such a policy.

**You asked:**

*5. Please provide a list of Airwave/ESN radio terminal talk groups your organisation uses and any interoperability talk groups shared by other users.*

**Our answer:**

We can confirm that we hold information about the terminal talk groups and interoperability talk groups our organisation uses. We are refusing to provide this information per Section 24(1) (National Security), Section 36(2)(c) (Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs) and Section 38(1) (Health and Safety) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Please see the full explanation of the use of these exemptions in our refusal notice at the end of this letter.

**You asked:**

*6. Please provide a copy of any policy or training information provided by your organisation to support your users of Airwave/ESN radio terminals and talkgroups.*

**Our answer:**

Please find attached our policy. This policy includes details of the members of staff who amended the document. We are refusing to provide this information as it would enable the unfair identification of these individuals, as per Section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Additionally, this policy has had some information redacted. We are refusing to provide this information as per Section 24(1) (National Security), Section 36(2)(c) (Prejudice to effective

conduct of public affairs) and Section 38(1) (Health and Safety) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Please see the full explanation of the use of these exemptions in our refusal notice at the end of the document.

Regarding our Initial training provided to staff and we issue various Service Delivery (SD) Memos and Fire Alerts communications to staff (these are internal communications). Some of this information relates to security arrangements and we are considering if this information falls under the scope of the exemption within the FOI under Section 24 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This is because the release of this information would lead to security exposures and therefore, we are unfortunately unable to provide this information.

**You asked:**

*7. What organisations/groups within your organisation have been allocated or granted access to Airwave/ESN radio terminals?*

**Our answer:**

Control, Firefighters and Officers

**You asked:**

*8. Do you loan or otherwise provide Airwave/ESN radio terminals to any third parties, and if so, please could you provide detailed information on the arrangements and policy in this respect used by your organisation?*

**Our answer:**

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service does not loan or otherwise provide Airwave/ESN Radio terminals to any third parties.

**You asked:**

*9. What is the annual operating cost to your organisation for access and use of Airwave/ESN radio communications networks?*

**Our answer:**

£1.1 million per year.

**Refusal notice for questions 5 and 6 (regarding redactions to our policy document)**

**Prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs.**

A disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act is treated as a release to the world at large. While we are not questioning the motives of the applicant, the disclosure of this information would identify channels used in emergency responses and would give clear and specific detail on how we communicate using Airwave.

These channels are used by both emergency services and public sector bodies to coordinate operational activity. Releasing information about these channels would enable malicious

actors to identify and compromise them. It would enable them 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.

Additionally, information in our policy document would enable malicious actors to effectively impersonate a member of the Service using correct nomenclature in the Airwave channels. This would decrease our ability to detect such malicious actors who had compromised our communications and enable them to impair our response to emergency incidents more effectively.

Consequently, the release of this information would compromise our ability to effectively perform our public task.

### **National Security**

These communication channels are used as part of responding to serious national security incidents. Any release of information would enable malicious actors to infiltrate and compromise these channels, enabling them to divert or otherwise decrease the resources available as part of a pre-emptive disruption to our response to a terrorist attack. Additionally, as these channels are a nation-wide resource, and are part of the Critical National Infrastructure, the disclosure of this information could negatively impact the mobilisation of appliances across the whole of the UK.

We are also mindful of the current security climate in the UK and the threat of terrorism and activism with the intent to cause disruption, so we recognise it is necessary to take a precautionary approach when releasing information that could impact on National Security, which includes the security of our service area and that of our staff.

Therefore, the prevention of the release of this information is required for the purposes of safeguarding national security.

### **Health and Safety**

As explained above, these channels are used during life-saving activities. Any delay in responding to an emergency, or disruption to the communication of information during rescue operations, is a risk to the health and safety of individuals. Additionally, were the channels used as outlined above, this could lead to a significant and severe loss of life. Therefore, the release of this information would be likely to endanger the health and safety of individuals.

### **Public interest Test**

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

### **Reasons for disclosure**

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

- It gives further information about our capabilities as a Fire and Rescue Service.
- It promotes transparency and shows that we have clear communication channels and methods in place to respond to any incident within our area.

- It provides further information about how the public sector works together to protect the public.

## Reasons against disclosure

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

- It would be likely to lead to an increase in both the likelihood and impact of terrorist and other criminal attacks.
- It would be likely to negatively impact the ability of ourselves as a Fire and Rescue Service and other agencies we work with to respond to emergency incidents.
- It would be likely to cause increased loss of life, damage to property and the terrorising effect of terrorist attacks.
- It would be likely to lead to the compromise of the Critical National Infrastructure's communications capabilities.
- There is a public interest in protecting national security.

## Conclusion

Public safety and the ability to deliver an effective response to emergency situations are of paramount importance to the Service. The ability to communicate effectively, ensuring the timely arrival of the emergency services and being able to work with other organisations in a trusted environment are critical to resolving incidents, protecting the public and saving lives. Consequently, we assert 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](mailto: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](http://www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints) or by post to The Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service