



R B F & R S

news release

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DON'T DIAL NINE AND WASTE A FIREFIGHTER'S TIME!

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) is receiving hundreds of calls every week from people trying to reach the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading. The situation is so bad that it is disrupting operational training and drills and interferes with day to day work.

Lee Arslett, head of telecommunications for RBFRS, explained: "The trouble started several years ago when the hospital changed its telephone services provider and all its telephone numbers. The new numbers start with 0118 but don't have a 9 in them.

"But people are so used to dialling a Reading number with a 9 in that they are still doing so, even years after the numbers were changed. The problem we have is that when this happens, the calls default to the nearest similar number and they are all coming through to us because our numbers start with 932.

"This affects all of our sites across the county, including fire stations and headquarters departments and our staff spend a lot of time answering calls from people who have misdialled when trying to reach the hospital.

"The other day, firefighters on one station were trying to train and had to stop work throughout the day to answer the phone – nearly every call was for the hospital. We are asking people to ensure they have the correct number for the hospital service or department that they want and to dial carefully. We have had calls from people who have been bereaved, whose wife is in labour, who are trying to obtain crucial test results so it is a concern for them as well."

Clive Walsh, Chief Operating Officer, of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, added: "We have worked extremely hard to ensure that all patients and users of Trust services have the correct contact details and we also make these clearly available on our website. We would also ask people to ensure that they are dialling the correct number as this means that we can provide them with the information they need as quickly as possible."

Remember:

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service numbers begin – 0118 932
Royal Berkshire Hospital number - 0118 322 5111
(Direct lines to departments and wards all begin with 0118 322)

ENDS.

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