



R B F & R S

news release

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RBFRS RESPONDS TO FBU PRESS RELEASE

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) is disappointed in the press release issued today (18 January) by the Newbury branch of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), which it considers to be premature, alarmist and misleading.

Olaf Baars, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, said: "Royal Berkshire Fire Authority is in fact investing in an improved range of rescue equipment for its frontline pumping appliances. This will ensure that the very best equipment, necessary to effect over 90% of all rescues from road traffic collisions (RTCs), is delivered to the scene by the first appliance to arrive.

"As a result of these improvements, a working group is reviewing the Brigade's attendance to RTCs to ensure that the optimal combination of personnel and equipment are sent to all incidents. The working group developing policy on this issue includes firefighters from Newbury fire station and the FBU. The new policy will be completed this week and issued to the FBU for consultation. The date originally scheduled for implementation of the new arrangements was 15 February but delays in developing a robust policy and deploying the equipment has resulted in a postponement of implementation and no firm date has yet been set.

"RBFRS currently has two Rescue Support Vehicles (RSVs), one based in Newbury and the other in Slough. Furthermore, Newbury is due to receive a brand new and enhanced RSV to replace the old vehicle this year, together with advanced training for the fire crews to ensure that specialist skills complement the specialist equipment. These improvements have been informed by our attendance at real incidents such as the Ufton Nerve train crash and the successful rescue of a construction worker from a collapsed trench in Shaw last year.

"The RSVs have specialist heavy rescue capability and consequently they are often deployed to RTCs involving large goods vehicles and other incidents which specifically require this function. As evidence shows that these vehicles are not required at the majority of RTCs, RBFRS instead intends to send a second frontline fire appliance with additional personnel. This will improve both the time taken to reach an RTC and how effectively the incident is dealt with on the great majority of occasions.

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“In addition, crews attending an RTC who determine that the specialist capabilities of an RSV are required can at any time request its attendance to back up the resources already there.

“Our decisions on operational policy and procedure are always based on the evidence provided from lessons learnt from previous incidents and are always intended to improve performance and our service to the public. It is a great shame that the FBU have, on this occasion, chosen to unnecessarily alarm the public rather than openly discuss their views with management in accordance with well established procedures. Our door remains open to the FBU to engage in those discussions.”

ENDS.

Notes to Editors:

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Olaf Baars will be available for interview on this subject on Tuesday 19 January. Please contact Ellie Gray on 0118 932 2214 or Nicole Targett on 0118 932 2283 to arrange.