



Operations Coordination Committee

Date: 22nd January 2019 **Item No:** 16.1

Title: Airwave Interoperability between Environment Agency and Fire and Rescue Services

Presented by: Darryl Keen, Strategic Lead – Ops Comms

For Information or Decision: Decision

Summary

1.1 The purpose of these proposals is to set out a procedure for the use of Airwave by FRS and Environment Agency officers when attending significant incidents where Police are not involved.

2 Decisions required

2.1 Approval of the procedure attached as Appendix A to support interworking between FRS and the Environment Agency.

3 Recommendation

3.1 NFCC Ops Coordination Committee is asked to approve the procedure attached as Appendix A to support interworking between FRS and the Environment Agency.

4 Introduction and background

4.1 Environment Agency (EA) officers will regularly attend significant emergencies to assist in protecting the environment. This will regularly include large waste fires for example and close liaison with fire and rescue incident commanders may be helpful.

4.2 To help with this EA officers are issued with Airwave radios and can use these in multi-agency circumstances in the same way that any other Airwave user would do so. However where the Police, who would normally manage these arrangements, are not involved an alternative procedure is required. The purpose of these proposals is to set out a procedure for use of Airwave in these circumstances.

Airwave Interoperability between Environment Agency and Fire and Rescue Services

Introduction

As part of its main responsibility, the Environment Agency is responsible for the protection and improvement of the environment. This includes regulating major industry and waste.

As part of the day to day duties the Environment Agency will find it necessary to attend large waste fires to investigate waste offenders.

Should an Environment Agency officer be required to attend an incident involving waste product, it will be important that they liaise closely with the incident commander.

Current process

Environment Agency officers are issued with Airwave radios and are familiar with using the system for multi-agency interoperability.

Therefore, any incident where multi-agency interoperability using Airwave is required, this would be set up in the usual way, i.e. via the police.

However, should the police not be in attendance at the incident where interoperability via Airwave is required, then it may be necessary to establish communications between the Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Agency which falls outside of the usual established procedures.

The Home Office and the Environment Agency have entered into an Airwave sharers agreement. This is to facilitate an alternative method of establishing Airwave interoperability between the Fire and Rescue Service incident commanders and Environment Agency officers.

New Procedure.

As part of the Sharers agreement, the Home Office have granted the Environment Agency access to all the English Fire and Rescue Services hailing talkgroups as well as national talkgroup 06 (FNTG-NTG06).

If the Environment Agency attends a multi-agency incident and Airwave Interoperability is required, this will be established in the usual manner of requesting a talkgroup via the police. A talkgroup that is common to all agencies involved will be allocated via police control, this is usually an ES talkgroup.

However, if the police are not in attendance, then the fire incident commander and the Environment Agency officer can choose to establish interoperability using FNTG-NTG06.

The use of this talkgroup can be agreed locally by both agencies. If the use of this talkgroup is established, the local fire control should be advised, and details entered on the incident log. The local fire control should then inform National Resilience Fire Control who will advise if the talkgroup is being used by another Fire and Rescue Service. National Resilience Fire Control should also be informed when the talkgroup is no longer being used.

If the talkgroup is already being used, then an alternative talkgroup should be considered such as an ES talkgroup via the police or a MAMA via Airwave. A local or National Airwave Tactical Advisor can be consulted to assist with this if necessary.

Communication between the Environment Agency and Fire Control Rooms

If the Environment Agency is required to attend an incident with the Fire and Rescue Service, there may be a need for the attending officer to make contact with the local fire control. In normal circumstance this will be done via the telephone. However, if the Environment Agency officer who is attending the incident is unable to contact the local fire control via the telephone, they have been advised that as an alternative, they can make contact via Airwave.

The Environment Agency has been granted access to all the English Fire and Rescue Service control room hailing talkgroups for this purpose. If the Airwave hailing talk group is used by the Environment Agency officers, the normal interoperability protocol should be used. For example, using plan speech, identify yourself by name and organisation and do not use callsigns.

As always, the hailing talkgroup should only be used for short conversations and if communications are required for a longer period, then FNTG-NTG06 should be set up by the control room following the procedure details above.

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