



**HAMPSHIRE
FIRE AND
RESCUE
AUTHORITY**

Purpose: Approval

Date: **4 December 2019**

Title: **HAMPSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE AND UNITED KINGDOM
INTERNATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE (UKISAR)**

Report of Chief Fire Officer

SUMMARY

1. UK International Search and Rescue (UKISAR) is a team made up of firefighters from across the UK, who respond to humanitarian crises when requested by a country in distress and on behalf of Her Majesty's Government.
2. Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) has several personnel whom currently are prepared for deployment. There are also a number of personnel who have been deployed to previous international incidents.
3. There are many benefits which HFRS receive from the involvement of staff in such operations. However, there is no statutory duty to deploy, but has powers to do so within the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.
4. There are risks with HFRS continuing to deploy staff to UKISAR.
5. The purpose of this report is to set out the risks and benefits of HFRS deploying staff to UKISAR. This report seeks a policy position from Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority (HFRA).

BACKGROUND

6. The UK Government, through the Department for International Development (DfID), looks to UKISAR to provide international search and rescue to countries overseas who have suffered from natural disasters. Though used infrequently, it gives an instantly reliable, highly professional service when called upon and relieves suffering from those who need foreign aid the most.
7. Formed in 1993, UKISAR is a co-operative of fifteen UK Fire and Rescue Services (FRS). Each Service contributes competent personnel and equipment and provides these resources when requested. The UKISAR Team responds primarily to international disasters on behalf of the UK Government but also carries out activities to support other nations to develop local and national Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capacity/capability.
8. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) is the Lead Authority for the co-ordination of FRS response to international disasters. There is a

permanent secondee from UK FRS' who is the Fire and Rescue National Resilience UKISAR National Coordinator. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) supports UKISAR with strategic and tactical groups.

9. UKISAR is fully prepared to respond to international incidents as outlined in the memorandum of understanding (MOU) entitled 'UK Fire and Rescue Sector Support to Her Majesty's Government for Emergency Response Operations Overseas'.
10. HFRS has been a prominent part of UKISAR since its inception and HFRS continues to develop new capabilities such as the UK Emergency Medical Team, provide specialist logistical support, humanitarian assistance and technical fire safety advice.

CAPABILITY

11. UKISAR is made up of personnel from 15 FRS' from across England, Wales and Scotland. These firefighters are typically those from USAR teams.
12. UKISAR teams are normally deployed to undertake tasks such as:
 - (a) Assessment;
 - (b) Search for deeply trapped victims;
 - (c) Scene stability;
 - (d) Gaining access to structures;
 - (e) Advanced life support;
 - (f) Rescues, including using heavy equipment.
13. UKISAR teams are deployed in most cases for up to 10 days where they are self-sufficient and provide 24 hour operations.
14. Every five years, UKISAR must be reclassified under the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG)¹ to permit the team to be deployed legitimately.
15. Typically, HFRS, amongst other Services, will contribute to the makeup of any UKISAR team.
16. 2019 has seen a widening of the scope of UKISAR operations with an extension of its Emergency Medical Team (EMT) and also Field Hospital capability.

DEPLOYMENTS

17. Following a sudden on-set disaster, UKISAR teams will be put on standby, but only stood up to deploy following a request from the affected country. Security, political and humanitarian impact assessments are required by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, before the request can be made for a

¹ <https://www.insarag.org/>

team from UKISAR. At this stage a dedicated trained Safety and Security Officer will be appointed prior to all mobilisations.

18. Historically, a deployment from HFRS has been authorised by the Duty Brigade Manager and the welfare of those joining the team has been tracked throughout the deployment.
19. During a UKISAR deployment, costs are recovered by HFRS from Her Majesty's Government.
20. UKISAR supported by HFRS firefighters, has undertaken highly successful search and rescue missions all over the world. The most recent and very high-profile events include disasters in Haiti (2010), Japan (2011), New Zealand (2011), Nepal (2015) and most recently Bangladesh (2017/2019).

FUTURE NEED

21. The DfID continues to develop the UKISAR offer to help in humanitarian crisis areas.
22. Global disaster statistics show that the vast majority of high impact earthquakes occur in less developed countries, and as such, there is a greater need for support and the UK intervention will add significant value.
23. The development of the EMT and field hospital capability includes everything from outpatient treatments to complex lifesaving operations. There is a growing need with this capability for UKISAR to provide logistical support.

SUPPORTING OUR SERVICE PLAN AND PRIORITIES

24. Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA) are required to develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse, as set out within the national framework document. This is also a strategic objective of the HFRS Plan 2015-2020 *Making Life Safer- Responding to Incidents*.
25. All the skills obtained by HFRS personnel through deployment to UKISAR are fully transferable into their roles at HFRS and will serve to enhance HFRS delivering response and rescue capabilities to the public of Hampshire.
26. Firefighters extending the use of their skills to those in humanitarian crises and in the most need is reported back to Hampshire. This helps to enhance the reputation of HFRS in terms of the skills and experience of staff, and also of their care and compassion for those in most need.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

27. Many of the skills needed for deployment to UKISAR are maintained by staff at HFRS due to their involvement in the USAR capability provided by the UK Government as part of the National Resilience Programme. HFRS team members are recruited in the main from across Hampshire's wholtime stations with the majority being based at Station 32, Eastleigh.

28. Costs associated with operational deployments are reimbursed to HFRS by the Department for International Development and are based upon agreed rates. Costs associated with capacity building, certification and training are reimbursed to HFRS from central funding.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

29. No environmental implications have been identified from this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

30. HFRS has no statutory duty to respond in emergencies highlighted in this paper, outside of Hampshire.
31. Under Section 11 of the Fire Rescue Services Act (FRSA) 2004, HFRS has legal powers associated with a response to emergencies highlighted in this paper outside of Hampshire.
32. United Nations General Assembly resolution 57/150 states:

“Noting with appreciation, in this respect, the important contribution made by international urban search and rescue teams in the aftermath of disasters, which has helped to reduce loss of life and human suffering”.

“Further urges all States that have the capacity to provide international urban search and rescue assistance to take the necessary measures to ensure that international urban search and rescue teams under their responsibility are deployed and operate in accordance with internationally developed standards...”.

33. HFRS has some indemnity insurance cover from Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company (FRIC). It is stated:

“For declared ISAR teams. Activates 2 optional areas of Public Liability Protection:

i) “United Kingdom International Search and Rescue activities”, £50m per event. Worldwide geographical limits apply.

ii) “Your employees being passengers or involved in winching operations in a rescue helicopter or rescue aircraft”, £5m per event.

Where activated on Public Liability, the risks associated with these activities are also accepted on the Employers Liability section”

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

34. HFRS currently has 18 UKISAR staff members who are trained, inoculated and equipped to mobilise as part of the earthquake response. This number provides HFRS with resilience. Prior to deployment, authority must be given at Brigade Manager level and due consideration is given, at that point, to any adverse impacts on domestic provision for technical rescue and USAR capability for incidents within the county or for national deployments.

OPTIONS

35. There are two clear options that have been identified within this paper:
 - (a) HFRA continues to provide capability for UKISAR operations when requested to do so by Her Majesty's Government;
 - (b) HFRA withdraws the capability of International Search and Rescue and no longer deploys to UKISAR operations.
36. Option (a) is subject to further controls as set out within the Recommendations below.

RISK ANALYSIS

37. **Insecure Environments.** This risk is controlled by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office conducting a full security, political and humanitarian impact assessment prior to decision to deploy. Additionally, a UK national operations room will monitor a deployment of UKISAR 24 hours per day.
38. **Exposure to extreme levels of human trauma and suffering.** Emotional and mental health and wellbeing support is offered to all HFRS personnel through existing schemes such as Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) and Employee Assistance Programme (Health Assured) and professional help through Occupational Health is also offered.
39. **Media exposure regarding the operational decision to deploy.** This exposure can be positive with regards to HFRS' reputation, but can also present a risk if there is national criticism of a deployment. This will be managed by HFRS' Communications team
40. **Environmental Challenges.** These relate to climatic risks, exposure to health risks and cultural risks. All personnel are trained for UKISAR operations by identifying and simulating conditions they are likely to work in. All HFRS staff that are part of UKISAR teams are appropriately inoculated. Her Majesty's Government will chaperone and prepare UKISAR teams on deployment to overcome language and cultural differences.

CONCLUSION

41. Experience indicates that there is a need for a UK International Search and Rescue team. This is endorsed by Her Majesty's Government.
42. HFRS personnel are a key component of UKISAR which is coordinated by the National Fire Chiefs Council and deployed by the Department for International Development.
43. There are risks associated with the continuation of this deployment and support as detailed above. These risks have shown to be manageable.
44. There are significant benefits to be gained from this support as detailed above which is encouraged by UN resolution 57/150. With control measures it is recommended that HFRS continue to support UKISAR.

RECOMMENDATION

45. That Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority approve option (a) that it continues to provide a capability for UK International Search and Rescue from HFRS when requested to do so by Her Majesty's Government.
46. That Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority approve maintenance of the appropriate resources to facilitate the required capability to UKISAR.
47. That Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority approve procedures formed to deploy; which are outside of HFRA's statutory duty, being delegated to the Chief Fire Officer.

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