

Risk Management

Cutting edge technology in Berkshire

VectorCommand's **Stephen Prendergast** reports on Royal Berkshire – the first fire and rescue service to launch advanced new mobile command units with the company's Command Support System



Royal Berkshire FRS Chief Fire Officer Iain Cox (left) and Deputy Chief Fire Officer Olaf Baars launch the Incident Command Unit at Windsor Castle



Alan Newcombe (left), project manager for the command support vehicles project, and DCFO Baars, in front of screens showing Command Support System

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE has launched two new additions to its fleet – the Incident Command Unit (ICU) together with its sister appliance, the Multi-Role Vehicle (MRV). In doing so, Royal Berkshire has also become the UK's first county fire and rescue service to start using VectorCommand's Command Support System to manage major live incidents.

Speaking at the vehicle launch, staged at Windsor Castle's Long Walk, Olaf Baars, Deputy Chief Fire Officer for Royal Berkshire FRS said: "It was during the tragic fire at Windsor Castle in 1992 that the need for a specialist Incident Command Unit to enhance the authority's Command Support Capabilities, was first identified.

"The lessons learned from the considerable challenges faced in commanding the fire at the castle directly informed the design of the Incident Command Unit that these vehicles are replacing.

"These new vehicles represent a very significant step change in the Command Support capability available to our officers. We wanted to equip this environment with the very best information systems and communications technology available. This enables us to support operational commanders in making what are sometimes very difficult decisions in challenging and dynamic circumstances. The vehicles themselves were built by WH Bence. Excelerate Technology acted as technology partner, integrating a large inventory of communications, computing and audio visual technology within each of the vehicles.

"These state-of-the-art units will attend incidents across the county. They are packed full of the latest satellite and communications technology and are designed to function as a

standalone command and control facility – in fact, senior officers can run Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service operations from the ICU if necessary.

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application is the Command Support System supplied by VectorCommand. The Command Support System uses advanced, integrated command, control and communications technology to provide major improvements in command information sharing and decision-making for officers managing major incidents.

"VectorCommand has been supplying command training simulation applications to this authority and many other fire and rescue services around the world, for many years. They have a

unique understanding of the Fire and Rescue Service; they understand incident command and have produced a command support application that is unrivalled. Together with the London Fire Brigade we are proud to be the first fire and rescue service to deploy this powerful application.

"Each vehicle is capable of operating on a standalone basis or together with the other. We can create a wireless IP network between these vehicles and, most importantly, with the command vehicles deployed by our partners in the South Central Ambulance Trust and Thames Valley Police.

"People have been talking about interoperability for many years but I believe that we are the first to be able to demonstrate true multi-agency interoperability at this level. The ICU provides a 21st-century platform for incident command, not only in terms of its technological capabilities for supporting operations but because of its capacity to act as a multi-agency command centre, linking directly to police and other emergency response organisations. To promote improved interoperability between different emergency services within Royal Berkshire, and across borders into other counties, Royal Berkshire will be running an interoperability day to test systems and procedures and to promote knowledge of the Command Support System and its powerful functionality.

"These vehicles provide the most advanced Command Support Capability deployed anywhere in the Fire Service. They will play a key part in ensuring that we are able to meet our statutory duty under the Civil Contingencies Act to maintain operational functionality regardless of circumstances."