

The killer application

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (based near London, UK) has launched two new additions to its fleet – the Incident Command Unit (ICU) and sister appliance, the Multi-Role Vehicle (MRV). In doing so the brigade has also become the UK’s first FRS to start using VectorCommand’s Command Support System for managing major live incidents.

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.

“The vehicles and the technology combined cannot deliver without the killer application that brings to life their potential and capability. That application is the Command Support System supplied by Vector Command.

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 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.”



Alan Newcombe (top), project manager for the command support vehicles, and Olaf Baars, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Berkshire FRS.

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.

“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 W H 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



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