



South Yorkshire FRS enhances single and multi-agency command

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is the latest UK fire service to choose the Command Support System. The system will be used to run its newly upgraded Command Operations Room and to equip its forthcoming mobile Command Support Unit (CSU). However, the service also has ambitious plans to make the system the centrepiece of technological support for improving and integrating the major incident activities of all of the county's Local Resilience Forum member agencies (i.e. creating a real-time Common Operational Picture), through the multi-agency emergency command centre known as South Yorkshire Multi-Agency Gold (SYMAG).

Like many other fire and rescue services in the UK, (and in addition to standard fire-driven objectives), the large scale flooding in summer 2007, and the requirement to ensure incident management systems are ready to deal with terrorist attacks, are driving South Yorkshire FRS's current modernisation programme - upgrading of incident management systems, acquisition of new mobile command vehicles, and enhancement of interoperable multi-agency incident command, management and communications facilities.

After careful analysis, the Command Support System was selected as the core technology for the service's incident management system role, with multi-agency integration as a key requirement.

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service's Chief Fire Officer Mark Smitherman is clear about the benefits he expects to flow from his service's adoption of the system: 'Adopting the Command Support System will substantially enhance the incident management system arrangements that support our crews at operational incidents. It also supports our ongoing plans to continually develop our working arrangements with partner agencies, including the police and ambulance services and local authorities, when responding to emergencies.'

The acquisition forms part of a broader programme of work designed to substantially

enhance the service's command support capability. The programme centres around projects to upgrade the technology enabling command support and incident management, set in the context of a new headquarters building providing improved command operations facilities (the Command Operations Room). For support of the multi-agency Local Resilience Forum the Service is upgrading the Training and Development Centre as the South Yorkshire Strategic Coordination Centre (South Yorkshire Multi-Agency Gold - SYMAG).

Multi-Agency Integration

According to Area Manager Neil Hessel, Head of Technical Services and Special Projects for the service, the South Yorkshire Multi-Agency Gold facility will be progressively developed to provide very closely integrated links with the command and control rooms of all emergency responder members of the Local Resilience Forum (police, ambulance etc), including the four local authorities in the county (Rotherham, Doncaster, Sheffield and Barnsley).

'The Command Support Unit will have a satellite link that will significantly improve communications from the incident ground to the Command Operations Room at FRS Headquarters and to the SYMAG facility at the Training and Development Centre. The introduction of the Command Support

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Mark Smitherman, Chief Fire Officer, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service

System will provide the Service with enhanced incident management functionality for use at Silver and Gold level incidents, whilst also enhancing our arrangements for working with our partner agencies, with which we will be able to share a Common Operational Picture.'

Comprehensive Training

Neil Hessel says the introduction of the new system and command centres will involve both a specialist training programme, for staff dedicated to the Command Support Unit, as well as more general training for South Yorkshire FRS operational personnel. 'We also have a wide remit to train key individuals from partner agencies, so that they can use the system whilst also understanding what it can provide. The training will be delivered by specific training programmes and also by exercises - both multi-agency and FRS only.'

'The new Command Support Unit, which incorporates the CSS, is at the heart of the early stages of the project and will be operationally available during June 2009. The Command Operations Room and the SYMAG facility have been in place for some time, although further improvements to the facilities are planned over the next two years. Total budget for the programme is around £950,000, with some of the funding spread over a period of 5 years.'



Top: Flooding, Ulley Reservoir, South Yorkshire, 2007

Right: South Yorkshire FRS's new Command Support Unit.

