

Case Study

North West Fire Control



North West Fire Control,
Warrington, Cheshire, UK

After the conclusion of the FiReControl project, the Department of Communities and Local Government allocated grant funding of some £82m to fire authorities to enable them to bring greater efficiency and resilience to their control rooms by utilising shared mobilising and dispatch systems.

Mobilising will ensure that the appropriate resources from collaborating brigades are dispatched to an incident – this will normally mean the resources that are nearest to an incident, even if they have to cross the county boundary. As an incident escalates and more appliances and other specialist resources including Incident Command Units are dispatched, of course command support becomes absolutely central to successful decision-making.

"It feels as if a phoenix has risen from the ashes of the FiReControl project."

CFO Chris Kenny,
Lancashire Fire & Rescue Service

"The key drivers needed to make it happen are desire, energy and passion. But you also have to have the capacity and the resource, as this is a major undertaking."

CFO Paul Hancock,
Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service



Command support central to interoperability

One of the largest joint mobilising collaborations between Cheshire, Cumbria, Lancashire and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Services is not only establishing a joint mobilising capability (with a joint control centre at North West Fire Control) but is also adopting integrated command support. Although the four services are very different, with different risk profiles and therefore different command support vehicles and equipment to address those risk profiles, all four services will run the same command support software using shared incident data. So regardless of which service's command support vehicle is dispatched, and regardless of the number and variety of command support devices deployed at the scene, all will have access to the same dynamic incident data.

Command Support System software from VectorCommand provides a wealth of information to the incident commander, including GIS map data, type and location of assets, an organisational chart, digital whiteboard, conferencing, web browser, incident log and a minute by minute timeline, which can be used for subsequent review and training purposes.

Because **Command Support System** automatically updates all devices on the network, the incident commander has all the information he needs at his fingertips. Even if communications are lost during the incident, the main computer - normally on the ICU - can still be used to manage the incident. As soon as communications have been restored, the most up to date incident data is automatically shared across all other devices logged into the incident.

What is more, **CSS** shares the same information to multiple users, but with the added benefit that each user is able to look at a different part of the Common Operational Picture at the same time. So, whilst the gold commander may wish to view all the active incidents in a specific area, the incident commander will view the incident from a strategic perspective and the sector commander will look at only those details pertinent to his sector. No other command support software can support this essential functionality.



As an increasing number of fire and rescue services merge their control room functionality, the future of interoperability lies firmly in the successful integration of mobilising and dispatch with **CSS**. The next step towards full interoperability at an incident is for Police, Ambulance and other agencies to have access to the Command Support System either on the brigade ICU or on their own command units. That is not far away.