

Why the Fire Brigades' Union [Surrey] opposes the savage cuts proposed in the Surrey County Council Public Safety Plan

- Lowering the emergency response target for the second time in 5 years.

The current target is not being met due to cuts that have already been imposed. This has resulted in under staffing of the fire engines leading to some being unavailable to respond to emergency calls.

Instead of funding the fire service adequately to meet the current standard, the target is being lowered to one of the slowest in the UK.

If this downgraded emergency response target is allowed to be introduced, it will allow the council to make their proposed cuts below.

- 12 fire engines being removed from night cover which equates to 36% of the current total night emergency response.

The fire engines that are left will have much greater travel distances which will lead to greater losses in both human and financial terms.

More life threatening fires occur at night. In 2008, 23% more Dwelling Fires with Persons Reported Trapped occurred between the hours of 7pm and 7am than during the day.

More deaths in road traffic collisions also occur at night.

- Up to 8 fire engines being removed from emergency response on days, this equates to 23% of the total existing day cover. Days are when the fire service says it is at its busiest.

Does any of this make sense to you?

- Large towns where the highest numbers of emergency calls occur are losing fire engines.

The few fire engines that are left will be constantly travelling to and from these towns to answer the calls but they will take longer to arrive, consequently leaving more stations empty.

Many calls require more than 1 fire engine (on average across Surrey, 42% of calls) to effectively and safely tackle the incident but with all of the 2 pump stations being cut, many rescues will be delayed until the backup pumps arrive from elsewhere in the county.

- This is your fire service, your life, your business, home, livelihood and it's your council. Are they representing you?

The current emergency response standard is not being complied with. Surrey's average first response to emergency incidents is the 17th slowest out of a total of 43 fire authorities in England. The proposed slower response standard will ensure that Surrey's average time worsens even further.

Of the 14 people who died in dwelling fires in Surrey between the years 2006 and 2009, 10 died in fires which occurred between 7pm and 7am.

To cut emergency cover at night is inviting the grim reaper into Surrey.

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Fact:

84% of Surrey's population resides in the urban areas which account for 34% of the geographical area of Surrey. The vast majority of emergency calls occur in the urban areas where the majority of the population live and work.

To cut fire engines in urban areas is illogical and putting lives at risk.

Fact:

The majority of victims of dwelling fires are elderly or infirm. The number of over 85's is expected to rise by 120%, and the 80 to 84's age group to rise by 68% by the year 2031. Surrey's population in general is expected to rise at a rate of 0.75% year on year.

Cuts will cost lives.

Fact:

Surrey fire fighters rescued 28 people from dwelling fires in the year 2009/10.

With far less fire engines being available how many of these people would have died?

Fact;

The biggest threat to life comes from road traffic collisions which occur most on "A" roads. Fire engines need to remain in large towns which are linked by "A" roads and have good access to motorways to enable the emergency crews to get to the incidents as quickly as possible.

The longer and injured person stays trapped in a vehicle wreckage the greater the chances are that they will be suffer more serious permanent injuries or death. The longer we take to get to road traffic collisions the longer the tailbacks become leading to massive economic losses. The cost of cutting the fire service will cost Surrey's residents, businesses and motorists more in insurance premiums and they will see no rebate on their council tax.

Fact:

Every death on our roads costs over a £1m – Police services, Ambulances Services, Accident Investigation team, Highway agencies, Coroners Court etc, etc, etc.

Most of these costs are funded by SCC Services – it makes sense to save lives but just as importantly to reduce costs!

Statistic

A train leaving Woking Railway Station can be at Clapham Junction in less time than a Surrey Fire Appliance will respond to a Road Traffic Collision with persons trapped [16 minutes].