

Establishment and Crewing Levels

Since the year 2000, SCC has cut the number of frontline operational post massively. The worst of these cuts have been imposed since 2004 since the introduction of Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP's).

SF&RS is inadequately staffed on the frontline to deliver an adequate service to the public

Between 2000 and 2008, SF&RS has suffered massive reductions on frontline crewing, far in excess of national reductions. Below are these reductions;

Surrey Whole-time Fire-fighter posts	16.35%	National average	7.76%
Surrey Retained Duty System crewing posts	19.25%	National average	9.26%

Since the figures published for 2008 a further reduction in Surrey's crewing gives an up to date total shown below. National figures since 2008 are not yet available but it's extremely doubtful that Surrey will compare any more favourably when they are.

Surrey Whole-time Fire-fighter posts	20.34%	(97 post reduction)
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Surrey Retained Duty System crewing posts	22.31%
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Source: CIPFA

The number of personnel forming the crews on these pumps is vital to carry out effective, safe and efficient work and rescues at emergency incidents.

The introduction of the IRMP's has brought cuts the frontline establishment; minimum crewing level targets are not being met at many stations.

Public and fire fighters lives at risk

Many of the pumps are not available to respond to emergency calls every week

Frontline funding is insufficient to adequately crew the pumps that are available

The job we do is dangerous. But with well planned and risk assessed procedures to train to and work with at emergency incidents, these risks can be brought down to an acceptable level. Standard minimum crewing levels should be maintained for a minimum of 75% at the majority of stations and 90% for 3 others. This is SF&RS's standard, the FBU believe the minimum crewing levels should 5 on all pumps across the county, 100% all the time.

Why should the public and frontline crews be subject to differing levels of risk simply based on where in the county they are located?

In generic terms, a crews of 4 is insufficient to carry out our statutory core functions of saving life and mitigating loss to property as crews do not have enough FF's to comply with Health and Safety regulations at the same time. This forces crews to take a "defensive" approach to dealing with these emergencies. The defensive approach means that the crews cannot for example; enter a building fire to rescue a casualty as the use of Breathing Apparatus requires a minimum of 5 FF's being present. Similarly; for a crew of 4 to extricate a casualty from an RTC or extinguish a vehicle fire on a highway the road would have to be closed as the risks posed by the flow of traffic are too high. A crew of 5 could carry out this work as 1 FF can be detailed to traffic control which is sufficient to bring down the risk to an acceptable level.

In reality, crews of 4 find themselves regularly arriving at incidents which require a minimum of 5 and are faced with the moral dilemma. Do they put themselves in a situation which they know would be unsafe when the public's expectation is that they will actively engage in carry out their statutory core functions of saving life and mitigating loss to property? Put yourself in the same situation; could you realistically tell a mother standing outside her burning house that because you have only got a crew of 4 that you cannot rescue her child from the building until the backup fire engine, expected in another 10 minutes arrives?

The following page shows 2 illustrations to highlighting how under crewing affects a crew's ability to carry out its core functions safely. They also highlight the pressure on the crew to work outside of safe systems of work. In both illustrations; the necessary crewing for 10 emergency calls is shown. The background colour shows the range of safe working. The crews should not work in the Red area. Some of the calls can be effectively and safely dealt with by a crew of 4 (remaining in the Green) whilst others require 5. Crews shouldn't feel forced to work in the Red due to public expectation but they often do as a result of under crewing.

If the crews in always worked within safe systems of work;

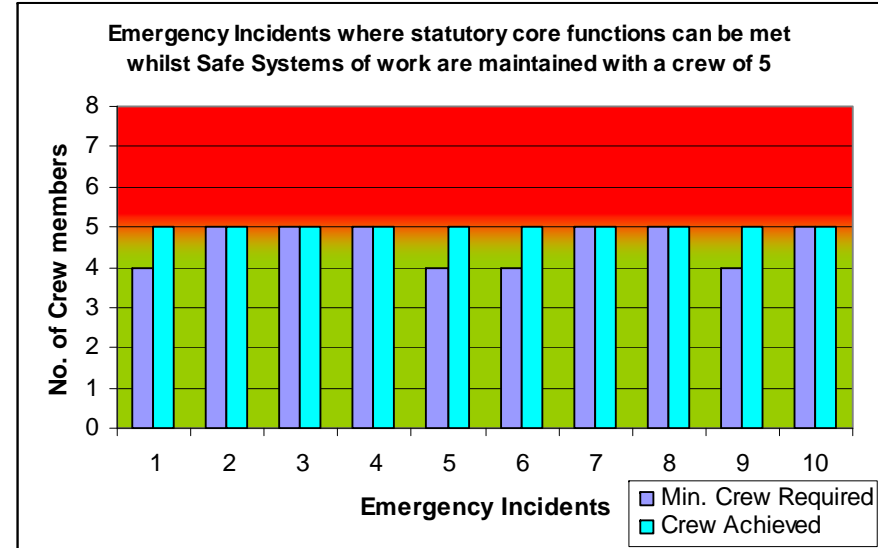
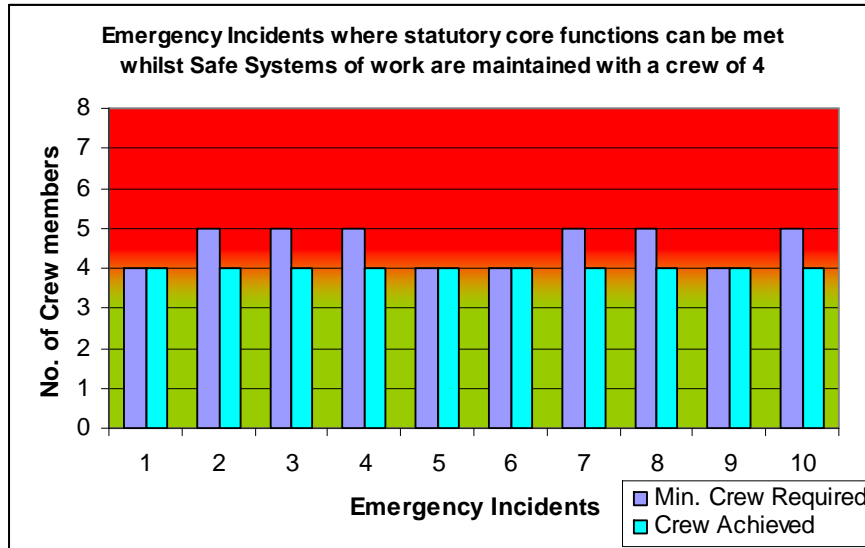
In the first illustration, statutory core functions could only be addressed on 40% of the emergency incidents shown.

In the second illustration, statutory core functions could be addressed on all the emergency incidents shown.

Conversely;

In the first illustration, if statutory core functions are addressed, the crew would be working outside of safe systems of work for 40% of the emergency incidents shown.

In the second illustration, if statutory core functions are addressed, the crew could be working within of safe systems of work for all of the emergency incidents shown.



This is totally unacceptable and carries real potential for catastrophic consequences for the public and fire fighters alike.

Under crewing is forcing an Attend to Defend policy which risks the lives of the public and emergency crews unnecessarily.

WT Crewing Levels

Surrey's minimum crewing levels have failed to be achieved for the last 3 years. Below is the number of stations which failed to achieve their crewing minimums. Remember these are minimum levels so no station should fail to achieve these levels.

2007	47% of Surrey's stations failed to achieve Surrey's minimum crewing levels
2008	33% of Surrey's stations failed to achieve Surrey's minimum crewing levels
2009	33% of Surrey's stations failed to achieve Surrey's minimum crewing levels

Source: SF&RS

But the figures listed above do not take account of crews moved to other locations to cover pumps off the run due to essential crew training, so the real failure rate is even higher still.

If we applied the FBU recommendation for crewing; every station over the past 3 years has failed to achieve minimum crewing.

Many incidents types require more than 1 crew to be dealt with effectively and safely, but if the first crew in attendance is a crew of 4, for the vast majority of these calls effective work can begin without waiting for backup. The initial minutes after the first crew arrive are crucial in terms of saving life and mitigating the loss to property. If crews defend during that time the overall losses at the incidents is likely to be far more severe.

But if it's possible to put the risk to lives to one side for a moment and look at the statutory core function of the fire service; crews of 4 are causing the "Attend to Defend" policy to be employed on daily basis. With an "Attend to Defend" policy is Surrey actually meeting its statutory obligations?

Is SCC is achieving its legal core functions as defined within the Fire and Rescue Service's Act 2004?

Section 7 Firefighting

(1) A fire and rescue authority must make provision for the purpose of –

- (a) *extinguishing fires in its area, and*
- (b) *protecting life and property in the event of fires in its area.*

(2) in making provision under subsection (1) a fire and rescue authority must in particular –

- (a) *secure the provision of the personnel, services and equipment necessary efficiently to meet all normal requirements;*
- (b) *secure the provision of training for personnel;*
- (c) *make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel;*
- (d) *make arrangements for obtaining information needed for the purpose mentioned in subsection (1);*

(e) make arrangements for ensuring that reasonable steps are taken to prevent or limit damage to property resulting from action taken for the purpose mentioned in subsection (1)

Ridership Factor

The ridership factor was used by every fire service in the UK to calculate how many operational FF's the service should employ at each fire station based on standard crewing levels needed to maintain 24/7 emergency cover. e.g. for a standard crew of 5 to be maintained 24 hours a day; the service would need to multiply 5 by the ridership factor which was accepted nationwide as 1.47 at 2 pump stations and 1.4 at 1 pump ones. This factor was calculated by taking into account the predictable unavailability of FF's over an average year. Losses from operational crewing incurred from sickness, attending training courses, holidays etc were all used in the equation to calculate the ridership factor.

Since the IRMP's were introduced in 2004, a few FA's like Surrey reduced their ridership factor.

Ironically, with the additional responsibilities, workload and training requirements put on the fire service nationally since 2004; the ridership factor should be higher than the original 1.47 to account for this additional loss to operational crewing.

In a recent FBU survey of ridership factors across all UK fire services', 38 returned a result. Of those 38 fire service's; Surrey was 1 of only 4 that had reduced its ridership factor below 1.4. Surrey's current ridership factor is only 1.4 at 2 stations; for all the others it's less and varies from station to station. This may not sound like a huge reduction but in reality this is why Surrey cannot maintain standard crewing levels. This reduction in ridership factor is the reason why 36 FF posts have been cut from Surrey since 2005, in addition to the another 61 FF posts cut through reducing fire and emergency cover over the last 10 years. Add the additional losses from crewing mentioned earlier and this is the main reason why crews of 5 cannot be maintained.

RDS Crewing Levels

The RDS crewing levels are very likely worse than the WT in Surrey but despite many requests, SF&RS have failed to provide the FBU with RDS crewing data.

However, we do have the RDS establishment data, which as shown at the start of this section has reduced by over 22% since the year 2000.

This loss in establishment is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the ability of the RDS crews to provide 24/7 emergency cover.

Prior to 2004, RDS establishment was based on the number of crew members needed to provide standard crewing of their appliances for 168 hours a week multiplied by the ridership factor to give the overall station total.

In 2004, Working Time Directive rules were applied to the RDS staff nationally. This rule change enforced a maximum of 120 hours cover for an the RDS personnel. This should have led to the establishment calculations being redone to take account of this loss of availability. The current establishment for the RDS in Surrey should be 40% higher than the figure set before 2004. This re-calculation did not happen. As a result the RDS establishment figure is nearly 30% short.

The single most damaging problem to RDS establishment is that it has been allowed to dwindle. Although an establishment figure is present on paper, in reality the actual number of RDS employed has steadily dropped over the past few years.

RDS staff are more difficult to recruit than WT ones but Surrey does not and has never tried very hard. Some neighbouring fire and rescue services use radio advertising and even pay incentives to employers to release their personnel to attend emergency incidents. Surrey doesn't use these initiatives and does not even set aside a budget to recruit RDS FF's.

The final contributing problem to the RDS establishment is that in the 2004 IRMP 2 existing WT fire engines at nights and weekends were replaced by RDS with RDS cover. This additional burden on the RDS establishment led to the establishment those 2 stations being increased. But it wasn't increased on the pre 2004 calculations which has led to further under establishment at these stations.

All 4 of these problems have culminated in the current RDS establishment problems. The number of RDS personnel employed in Surrey is less than half of that required to provide 24/7 emergency cover on the 13 RDS fire engines.

Don't assume because you have a Fire Station near your home that there will be anyone available to respond from it when you need them.

How does this affect the service we provide?

Availability of emergency appliances

Availability is expressed as a percentage of the day, week or year the appliance was available to respond to emergency calls.

Despite requesting on many, many occasions, we have been unable to obtain appliance availability from SF&RS. We have been constantly requesting this data for well over a year and also raised our requests with the SCC, but we have still not been provided this data. This is by no means the only performance data we have been denied over the last 14 months.

We do know from our own research that on any given weekday approximately 25% of all Surrey's fire engines will not be available to respond to emergency incidents due to lack of crew. We do not know how many are unavailable on nights and weekends but we do know that it's rare that they are all available.

Press release 16th November 2010 – supporting evidence for Surrey

Section 2: Establishment and Crewing Levels

We also know that there are often appliances unavailable during the day time due to essential training taking place without enough fire fighters to crew the pumps simultaneously. But we cannot obtain data to quantify this.

Frankly, we are not surprised this data is being kept secret.

We also know that since 2008 the Arial Ladder Platforms (ALP's) at Chertsey and Guildford are no longer available at the same time as the fire engines as the dedicated crewing for them was cut from Chertsey (Guildford didn't even have dedicated crewing before then). This has led to London having to supply Surrey with ALP's whilst the Surrey's ones sat idle at the station as the reduced crew were already crewing the fire engines at the same incident. It really defeats the object of having ALP's in the first place if no-one is available to crew them.

As you travel around Surrey you could be forgiven for assuming it has a good level of fire and rescue cover exists as you drive past the fire stations. But in reality, many of them have no-one available to crew the appliances.

The majority of emergency incidents we attend which could result in injury or death e.g. Dwelling fires and Road Traffic Collisions, require more than 1 pump to carry out an effective and safe rescue and to mitigate the damage to property and possessions. With so many pumps off the run, the vital backup for the initial crews is coming from further and further away resulting in delays in the crews effectively tackling the incident and rescuing casualties.

For much of the time, the only thing the Surrey fire stations can provide is a false sense of security

Establishment and Crewing levels Summary

An “attend to defend” policy does little more than tick a box to show that an emergency crew was in attendance by recording an emergency response time. It’s ineffective and dangerous.

**Surrey council tax payers should expect more for their money
Surrey Fire fighters don’t expect to die due to SCC’s under crewing forced upon them by under funding**

WT establishment has been cut through the IRMP process to dangerously inadequate levels over the past few years; far in excess of other fire and rescue services.

RDS establishment has been allowed to dwindle to the lowest level ever which is causing large areas of Surrey to have no local fire and emergency cover for a substantial part of every week.

The latest proposals from SF&RS is to cut the RDS cover at all stations during the day and **partially** replace it with WT crews removed from night cover at some stations, is merely moving the problem from area and time of day to another, rather than addressing the fundamental problem of the under establishment in the RDS.

e.g. Guildford loses fire cover at night (when 2/3 of all fire deaths occur) to provide day cover at Godalming.

This is a classic case of robbing Peter to pay Paul.

The problem of under crewing caused by underfunding will not be solved; it’s merely been moved.

With a small amount of additional funding and innovative recruitment initiatives the RDS stations could provide effective fire and rescue cover, preventing the need to cut WT cover at night at Guildford, Camberley, Woking, Epsom, Reigate and ?

Surely it would be better to have these RDS crewed stations crewed adequately during the day and leave other areas night cover in tact?

e.g. Maintain both WT crews at Guildford at night and crew Godalming adequately during the day.

Surely it would be better to staff all fire engines with a crew of 5 to allow both effective statutory core functions to be addresses whilst safe systems of work are maintained?

SF&RS should stop reconfiguring its fire and emergency service to fit a continuously shrinking budget as dictated by SCC, which is having detrimental affects on that service it provides. SF&RS should set the level of cover which is right for Surrey and SCC should ensure that they allocate a budget that maintains that level of service.