

Briefing Note from Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service Crews of Three

1. The crews of three mobilising procedures have been in place across our county since 1 January 2023. We are **not** making cuts and this is **not** about budget; by allowing crews of three at our On-Call fire stations, we are using the resources we have available to respond to emergency incidents in the quickest time possible. Crews of three can take positive action to minimise the escalation of an incident and in many cases, they can deal with an incident in its entirety before supporting appliances arrive; this significantly benefits the public and is preferable to waiting for some time for the nearest fully crewed resource to attend. Aside from preparing the ground for further responding appliances, crews of three can also carry out the following important lifesaving actions;
 - improve survivability of the occupants of a property on fire by applying water to extinguish a fire,
 - perform rescues of occupants who are visible but unable to escape from a property that is on fire,
 - give first aid to casualties who have escaped a fire,
 - use rescue equipment to cut somebody from a car following a road traffic collision.
2. To date there have been 175 occasions when we have sent a crew of three. On half of those occasions, they were the first to arrive and at 50% of those incidents they were able to deal effectively with the incident and turn back oncoming supporting fire appliances and crews before they arrived, thus allowing the Service to maintain more effective fire cover for other serious incidents.
3. We will always strive for at least four (ideally five) firefighters on a fire appliance every time they are turned out to an incident. But at our On-Call fire stations, where we struggle to have enough firefighters available to respond to incidents, particularly in daytime hours and at weekends, we often have three trained firefighters available that previously would not have been sent to an incident in their own town or village. By sending them as a crew of three we can get help to a scene quicker, alongside sending additional back up fire appliances in case they are needed. But, most importantly, it means we can intervene in a potentially life-threatening situation more quickly by taking action to deal with an incident or, at the very least, setting up safe systems of work in readiness for the arrival of further attending crews. Crews of three are enabling us to provide an additional 5.5% of fire appliance availability, which equates to roughly an additional 250 hours of additional fire cover per week.
4. The practice of using crews of three has been risk assessed and firefighters are trained in risk assessing incidents and situations which means that they will be able to carry out the appropriate action at these incidents while minimising the risk to themselves. This is no different to any situation that we attend where there are insufficient resources to deal with an incident until further fire appliances and firefighters arrive. For example, it is not usual for

the first appliance at a large incident or an incident that requires specialist capability to be unable to resolve the incident on their own, even with a crew of five or six, therefore all firefighters are trained to be able to take appropriate action that ensures their safety while doing the best they can for the people affected by the incident. Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service is not the only fire service in the country, or even the region, taking this approach.