



# SOUTH WEST REGION

Avon - Cornwall - Devon & Somerset - Dorset & Wiltshire - Gloucestershire

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To:

All Control Members

South West Region

2nd Sept 2016

Dear Colleague,

## **SERIOUS ONGOING ISSUES WITH 'VISION 4 DS' MOBILISING SYSTEM**

I am writing to update you on the work being undertaken by the Fire Brigades Union in regard to a series of ongoing, serious failures of the 'Vision 4 DS mobilising system' and the considerable impact that these failures are having on the Control Staff operating it within the South West. This is an issue which was discussed at the recent 'all members' meeting of South West Control members, held in Bristol, and we undertook to keep members in all Brigades informed of any significant developments.

As you may know, for a considerable period of time the FBU has been raising very serious concerns regarding the unreliability and instability of the "Vision 4 DS mobilising system", supplied by Capita. This system is meant to underpin the "Networked Fire Control Services Partnership (NFCSP)" which is a single command and control system for the Fire and Rescue Services in Devon & Somerset, Dorset & Wiltshire and Hampshire.

Since its introduction we have experienced serious failures across many areas of this system and we are greatly concerned about the impact these failures are having on the operational effectiveness of the Fire & Rescue Services involved.

During a visit to the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Control in Potterne, I personally witnessed a live 999 call being taken and saw for myself the delays caused by a failing of the system, which I understand happens constantly and consisted of 'freezing' of computer screens during the processing of the call.

The event I witnessed was, however, on a relatively small scale when compared to the major system failures which have become a regular occurrence. These major system failures have included 'evacuations' of staff to the Devon & Somerset Control in Exeter when the Potterne control suffers a total failure, severe communication failures and major server failures. In addition, there has been a failure by Capita to rectify these failures in any proper manner. In fact, it seems that when one issue is resolved it simply triggers a further series of failures in other parts of the system.

The instability and unreliability of the system is such that there is an overwhelming reliance on our Emergency Fire Control members to use their own personal initiative in

order to attempt to mobilise the correct number of appliances, from the correct location, to an emergency incident when the system fails. This has created a severe level of stress amongst these staff that is both intolerable and unfair.

It would appear that the serious failures of this system are escalating and the ongoing problems and instability of this safety critical system have reached, in our view, crisis point.

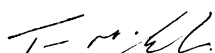
Based on this, in August I took the unusual step of formally writing directly to every individual member of Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority and also, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority. In these letters I stressed both the seriousness of the situation, the dangerous consequences of these failures and the urgency of putting in place an effective solution. I have spoken with my colleague Danni Armstrong, the FBU EC member who covers Hampshire, and the issue will also be brought directly to fire authority members in that county.

The responses I have received from the Fire Authority members involved, together with discussions I have had with some of the Principal Managers concerned, indicate an understanding of the scale of the failures and the requirement for an urgent solution - however the Union will continue to press very hard for this on behalf of our members. The FBU Head Office is also fully informed and is pressing at a strategic, national level using its resources to do so.

I know that some of you, in other Brigades, do not face these issues but I am sure that you will want to support your colleagues who do. Can I ask that you pass this update to any contacts that you have in other Control rooms and please make sure that you send support where and when needed.

If you have faced any problems please do contact me and let me know. Thanks for all your work and please be reassured that the FBU is deeply appreciative of all our Control members and is fighting hard on your behalf.

Yours sincerely,



Tam McFarlane  
Executive Council Member  
Fire Brigades Union - South West Region