



 **FiReControl** – An Overview





FiReControl

a national project delivered regionally

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The case for FiReControl

The kind of challenges we face, and the conditions in our communities, are changing.

The Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) have a central role to play in handling this change – as demonstrated at the Buncefield oil terminal fire in 2005, the terror attacks in London in 2005 and the flooding in summer 2007.

Public service modernisation is delivering improved and better targeted services, patterns of usage are changing and public expectations are rising.

The Fire and Rescue Services must respond to these challenges and FiReControl plays a key role in that response.



FiReControl is part of a £1 billion investment programme by Communities and Local Government (CLG) in the Fire and Rescue Services.

By greatly improving the infrastructure and capability of the FRSs, the programme will strengthen local, regional and national resilience.

The fire and resilience programme is made up of three integrated projects in England, which are funded through CLG. These projects are:

- :: New Dimension ::** **New Dimension** – Provision to FRSs of specialist equipment and training to deal with major incidents such as flooding, urban search and rescue, mass decontamination, high volume pumping, and enhanced command support capability.
-



Firelink – A resilient, digital, wide-area radio communications service for FRSs, on one network across England, Scotland and Wales.



FiReControl – A network of nine Regional Control Centres that will improve the capacity of the Fire and Rescue Services to mobilise and co-ordinate resources throughout England.

FiReControl will provide:

- **Improved systems and better technology** providing a more effective response to emergency calls. The project will deliver networked access to up-to-date information on the nearest and most appropriate fire appliances for any incident. This will improve local, regional and national mobilisation.
- **A more resilient system** that supports FRSs in responding to major emergencies. The RCC network will enable fallback and back-up arrangements.
- **Enhanced capability** for dealing with high volumes of emergency calls. There will be common systems, procedures and mobilising protocols. All FRSs will have the full range of capability that currently only some FRSs benefit from.



What is FiReControl?

The FiReControl project will develop a network of nine, purpose-built Regional Control Centres (RCCs) to handle all emergency calls made to FRSs, using a single national operating system.

The RCCs will mobilise the appropriate fire and rescue resources to local, regional and national incidents.

The RCCs will be fully interconnected. Control room operators will have world-class equipment and technology so, for example, when a call cannot be answered by one RCC it will be handed on, with the same information available at the next RCC.



“The review findings underpin the rationale for the FiReControl project and conclude that a number of the difficulties experienced in the existing disparate fire control arrangements will be overcome through the proposed regional control centre network”

Sir Ken Knight – Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser
(Facing the Challenge report – review of FRS response to 2007 floods)



How does this differ from the current control rooms?

Currently each FRS in England has its own local control room handling its emergency calls. The 46 control rooms are independent, each with differing levels of technology, network capacity and emergency back-up arrangements.

The local control rooms are operated by highly committed and professional staff and have served their communities well, but modern threats, risks and uncertainty mean that existing arrangements may not be enough in the future.

When there is a high number of calls and levels exceed the capacity of the local control room – for instance, in the event of a large-scale incident – calls are transferred to another FRS or police control room. That FRS or police control room will then pass information back to the local control room using telephone, radio or fax machine.

The differing technology and variable quality of the transfer process makes it difficult for FRSs to effectively back each other up.

In recent large-scale UK emergencies, such as severe flooding, the local standalone control rooms have found it hard to cope when having to rely on current technology. For example, systems become overloaded by the high volume of calls resulting in long queues and sometimes lost calls.

With FiReControl the nine fully networked RCCs will have access to the same modern technology and data, including local information. Calls will be automatically transferred to another RCC if one becomes overloaded.

Current set up

Forty-six stand-alone local control rooms that are not networked and use different technology.

Limited ability to back each other up in case of a large scale incident, high demand or failure.

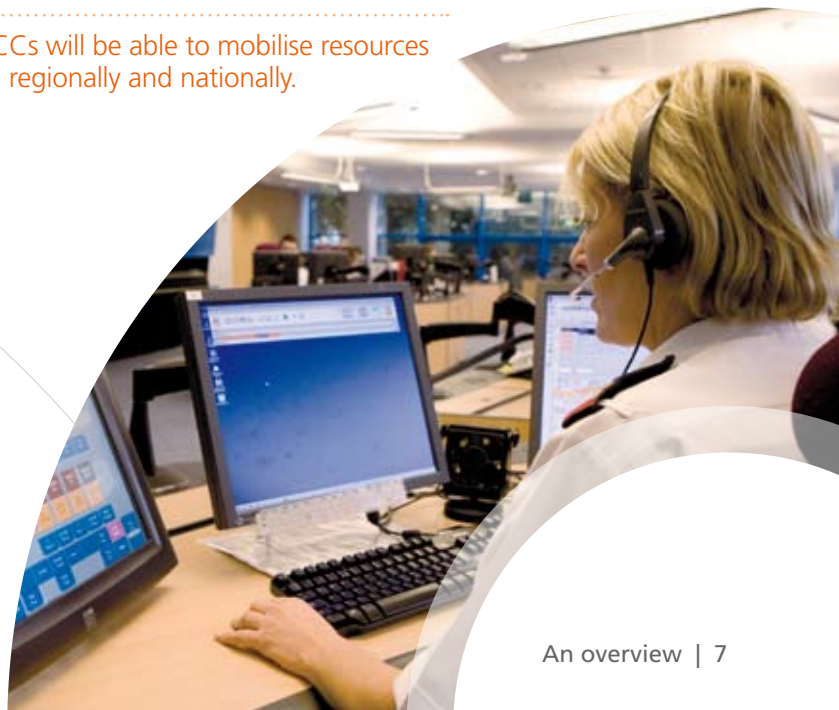
Limited ability to mobilise appliances outside their county.

Under FiReControl

Nine networked RCCs across England, that have access to the same, compatible, modern technology and data sources.

The networked RCCs will be able to back each other up effectively and consistently.

The RCCs will be able to mobilise resources locally, regionally and nationally.





The RCC network – mutual support

The RCC network will provide mutual support for control room staff across England.

When there is high demand, the network will allow calls to be automatically transferred from one RCC to another less busy RCC.

The technology will enable control room staff in all regions to see where local fire appliances are located and to access local information including on roads, hazards and buildings.

With access to the same information, any RCC will be able to handle the call and mobilise the closest and most appropriate units – even though the emergency is outside its region.

All RCCs will:

- Cooperate seamlessly using the same systems and technology.
- Provide support when there is high demand.
- Have access to the same data and information at each control workstation.
- Mobilise resources on a local, regional and national level as required.





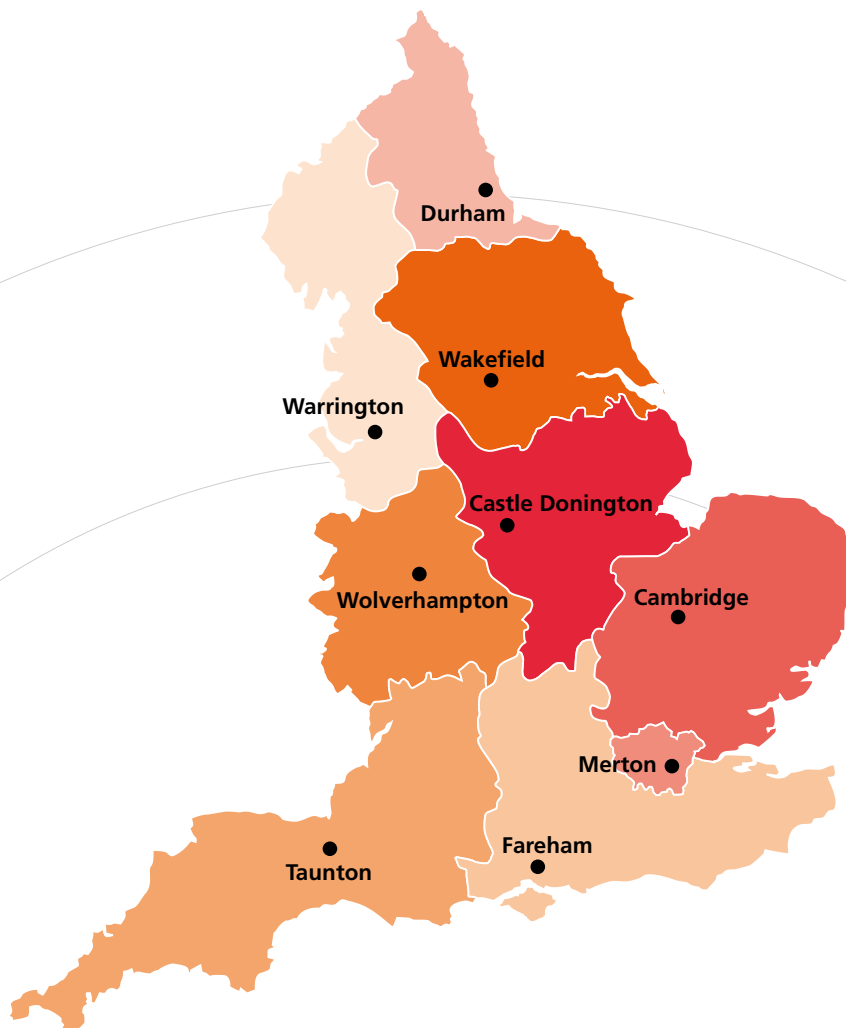
How will the RCCs be run?

The London RCC will be owned and run by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA).

The other eight RCCs will be owned and run by Local Authority Controlled Companies (LACCs). Each regional company is jointly controlled by all the Fire and Rescue Authorities in that region.

The RCCs will be run on a day-to-day basis by a Regional Control Centre Director (RCCD) – effectively the chief executive of the LACC. RCC staff, including control staff, will be employed by the LACCs.

FiReControl Regions



Yorkshire and Humberside



West Midlands



South West



South East



North West



North East



London



East of England



East Midlands



What will the FiReControl project deliver?

Every FRS will benefit from a number of features available through FiReControl and the networked RCCs. Currently, very few FRSs in England have all these. (See annex for a table of current control room features for all FRSs)

FiReControl key features

Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) software

Using MDTs, electronic safety information can be provided in the cab of a fire appliance to assist crews during operational incidents and enhance firefighter capability.

The data provides firefighters with information ranging from known risks and hazards in the buildings or locality, floor plans and access details to instructions on how to deal with different types of chemicals or other substances, as well as a map showing the quickest route to the incident.

The MDT hardware is being funded and installed in appliances by the Firelink part of the programme.

Status Messaging

This allows firefighters and officers to send updates to the RCCs regarding their availability – for example changing their status from ‘mobile to incident’ to ‘arrived at incident’.

Automatic Vehicle Location System (AVLS)

The MDT will contain a Global Positioning System (GPS) transmitter. This allows the exact location of all individual fire appliances to be identified, which enables the nearest available appropriate appliance to be sent to an incident.

Satellite Navigation (Satnav)

This provides firefighters, including New Dimension specialist teams, with route planning information and directions to incidents.

The Enhanced Information Service for Emergency Calls (EISEC) and Automatic Location Service for Emergency Calls (ALSEC)

Control room operators can confirm a caller's location swiftly using these technologies. EISEC displays the address being used to make an emergency call via a fixed line, while ALSEC shows the location of a mobile caller on a map using GPS. This helps to identify hoax calls.

Geographic Information System (GIS) – control room and integrated

This is an electronic map that helps a control room operator to determine visually the location of an incident when the caller cannot provide proper address details.

It also enables crews using MDTs to view information about the surrounding area, such as site-specific risks and hydrant data.

Full Premises Based Gazetteer / mobilising at premises level

This is a database that uses the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG) information. It is created and maintained by local authorities. The NLPG contains up-to-date details of the address, location and use of properties throughout their life cycle, from planning to demolition.

The Gazetteer will contain the latest information on all streets, motorways, towns, villages, hamlets and other features of interest to the FRSs.







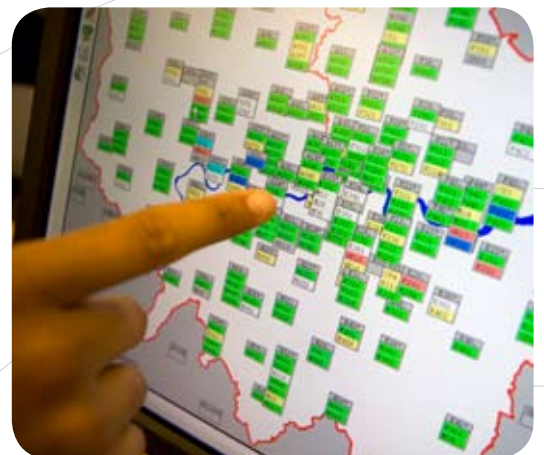
How FiReControl will benefit...

Control room operators

The integrated system will provide control room staff with reliable and up-to-date incident and resource information. This will enable them to deal with emergency calls from anywhere in the country in a consistent way.

Staff will have access to technology that will help them to pinpoint the location of a caller anywhere in the country. Any operator across England will be able to identify the nearest available suitable resource and mobilise it.

The modern buildings – designed with input from control room staff – will create an improved physical working environment. They will maximise natural light, provide controlled air temperatures, an optimised control room layout, car parking area, improved security, upgraded furniture and high-quality supporting technology.



Firefighters

Firefighters will access relevant, accurate and up-to-date information through on-board computers called Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) in their cabs.

The MDTs will enable firefighters to access vital information about the incident type, its location, floor plans to buildings and known risks and hazards. As a result, they will be better equipped to protect the public and improve their safety.

Messages (such as mobilisation, status and automatic vehicle location) can be sent between the RCCs and appliances, wherever the appliance is located.

The equipment in fire stations which receive mobilisation messages will also be replaced with modern equipment.

The public

There will be no changes to the way members of the public make emergency calls, but control room operators will be equipped with better technology and tools for handling the calls.

The RCC network will make sure that emergency calls are not held in queues at peak activity times. Local knowledge will form part of the data available to every control room operator in the RCC network.

The technology will automatically identify a caller's location, helping the control room operator ensure the fastest possible response to an incident. This will also improve the service for callers coping with language issues, incapacity or injury.

The public can be confident that control room staff have better technology to support them in doing their job; all RCCs will be fully networked across the country; and firefighters will have comprehensive information available to them. FiReControl will provide a coordinated, robust and resilient emergency response to the new threats we face.





Annex: FRSs' current access to FiReControl features

	Fire and Rescue Authority	MDTs	Status Messaging	AVLS	Satnav	EISEC or ALSEC	GIS Control Room	GIS integrated	FPBG / MPL
EM	Derbyshire	✓	✓	✗	✓ Officers only	✗	✓	—	✗
EM	Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland	✓ Command Vehicles only	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	—	✗
EM	Lincolnshire	✗	✓	✗	✓ Officers only	✗	✓	—	✗
EM	Nottinghamshire & City of Nottingham	✓	✓	✓	✓ Officers only	✗	✓	—	✓
EM	Northamptonshire	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	—	✗
E	Bedfordshire & Luton	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓ Partial
E	Cambridgeshire & Peterborough	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓ Partial
E	Essex	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓ Partial
E	Hertfordshire	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
E	Norfolk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
E	Suffolk	✓ Command Vehicles only	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
NE	Cleveland	✓	✓	✓	Limited	✓	✓	✓	✗
NE	Durham & Darlington	✓	✗	✗	Limited	Limited	Limited	✗	✗
NE	Northumberland	✗	✗	✗	Limited	✗	✗	✗	✗
NE	Tyne & Wear	Limited	✓	✗	Limited	✗	✓	✓	✗
NW	Cheshire	✓	✗	✗	—	✗	✓	✓	✗
NW	Cumbria	✓	✗	✗	—	✓	✓	✓	✗
NW	Grtr Manchester	✗	✓	✗	—	✗	✓	✗	✗
NW	Lancashire	✓	✓	✗	—	✗	✓	✗	✗
NW	Merseyside	✗	✗	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	✓
SE	Royal Berkshire	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
SE	Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes	✗	✗	✗	✓ Vehicles	✓	✗	✗	✓
SE	East Sussex	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓ Partial

Under FiReControl every FRS will have access to, and benefit from, a number of features not currently available to all. This table sets out FRSs' current access to these features.

	Fire and Rescue Authority	MDTs	Status Messaging	AVLS	Satnav	EISEC or ALSEC	GIS Control Room	GIS integrated	FPBG / MPL
SE	Hampshire	x	x	x	✓ Appliances GPS officers	✓	x	x	x
SE	Isle of Wight	✓ Partial	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
SE	Kent & Medway	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SE	Oxfordshire	x	x	x	Limited	x	x	✓ Partial	x
SE	Surrey	✓ Frontline appliances	✓	✓	✓ Frontline appliances	✓ Dec 09	✓	✓ Frontline appliances	✓
SE	West Sussex	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	x	x
SW	Avon	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	✓
SW	Cornwall	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	✓
SW	Devon	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓ Partial	x
SW	Dorset	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	✓
SW	Gloucestershire	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
SW	Somerset	x	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x
SW	Wiltshire & Swindon	x	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x
WM	Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire	x	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓	x
WM	West Midlands	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x
WM	Shropshire & Wrekin	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x
WM	Warwickshire	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	x
WM	Hereford & Worcester	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	x
Y&H	Humberside	✓ 9 in total	✓ Officers only	x	x	x	✓	x	✓
Y&H	North Yorkshire	✓ Wholetime appliances	x	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
Y&H	South Yorkshire	✓ Wholetime appliances	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓
Y&H	West Yorkshire	✓ Provided with Firelink	✓	x	✓ Officers only	✓	✓	x	✓
L	London	✓ March 10	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x	x

This table has been compiled from FiReControl Regional Benefits Business Case with information from the FRS.



Q and A

Q: How is FiReControl being funded?

A: FiReControl is a part of the £1 billion Fire and Resilience Programme – Communities and Local Government's major investment programme in the Fire and Rescue Services and delivered in partnership with them.

Q: Will the Regional Control Centres cost Fire and Rescue Authorities more to run than their existing control rooms?

A: No. Some regions are expected to make a saving which they can reinvest in frontline services. Communities and Local Government will make annual FiReControl payments to ensure that all FRAs break even at least.

Q: When will FiReControl be delivered?

A: On current planning assumptions we expect the first RCCs to begin taking calls during 2011.

Q: What will happen to existing control room staff?

A: Existing control room staff will transfer to the Local Authority Controlled Companies. TUPE legislation offers protection for the contractual terms and conditions of employment of transferring staff. Where it is not reasonable for staff to transfer, or if there is no suitable role for them, CLG is encouraging the current employers to look for ways of helping staff to find alternative opportunities.

Q: Will FiReControl result in a loss of control by the FRS during major incidents?

A: There is no intention to change the working relationship between the incident ground and the mobilising control. Operational commanders are the right people to take decisions about how – and where – fire service resources are used on the fireground during any incident. Operational commanders will have access to the same dynamic information and resources that are available to the RCC staff, and will work with their colleagues in the RCC to ensure that their operational needs are supported and met.

Q: Won't local knowledge be lost as a result of the move to the RCCs?

A: Local knowledge will not be lost. This information is being captured and will form part of the data that will be available to every control room operator in the RCC network. Also, local crews will still respond to incidents and will know their station areas.

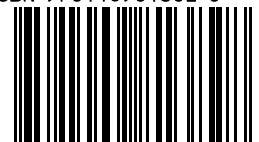
For further information please call the FiReControl Communications Team on **020 7944 3994** or visit **www.communities.gov.uk/firecontrol**

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