Incident Support Imaging System

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Traffic Incident Management Bulletin

In addition to disseminating good practice and lessons learnt in incident management, the role of the bulletin is to inform all readers of any additional resources that are assisting local responders. In this case, the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service have recently added a state-of-the-art unmanned flying craft to their equipment portfolio.

Currently, the West Midlands are the only Fire and Rescue Service in the country to adopt this new piece of technology. However, Merseyside Police have been using one within their operations for some time.

What is the ISIS?

Incident Support Imaging System (ISIS) as it is now commonly known within the West Midlands Fire Service (more widely known as a Microdrone) is used to provide live video footage and high definition stills pictures from above an incident scene, gathering vital information to aid the emergency response and tactical decision making.

The craft is a high endurance, four-rotor, remotely-operated machine that can take-off and land vertically. It can be fitted with a daylight or low-light digital video camera, as well as a high resolution stills camera. In addition, the camera has Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) capability, which means that once a suitable location for observation has been identified it will hover in that location automatically.

Where will it be used?

It is likely that this new piece of equipment will be used by the Fire and Rescue Service in the following situations:

- rescue
- flooding
- incidents involving hazardous materials
- assessing key sites for risks
- incidents involving gas cylinders
- training exercises

At incidents, the ISIS will be used to identify:

- casualties/people in need of rescue
- water supplies
- rendezvous points
- access and egress to incident
- ground evacuation zones
- cordons
- direction and speed of fire spread
- damage caused

Training has been supplied to nominated personnel within West Midlands Fire Service and associated procedures have been developed to ensure it complies with all stakeholders' working protocols.

How is it working?

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Vij Randeniya commented on the equipment:

"This is fantastic new technology that will provide real benefits when we are tackling a range of emergency situations.

Being able to look down on the scene will allow us to get a full picture of the incident and the surrounding environment, which will aid incident commanders to make vital, potentially life-saving decisions.

At West Midlands Fire Service we are constantly looking for ways to make our communities safer and are proud to be leading the way in the use of new technology to reach this goal."

The Future

The ISIS will be trialed over an initial 12 month period. This will allow time for the equipment and associated procedures to be assessed. The Highways Agency Traffic Incident Management Programme will be keeping a 'watchful eye' over its progress, carefully monitoring the benefits it provides to incident management.

If you are involved in an incident where this equipment or similar has been used, please e-mail us at the TIMbulletin@highways.gsi.gov.uk and let us know how you thought it worked.

Has this article been worthwhile reading? Why not take a moment to send us your comments, thoughts or questions. Please e-mail TIMbulletin@highways.gsi.gov.uk.