

CAPITAL ISSUES FOR DUBLIN FIRE BRIGADE

As this year marks the 120th anniversary of Dublin Fire Brigade's Emergency Medical Services (EMS), the unique dual role played by firefighters when responding to emergencies across the city was outlined at 'Respond 2018' by Martin O'Reilly, DFB's EMS Support Officer, who claims that harnessing technology to improve response rates will become a major issue in the future for the capital.



Trained to respond to both fire and rescue and EMS incidents, fire crews in Dublin are the only ones in the country who can utilise combined fire and ambulance skillsets and resources to attend to sudden cardiac arrests and other medical emergencies across the capital.

Dublin Fire Brigade's EMS Support Officer Martin O'Reilly said that the issue going forward is how to harness technology to improve the response rate levels. In a frank discussion with John Fitzgerald, co-chair of CFR Ireland (the national first responders' network), O'Reilly said that since all community first responders are there to respond to cardiac arrest call-outs in their communities, he added it would be great to harness that technology.

"So, for example, if a CFR is visiting Dublin and comes across someone suffering from a cardiac arrest, they can perform CPR on that person and then be in a position to notify DFB to respond. I think the development of technology to assist in such a scenario is not too far away, and it's something which could affect the survival rates."

DUAL TRAINING

With up to 700 paramedics (including 72 who are advanced paramedics) employed by Dublin Fire Brigade, O'Reilly said that all firefighters are dual trained to respond to both fire and rescue and EMS incidents across the city, and they can utilise the combined fire and ambulance resources to attend to medical emergencies.

Most are full-time firefighters while in the north of the county (such as in Balbriggan and Skerries) there are a number of retained fire services with retained firefighters trained to first responder level.

"We have 12 emergency ambulances and 23 frontline fire and ambulances in our fleet to cover a population 1.25 million people. In 2004 we did some data crunching and found that in all of the cardiac arrest cases responded to by DFB, our fire appliances were first on the scene ahead of the ambulances.

"Since we introduced dispatch CPR and equipped all

fire appliances with defibs, we have noticed a significant improvement in the survival rate from cardiac arrest. Not all calls to the control centre in Townsend Street are cardiac arrest calls; for example we responded to 433 OHCAR-managed cardiac arrest cases during 2016 – with an 8.9% survival rate, which is a little bit higher than previous years. And within the last year alone DFB received about 120,000 calls to the control centre in Townsend Street for medical emergencies."



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