

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service

Efficient rostering ensures optimum deployment of skilled staff for fire station watches.



GREATER MANCHESTER
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service is the largest Fire and Rescue Service outside London with over 2,500 members of staff and 41 fire stations, covering an area of 500 square miles and a population of 2.5 million people.

Two thirds of its staff are operational, with the remaining number providing a range of support services including finance, corporate communications, property management, fleet management, human resources and information technology.

The Service uses SMART's eRostering solution to manage its 1700 strong firefighter workforce (including 200 specialist fire safety staff) across the different boroughs. Using SMART the Service's central crewing team ensures that the stations are crewed with the right number of skilled staff to meet the watch requirements. Since being introduced in 2006, the system has enabled the Service to maintain service levels through more efficient use of rosters, while making reductions in staffing levels.

Ensuring the right skills sets for duty

Station Manager Kevin Brogden, officer in charge of Central Crewing at Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service has led the successful implementation of SMART eRostering. With over 28 years' in the Service, he has experience of being a firefighter, driver and has held various management positions on watches. *"Prior to SMART we operated locally managed systems to ensure that every watch on each station had the required minimum of staff for operations and to cover for unplanned absence. However in a review we found we had some extra people to allow for absence of colleagues.*

"Using SMART we are able to produce rosters three to four weeks in advance that meet the requirements of the service and ensure we can also fill any future gaps that appear across the stations. The rosters account for travel time to locations, as well as the different skill sets required for duty watch."

Benefits

- **More efficient deployment of skilled operational staff ensures best use of contractual hours.**
- **Rosters are prepared 3-4 weeks in advance enabling gaps due to unplanned absences to be managed proactively.**
- **Web based self service gives staff flexibility to view rosters and request leave at work or at home.**
- **Time and attendance data ensures fair and consistent management of hours worked, improving staff work/balance and moral.**

"We could not manage without a system like SMART. Not only can we prepare rosters for staff, we can manage checks on a regular basis to highlight potential shortages and issues, seeing at a glance where there may be gaps and find replacements. It gives us an overall view and better management information."

Station Manager Kevin Brogden, Officer in Charge of Central Crewing,
Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service

For the Service the need to balance skill sets within rosters is vital. Fire stations require the right balance of skills – a manager is required for each pump (the term for the fire engine itself), one qualified driver and two breathing apparatus wearers are also mandatory. Where fire stations have more than one pump the roster must reflect this.

Operational savings

By creating rosters for the overall duty watch, rather than individual stations, the number of staff required for duty is now significantly less.

“SMART eRostering has assisted us in streamlining our service in 35 stations, we can now provide the same responsive service, but in a much more efficient way. In the first year of using SMART we reduced our staff requirements in the stations by 87 through more efficient rostering. In addition, by reorganising our operations, we have been able to reduce the number of pumps on night duty, again reducing the number of personnel required,” said Kevin Brogden.

Time and attendance data for all staff is collected by hand readers. Parameters have been built into the system to allow for clocking in and out times to ensure fair ruling. For example, a late clocking off time for a shift finishing at 6pm would cause a system reminder or ‘exception’ to their manager to allow overtime authorisation depending upon the circumstances. This allows for local management should the employee qualify for overtime.

“Punctuality is also vital to ensure that in the event of someone not arriving for duty, there is time to call up reserve staff. To allow for this, the rosters have been designed to minimise travel time for reserve staff to the stations,” said Kevin Brogden.

SMART time and attendance is also used to record working hours for the staff that work on a flexi-time basis, between the hours of 7am and 7pm, which includes Fire Safety staff and other uniformed staff working in specialist departments such as training.



Organisational benefits

Each operational member of staff is contracted to work 1800 hours during a year, of which on average, 1500 hours are fixed. Using SMART the crewing team allocates people to roster reserve shifts using their pot of ‘unfixed’ hours, to get best value. This means that at the end of the year there should be no one with large numbers of unrostered hours for which they have been contracted.

“We could not manage without a system like SMART,” said Kevin Brogden. *“Not only can we prepare rosters for staff, we can manage checks on a regular basis to highlight potential shortages and issues, seeing at a glance where there may be gaps and find replacements. Using SMART we can manage unused staff reserve hours across the service to control most efficient use. It gives us an overall view and better management information.”*

The web based system enables firefighters to check their rosters, hours worked and holiday availability when at work or home.

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