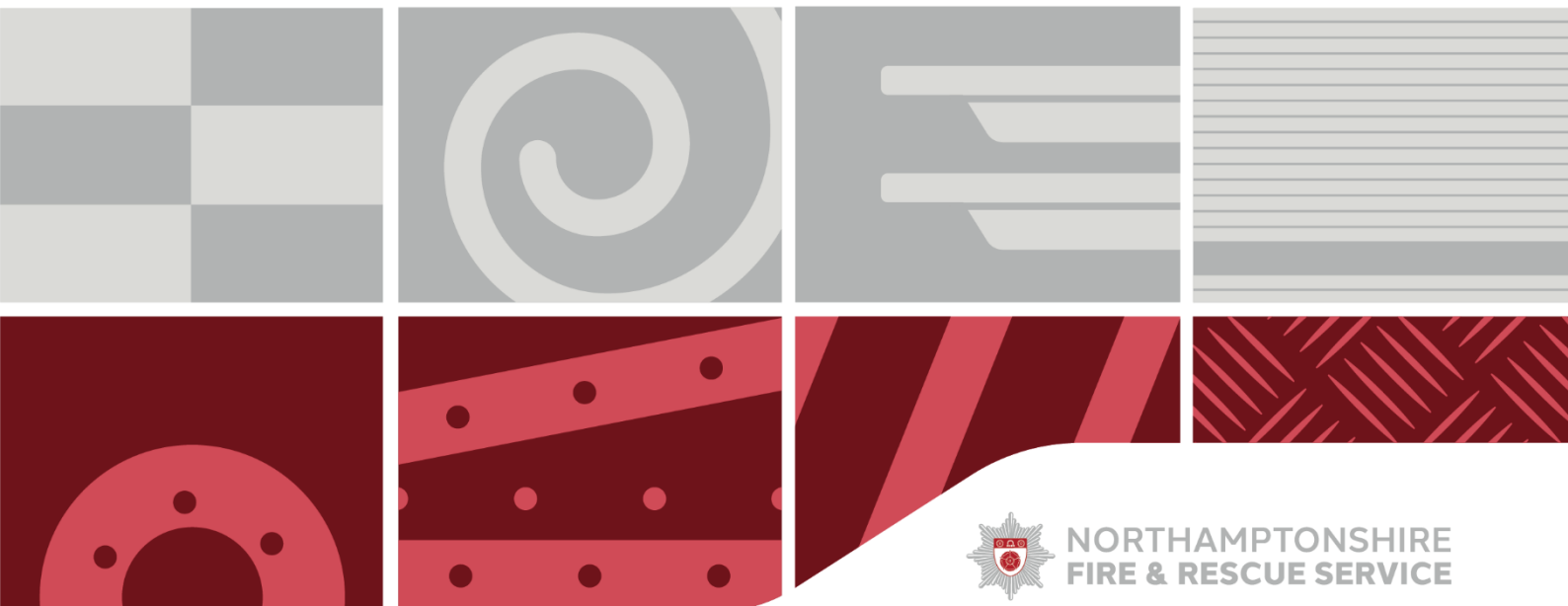


# Public Consultation – NFRS Standards of Response (SOR)



**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**

As part of our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2025-2030, we're looking at how we measure our response to incidents. Every Fire and Rescue Service must set and publish response standards so the public can see how they're doing against their own targets and compare this to national trends.

Whilst the Home Office publishes an annual report that benchmarks response times across fire and rescue services, there aren't any national response standards for the Sector. It's vital however that we set realistic targets, based on risk and the capacity of our resources, to hold ourselves accountable and do everything we can to keep our communities safe. Response times depend on several factors, such as where the incident happens, the location of the nearest fire engine, traffic, and weather conditions.

## Community Risk Management Plan 2025 – 2030

Our previous CRMP (2019-2022) set a single Standard of Response (SOR) – to attend all incidents within an average of 10 minutes. For our CRMP 2025–2030 we are proposing to update our SOR so that they are risk-based, transparent and more easily monitored. We believe they also clearly demonstrate our commitment to providing the fastest response to those emergencies that pose the greatest risk to life, property and the environment.

We are seeking your views on the following proposed changes:

Current method	Proposed change
Calculate and measure our performance using a 'mean average'	Calculate and measure our performance using the 'Median' number
An 'all incident' standard	Have four distinct standards, grouping incidents together based on risk
The clock stops when the first fire engine arrives	The clock stops when the first fire service asset arrives, whatever that is

Your views will help to inform our decision on whether to retain our current SOR or move to the proposed new SOR:

### Proposed response standards

We have used our data to determine the optimal time we should measure ourselves against:

- **We will attend all Primary Dwelling Fires (high risk) within an average of 9 minutes.**
- **We will attend all RTCs – Life Risk (high risk) within an average of 12 minutes.**
- **We will attend all Other Emergencies (high risk) within an average of 12 minutes.**
- **We will attend all Other Calls for Service (medium/low risk) within an average of 60 minutes.**

## 1. Averages

We are proposing to move from using the mean (average) to the median when calculating our response times. This change is in line with how our police and ambulance colleagues measure their responses and will provide a more accurate and reliable picture of our performance.

The mean can be heavily influenced by extreme values—such as incidents with unusual circumstances—which can distort the overall average. The median, on the other hand, represents the middle value in the dataset, offering a clearer reflection of how we typically respond. By reducing the influence of outliers, the median will help us give a more balanced view of response times, making our performance data more transparent and meaningful.

## 2. Risk Categories

All 999 calls are received and assessed by Fire Control Operators, based on the initial information provided by the caller. This informs the type of response provided which might include no action, advice only, or a mobilisation of appropriate resources. Upon attendance at the incident, emergency responders will reassess the incident and reclassify the incident type as required. This is then known as the Revised Incident Type.

To further improve how we measure and report our response standards, we have assessed risks for different revised incident types using four years of incident data. This analysis, based on the [NFCC risk methodology](#) which defines risk as “likelihood x consequence/impact, allows us to group revised incident types into categories which share a similar risk profile. The proposed categories are detailed below and a full list of the incident types within each category is contained within our Appendix.

- **Primary Dwelling Fires**
- **Road Traffic Collisions (RTC) – Life Risk**
- **Other Emergencies**
- **Other Calls for Service**

### Primary Dwelling Fires

Primary Fires pose significant risk of causing serious harm or damage to persons or property. The Fire Sector recognises, based on historic incident data, that Primary Fires occurring within a dwelling present the highest risk. Primary Dwelling Fires are fires that take place in properties that are a place of residence, ie places occupied by households such as houses and flats, as well as non-permanent structures used solely as a dwelling, such as houseboats and caravans.

Dwellings do not include hotels/hostels, hospitals, and residential institutions – Fires within these buildings are still considered Primary Fires, but do not fall under the heading of being a dwelling. These buildings are regulated by the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety Order 2005\)](#) and classed as “other buildings” by the Home Office. This means that a responsible person is

required to assess and manage fire risks to ensure compliance with these fire safety regulations and that we enforce these regulation as the local fire service. They are therefore captured within Other Emergencies. Chimney fires are also captured within Other Emergencies, as these are fires that have been contained to the flue and don't pose a risk to life (otherwise they would have been re-classified as a Primary Fire).

### **Road Traffic Collisions (RTC) – Life Risk**

These are non-fire incidents where the fire service is called to life risk collisions involving road vehicles, both large and small, including motorbikes. These incidents include extrications and/or releases of persons, and the provision of medical assistance. These often require specialist rescue skills to help those involved. This grouping does not include RTCs where there is no life risk, e.g. where there are no casualties, or where vehicle occupants have been rescued by the Ambulance Service or Police prior to arrival of the Fire Service.

### **Other Emergencies**

This covers a wide range of emergencies, including those where life is at risk, such as fires (other than primary dwelling fires), rescues from height or water, and incidents involving hazardous materials. This category also includes all false alarms – incidents where we have mobilised to an emergency and later learnt that our services were not required – this is a change to previous reporting, where false alarms were not reported on.

### **Other Calls for Service**

These are incidents that don't pose an immediate risk to life. Not all incidents in this grouping are met with a blue light response. Included are calls where only advise is given, effecting entry/exit (non-emergency) and assisting other agencies (non-emergency).

By breaking down our response standards into these categories, we can offer a clearer picture to the public on how we measure our performance and align with national standards. It also helps us target the areas of greatest risk to ensure we're delivering the right level of service.

We are proposing new response standards that better reflect the different levels of risk associated with each type of incident. These standards would help us measure performance more accurately and improve transparency around how we respond to emergencies.

### **The proposed response standards are:**

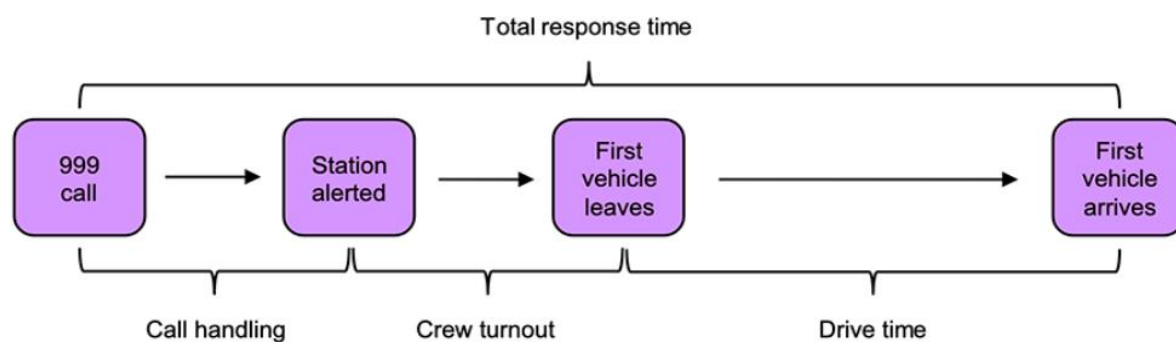
- **We will attend all Primary Dwelling Fires (high risk) within an average of 9 minutes.**
- **We will attend all RTCs – Life Risk (high risk) within an average of 12 minutes.**
- **We will attend all Other Emergencies (medium/high risk) within an average of 12 minutes.**
- **We will attend all Other Calls for Service (medium/low risk – non life risk) within an average of 60 minutes\*.**

\*The specific standards of response listed above have been set internally and informed by four years of response data. For further information on the decision-making process for each of the targets, please refer to the supporting information within the Appendix.

These proposed response standards aim to improve how we measure and report our performance. While breaking the standards down into these categories does not directly address risk, it does allow the Service to identify areas where meeting the standards may be challenging. This insight supports future planning to mitigate risk through a combination of Prevention, Protection, and Response activities.

### 3. Stopping The Clock

When you call 999, our Control Room sends the nearest appropriate resource as quickly as possible. Response times are currently measured from the moment we answer your call to when the first fire engine arrives at the scene.



Recognising the positive impact the arrival of a specialist resource can have on an incident, we propose “stopping the clock” at the point the first fire resource arrives. This includes traditional fire engines and specialist appliances (e.g. aerial appliance or water resources). It also includes officers in fast response cars who can take immediate action to control the scene. Over 95% of all incidents have a fire engine arriving on scene first.

#### Summary

By providing greater clarity and data-driven insights, these response standards will give us the tools to create a long-term roadmap for improvement. This will help us move towards a service that truly reflects our vision of “Providing exceptional fire and rescue services for all” and supports our mission of “Preventing, protecting, and responding to keep communities safe.”

This approach aligns with national recording and reporting standards set by the Home Office and His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), enabling better benchmarking against similar services. We remain committed to deploying sufficient resources to ensure a safe system of work for our crews and achieving the best possible outcomes for those affected.

The proposed response standards will be monitored through monthly governance boards and the OPFCC Accountability Board. Performance against response times for all incident types will be reviewed and reported by the Data and Insight Team as part of the monthly performance report.

We want your views on how we measure our response and on our draft Strategic Plan, 2025 – 2030, please take part in our survey [here](#)

## Appendix – Supporting information

### CATEGORIES

#### How did we determine the different categories?

We have retained a single standard of response measure since 2019 - to attend all incidents within an average of 10 minutes.

In reviewing our standard to become more risk based, we considered the broad range of incidents we attend. Using professional judgement we assessed whether a rapid response would likely mitigate the risk (e.g. by increasing the survivability of a property fire, or reducing the damage caused by a spill of hazardous material) for each of the incident types.

It was considered that for most of the incidents we attend (88.3% for 2024), an immediate response is essential in mitigating the risk. These included various types of rescues, fire or where a threat to life exists.

We determined that as a fire and rescue service, the greatest risk (to life) is in **Primary Dwelling Fires** and for this reason we wanted this to have its own standard of response – 9 minutes. This is one minute quicker than the SOR set in our last CRMP.

We have specifically drawn out **RTC - Life Risk** incidents within its own category. Having this as a distinct category provides transparency to the public and recognises that we are seeing an increase in the number of people Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) in RTCs in the county.

We do not attend all RTCs in the county as the ambulance service and/or police are often able to safely resolve incidents of this nature without assistance from the Fire Service.

However, RTCs remain a key focus for us and separating this into its own category will allow us to more closely monitor our performance against this SOR.

All other rescues and emergencies would be grouped into one category - **Other emergency**, with a standard of response of 12 minutes.

The remainder of our incidents are grouped together into **Other Calls for Service**. The standard of response of 60 minutes reflects the varied nature of these incidents and where an immediate response, often on blue lights may not be required.

A breakdown of the different incident types is detailed within each category overleaf.

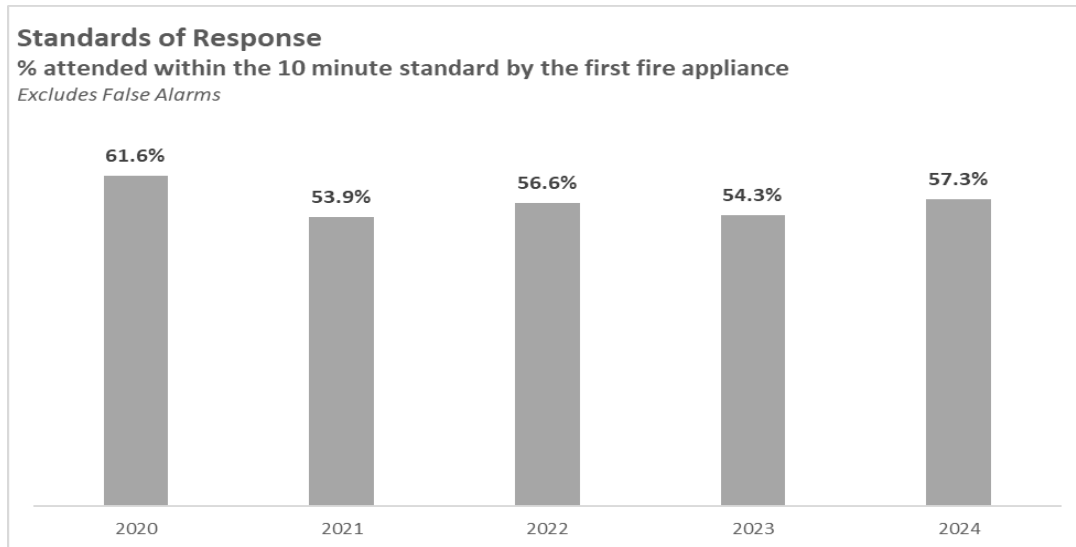
SOR Group	Incidents included (IRS Category)	% of demand (2024)
<b>Primary Dwelling Fires</b>	Fire    Primary    Building    Dwelling	<b>6.1%</b>
<b>RTC - Risk to life</b>	Special Service    RTC    Extrication of Person Special Service    RTC    Release of Person Special Service    RTC    Medical Assistance	<b>2.2%</b>
<b>Other Emergency</b>	Fire    Chimney - All Fire    Primary    All excluding dwellings Fire    Secondary - All Special Service    RTC    Make vehicle or scene safe Special Service    Other Transport    Make vehicle or scene safe Special Service    Other Transport    Extricate people/Release of person/Medical assistance Special Service    Assist Other Agencies - All Special Service    Effecting Entry/Exit    Vulnerable Persons (child/medical reason/person in distress) Special Service    Evacuation (no fire) - All Special Service    Flooding    Evacuation Special Service    Hazardous Materials - All Special Service    Lift Release    Vulnerable Persons (child/medical reason/person in distress) Special Service    Making Safe (Not RTC)    Cordon off hole/Stabilise unsafe structure Special Service    Medical Assistance    First Responder / Co-Responder Special Service    Other Rescue or Release of Persons - All Special Service    Removal of objects from people    When impaled/Involving injury/Not impaled Special Service    Removal of people from objects - All Special Service    Rescue or evacuation from water - All Special Service    Spills and Leaks    Vehicle leaking fuel Special Service    Suicides or attempted suicides Special Service    Standby    Aircraft False Alarm    Good Intent False Alarm - All False Alarm    Fire Alarm Due to Apparatus - All False Alarm    Malicious False Alarm - All	<b>80.0%</b>
<b>Other Call for Service</b>	Special Service    RTC    Advice/Stand by/Wash down road Special Service    Other Transport    Advice/Stand by/Other Special Service    Animal Assistance Special Service    Effecting Entry/Exit    Able persons/No person involved Special Service    Flooding    Advice/Make safe (electrics etc.)/Pumping out/Other Special Service    Lift Release    Able persons/No person involved Special Service    Making Safe (Not RTC)    Removal/retrieval of objects/Other action Special Service    Removal of objects from people    Ring removal/Handcuffs removal Special Service    Spills and Leaks    Swill away/Other Special Service    Water provision Special Service    Standby    Other stand by Special Service    No Action (not false alarm) Special Service    Advice only	<b>11.7%</b>



## PERFORMANCE CONTEXT

The current single Standard of Response (SOR) – to attend all incidents within an average of 10 minutes is calculated from the time Fire Control answer the call to when the first fire appliance arrives on scene.

In the last four calendar years, performance has been stable. 2020 saw the highest proportion of incidents attended within the 10 minutes (61.6%) with demand and travel impacted during COVID-19 restrictions.

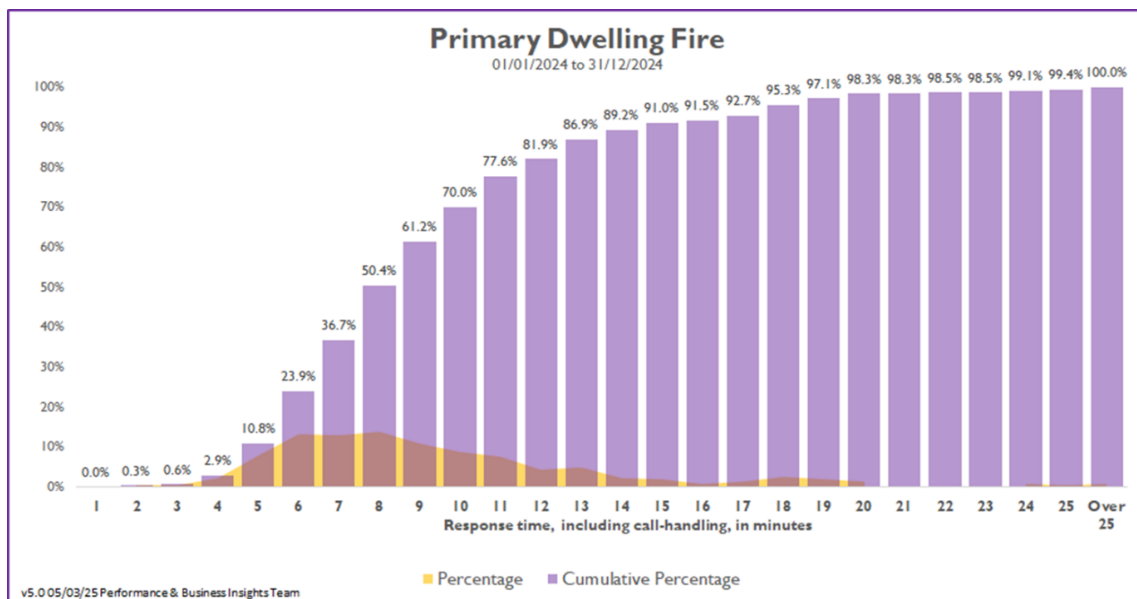


For each of the four proposed categories, we have considered the past performance of incidents within them, alongside known organisational and environmental factors, to inform their set SOR. In this way we can be assured that we have been evidence led, using our data to best effect.

## PRIMARY DWELLING FIRES

During 2024:

- 6.1% of all incidents attended were Primary Dwelling Fires
- Most incidents of this type had a median full response time between 05:01 and 7:59.
- Over 80% of all incidents of this type were arrived at within 12 minutes
- 70% of incidents are attended within the current 10-minute service level
- 61.2% of incidents achieved the proposed 9-minute service level

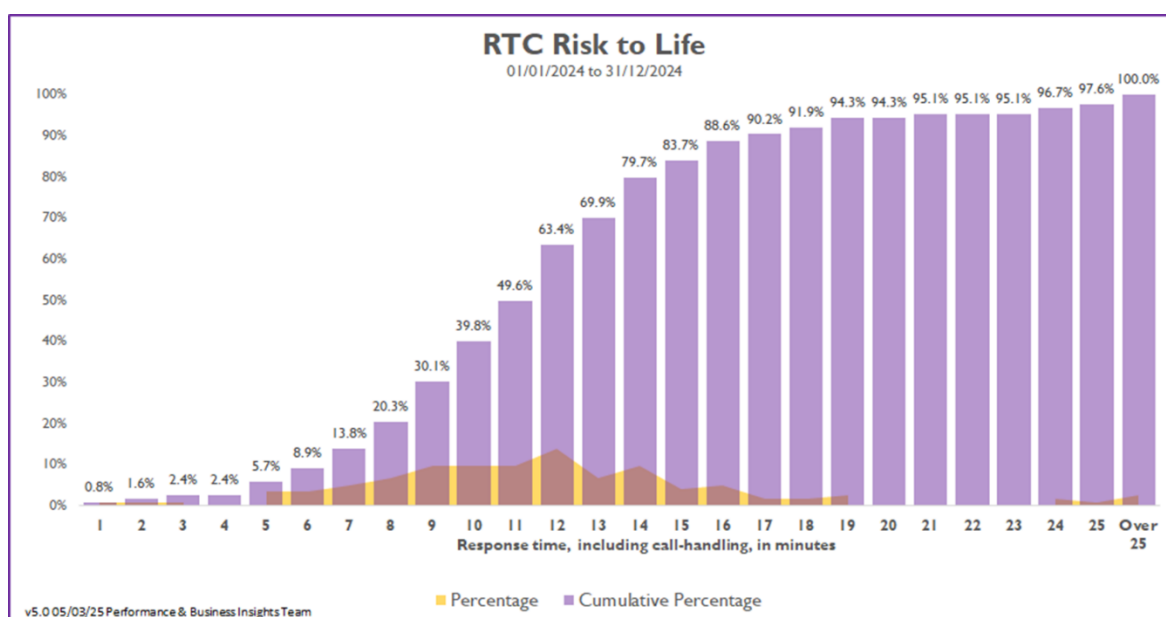


The 9 minutes median average time reflects the rapid growth of housing in the county, and increasingly in more rural areas, and improvements we are making within our mobilising processes.

## RTC's – RISK TO LIFE

During 2024:

- 2.2% of all incidents attended were RTC – Life Risk
- The typical full response time to these incidents was between 11:01 and 11:59
- Over 80% of these incidents were attended within 15 minutes
- Only 39.8% of incidents achieved the current 10-minute service level with location in more remote areas affecting the drive time.
- 63.4% of these incidents were attended within 12 minutes



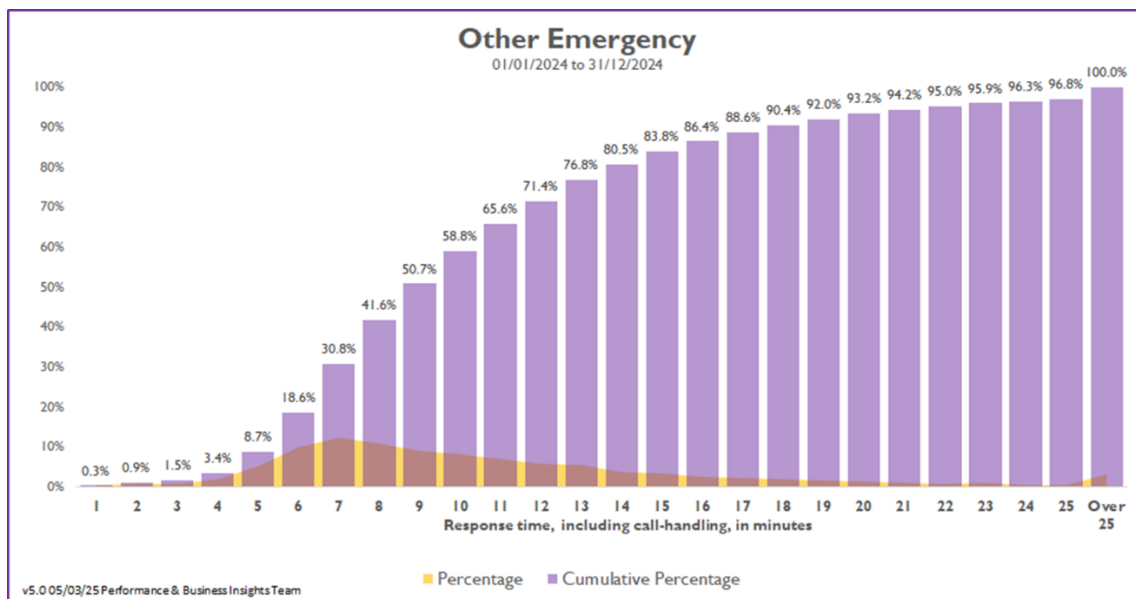
Meeting the previous 10-minute response target proved challenging due to a combination of factors that increase the time taken to arrive. We are committed to getting to these high-risk incidents as quickly as possible but must take a pragmatic view to get there safely and with the right resources to make the biggest impact.

We are already utilising technology to decrease the time it takes us to mobilise appropriate resources, as well as recognising the positive impact that road safety prevention activity will likely have on future road traffic collision numbers. These combined factors should ensure the 12-minute median average service level is achieved in more cases.

## Other Emergencies

During 2024:

- 80% of all incidents attended were Other Emergencies
- The typical full response time to these incidents was between 06:01 and 06:59
- Over 80% of these incidents were attended within 14 minutes
- 58.8% of these incidents achieved the current service level of 10 minutes
- 71.4% of these incidents met the proposed service level of 12 minutes

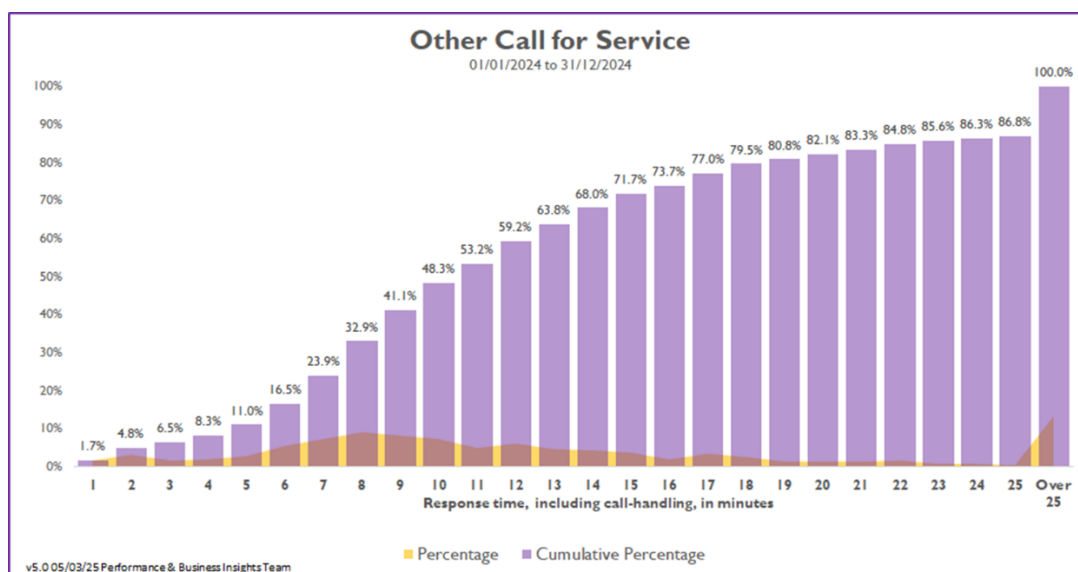


This category of incidents is large and varied and we are committed to attending these incidents as quickly as possible. The proposal of 12 minutes would ensure we can do so safely.

## Other Call for Service

During 2024:

- 11.7% of all incidents were Other Calls for Service
- The typical full response time to these incidents was between 07:01 and 07:59
- Over 80% of these incidents were attended within 19 minutes
- 48.3% of these incidents achieved the current service level of 10 minutes
- 99.9% of these incidents met the proposed service level of 60 minutes (some incidents are excluded because of missing data)



We recognise that most Other Calls for Service are responded to within 12 minutes. During periods of peak demand however, we must ensure that resources are directed first to incidents that pose the greatest potential risk to life, property, and the environment. During such times, responses to Primary Dwelling Fires, RTC – Life Risk, and Other Emergencies will take priority over Other Calls for Service. Furthermore, due to the level of risk associated with incidents in this group, there is often no requirement to provide a blue-light response.

Our commitment to respond to all Other Calls for Service within 60 minutes recognises these factors.

Grouping incidents into this category based on the risk profile will allow us to monitor and explore the immediacy of the response required and whether there are areas for improvement.



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