

All CFOs

London Fire Commissioner

16 March 2011

Dear Colleague

As you will be aware following the devastating earthquake and tsunami in Japan last week, 59 firefighters from 8 fire and rescue services, together with 4 medics were deployed in their role as UK International Search and Rescue team. In addition CFO Roy Wilsher has accompanied the team to provide a strategic liaison point in a very challenging environment.

The normal liaison is taking place between the UKISAR co-ordination team in Hampshire and the eight participating Fire and Rescue Services however, there has been considerable media interest in the ongoing difficulties being experienced at the nuclear power stations at Fukushima. This has also resulted in a number of enquiries to my office regarding the team deployment.

It therefore might be helpful if I set out the details of the deployment and the current situation which we are monitoring closely in consultation with the UKISAR Co-ordination Team in Hampshire.

The team were initially located at a United States Airforce base in Misawa (330 km North of Fukushima). All the teams have personal radiological monitoring equipment. In addition, the UK team also has a radiation survey meter and a qualified Haz-Mat member of the team.

The first deployment of the team was to Ofunato, a coastal town of some 42,000 population devastated in the tsunami. The team were preceded by a US military team who scanned the area for radiation contamination to ensure that the UKISAR and US teams were not to be deployed to any areas affected by radiation. The search and rescue teams continue to assess the risk with the US and Japanese authorities.

In addition to the above we have maintained close contact with the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir John Beddington and provide regular advice to the UKISAR Co-ordination Centre. Sir John's advice remains that there is no risk to health outside the present 30km exclusion zone around Fukushima put in place by the Japanese authorities.

The Chief Scientific Adviser is continuing to monitor the position with scientific experts together with meteorological advice.

Having completed the search requirements at Ofunato the UKISAR team together with the US teams have moved 30km North to Kamaishi to continue the rescue mission. They are therefore working some 160km from Fukushima and over 130km outside the 30km exclusion zone.

The country is now moving from the rescue to the recovery phase over the next few days and, as with normal practice, the UKISAR team is expected to return home over the weekend.

I am in regular contact with Roy Wilsher and we will continue to monitor the situation together with the UKISAR Co-ordination Centre to ensure the teams are not put at risk.

I hope that the above provides you the background to answer any queries that you might have.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ken Knight". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal blue line.

Sir Ken Knight CBE QFSM DL  
Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser