



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

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FOI REFERENCE: FOI 23/24 - 147

DATE RECEIVED: 19/09/2023

TITLE / CATEGORY: Communications / ICT systems – Control Non-Emergency Number

REQUEST

I request a direct non-emergency telephone number and email address for your control room (or, where you have more than one control room, the aforementioned for each such control room).

Please note that I am not seeking your switchboard telephone number and that I do not seek to “jump the queue”, so to speak, but simply to make contact directly with your control room in circumstances where that is required without having to engage with your switchboard.

In order to assist, I believe that the telephone number I am seeking is likely to be that on which calls from your switchboard to your control room are forwarded.

Please contact me at once should you require clarification of my request. I otherwise look forward to hearing from you within the statutory timeframes set out by the Act.

RESPONSE

We are exempting the disclosure of the control room non-emergency telephone number requested under section 38(2) (Health & Safety) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 38(2) provides that information is exempt if its release would likely endanger the health and safety of an individual. A disclosure under Freedom of Information is a disclosure to the world, not just the individual who has requested the information. Placing this information into the public domain could result in an influx of non-emergency calls to Control, diverting staff from their primary purpose of answering emergency calls and potentially endangering public safety. Section 38(2) is a qualified exemption, which means that it is subject to a public interest test. Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service acknowledge the public interest in openness and transparency. As we have a published general enquiries number, public interest is not benefitted by having access to a separate number.

We are exempting the disclosure of the Control Room email address requested under section 24(1) (National Security) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 24(1) provides that information is exempt for the purposes of safeguarding national security.

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service is considered to be a critical piece of UK national infrastructure for Emergency response. We consider under section 24 that the information

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RESPONSE CONT.

you have requested would be enough details for a person with malicious intent to exploit any potential vulnerabilities and compromise our systems, for example, a cyber-attack. Section 24(1) is a qualified exemption, which means that it is subject to a public interest test. Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service acknowledge the public interest in openness and transparency, but we consider that there is also a public interest in TWFRS protecting national security.

Having reviewed the requested information, we are concerned release of such information poses an unacceptable risk to public safety and to the safety of our employees.

We have therefore concluded that the exemptions apply and that withholding the material serves the public interest better than release in this instance

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