



Trust Headquarters
Nexus House
4 Gatwick Road
Crawley
West Sussex
RH10 9BG

Internal Ref:
Email:

Tel: 0300 123 0999
www.secamb.nhs.uk

Dear,

The Trust is in receipt of your Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) request, thank you. This request has been assigned the internal reference quoted above; please ensure that you quote this number in any future correspondence.

We have now provided a formal response below. Please accept our sincere apologies for the delay and inconvenience you have experienced regarding the completion of this request. At the time of writing the Trust continues to receive high volumes of FOI requests, many of which are complex and time consuming. In this instance, the Trust has not responded within the required 20 working days, and for this we apologise.

FOI Request

You asked us:

With regard to the proposal to build a large Solar Panel Farm (with Lithium-ion batteries invertors and a substation) on 235 acres of land between New Ash Green and Ridley, Kent.

- 1. What are the minimum highway dimensions to provide access and deployment for South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust) vehicles, particularly for access to rural locations where access to infrastructure in fields via narrow country lanes is required?**
- 2. What are the minimum space requirements to allow crews to work around those same vehicles, particularly when working in rural locations where infrastructure is in fields with access via narrow country lanes? *Please use a worst case scenario, where the fields containing the infrastructure/incident are sodden due to weeks of heavy rain.***
- 3. Please advise as to the policy adopted by “the Trust” for dealing with a large scale Lithium ion battery fires. Please address the “The risks of toxic vapour cloud(s), thermal runaway, thermal propagation, metal fire and explosion”.**



4. Noting that the trust has access to All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV) where are these based?
5. How many All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV) are available to the Trust?
6. Are the Trust's All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV) capable of being deployed and operating on sloping sites where an incident has occurred on Green Belt / Agricultural land? *NOTE: Please use a worst case scenario, where the incident is located on a sloping site where fields where the incident is occurring are sodden due to weeks of heavy rain.*
7. What are the published response time for the deployment of 'All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV) available to "the Trust" when attending an incident occurring on land between New Ash Green and Ridley, Kent?
8. With respect to the use of All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV) by the trust dealing with a large scale incident on land between New Ash Green and Ridley, Kent. What is the response time for the Trusts 'All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV)?
9. Are all Trust Paramedics trained in the use of All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV)?
10. If the use of All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV) is restricted to specialist Trust staff, where are they based and what is their availability and published response times? Response times should be to an incident occurring on Green Belt / Agricultural land between New Ash green and Ridley Kent.
11. In the event of a large scale incident (Lithium ion battery fire, where the fire has developed to a Thermal Runaway, Thermal Propagation, Metal Fire) on land between New Ash Green and Ridley, Kent. Bearing in mind that the land will be covered in infrastructure, what the policies of the trust re the deployment of Air Ambulances from the Kent, Surrey & Sussex service?
12. What are the published response times for the Trust to respond to a large (Lithium ion battery fire, where the fire has developed to a Thermal Runaway, Thermal Propagation, and Metal Fire) fire on Green Belt/Agricultural land between New Ash Green and Ridley, Kent?
13. Have training exercise's taken place between the Trust, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue and KSS Air Ambulance (and other air ambulance service providers) to simulate the response to large Lithium ion battery fire, where the fire has developed to a Thermal Runaway, Thermal Propagation, Metal Fire? If so please provide details.
14. Once a "thermal runaway" fire is established with the emission of toxic gases, what guidance would you issue to the general public and for what size area? Please use the seat of the fire as the centre point for the notification area.



15. Once a fire has established and becomes a 'metal' fire, with thermal runaway and thermal propagation between adjacent cells: as defined by the "Fire Industry Association" www.fia.uk.com guidance document 2020. What size exclusion zone, centred on the seat of the fire, would you establish due to the risk of explosion?
16. What other agencies will you call on in the event of a Major Incident concerning Lithium Ion batteries, Solar Panels, Sub-Station and other equipment associated with a Solar Panel Farm.
17. What is the agreed response times for the "other agencies"?

Please note, where references are made to of All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV), please make reference in your reply to any vehicles used by the HARTS teams.

Formal Response

The Trust confirms it holds part of the information you requested.

1. **What are the minimum highway dimensions to provide access and deployment for South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust) vehicles, particularly for access to rural locations where access to infrastructure in fields via narrow country lanes is required?**
2. **What are the minimum space requirements to allow crews to work around those same vehicles, particularly when working in rural locations where infrastructure is in fields with access via narrow country lanes? *Please use a worst case scenario, where the fields containing the infrastructure/incident are sodden due to weeks of heavy rain.***

Response to 1. & 2.:

The Trust does not have a record of this information. Assessments of operational restrictions are taken by staff dynamically depending on the conditions at the time and operational requirements.

3. **Please advise as to the policy adopted by "the Trust" for dealing with a large scale Lithium ion battery fires. Please address the "The risks of toxic vapour cloud(s), thermal runaway, thermal propagation, metal fire and explosion".**

Actions taken at incidents are dependent on the type and scale of event. Any command or cordon arrangements would be implemented in conjunction with multi-agency partners and in line with the National Ambulance Service Command and Control Guidelines. Technical advice on the management of the given scenario would fall outside the purview of the Ambulance Service.

Here is a link to the [National Ambulance Service Command and Control Guidelines](#)



Saving Lives,
Serving Our Communities

Chair: Usman Khan CEO: Simon Weldon

The full web address is as follows: <https://narueducationcentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NARUCOMMANDANDCONTROLGUIDEV3.107.2019Procl us.pdf>

4. Noting that the trust has access to All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV) where are these based?

These are based at Ashford and Gatwick.

5. How many All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV) are available to the Trust?

Two vehicles are available, one based at each location.

6. Are the Trust's All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV) capable of being deployed and operating on sloping sites where an incident has occurred on Green Belt / Agricultural land? NOTE: Please use a worst case scenario, where the incident is located on a sloping site where fields where the incident is occurring are sodden due to weeks of heavy rain.

The Trust experience regarding ATV performance suggests that capability would be expected in this scenario. However, it is not possible to guarantee the description in your request equates directly to any real-world test or incident. Therefore, the Trust does not have any record of testing against this exact capability.

7. What are the published response time for the deployment of 'All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV) available to "the Trust" when attending an incident occurring on land between New Ash Green and Ridley, Kent?

8. With respect to the use of All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV) by the trust dealing with a large scale incident on land between New Ash Green and Ridley, Kent. What is the response time for the Trusts 'All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV)?

Response to 7. & 8.:

The Trust does not record or publish response time to specific locations, or for specific incidents, resources or apparatus. Response capability to any incident varies according to the concurrent demand upon the service, and our assets may be deployed to respond from any location within the Trust region.

9. Are all Trust Paramedics trained in the use of All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV)?

No, only specialist responders are trained. This is also the case for other vehicles used by the HART teams.

10. If the use of All-Terrain' Vehicles (ATV) is restricted to specialist Trust staff, where are they based and what is their availability and published response times? Response times should be to an incident occurring on Green Belt / Agricultural land between New Ash green and Ridley Kent.



HART Teams are based at Ashford and Gatwick. This type of response can be deployed 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Response availability for any incident varies according to the concurrent demand upon the service and what information regarding that incident has been received and triaged.

The Trust does not record or publish response time to specific locations, or for specific incidents, resources or apparatus. Response capability to any incident varies according to the concurrent demand upon the service, and our assets may be deployed to respond from any location within the Trust region.

11. In the event of a large scale incident (Lithium ion battery fire, where the fire has developed to a Thermal Runaway, Thermal Propagation, Metal Fire) on land between New Ash Green and Ridley, Kent. Bearing in mind that the land will be covered in infrastructure, what the policies of the trust re the deployment of Air Ambulances from the Kent, Surrey & Sussex service?

The Trust has no information on record, specific to the possible incident or risk being described.

Actions taken at incidents are dependent on the type and scale of event. Any command or cordon arrangements would be implemented in conjunction with multi-agency partners and in line with the National Ambulance Service Command and Control Guidelines. Operation of Air Ambulance Kent, Surrey, and Sussex falls outside of the Ambulance service as an independent organisation. Flight crews are always ultimately responsible for operational decisions relating to the safe operation of an aircraft.

12. What are the published response times for the Trust to respond to a large (Lithium ion battery fire, where the fire has developed to a Thermal Runaway, Thermal Propagation, and Metal Fire) fire on Green Belt/Agricultural land between New Ash Green and Ridley, Kent?

The Trust does not record or publish response time to specific locations, or for specific incidents, resources or apparatus. Response capability to any incident varies according to the concurrent demand upon the service, and our assets may be deployed to respond from any location within the Trust region.

13. Have training exercise's taken place between the Trust, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue and KSS Air Ambulance (and other air ambulance service providers) to simulate the response to large Lithium ion battery fire, where the fire has developed to a Thermal Runaway, Thermal Propagation, Metal Fire? If so please provide details.

No relevant simulations have taken place.

14. Once a "thermal runaway" fire is established with the emission of toxic gases, what guidance would you issue to the general public and for what



size area? Please use the seat of the fire as the centre point for the notification area.

- 15. Once a fire has established and becomes a ‘metal’ fire, with thermal runaway and thermal propagation between adjacent cells: as defined by the “Fire Industry Association” www.fia.uk.com guidance document 2020. What size exclusion zone, centred on the seat of the fire, would you establish due to the risk of explosion?**

Response to 14. & 15.:

The Trust has no information on record, specific to the possible incident or risk being described.

Actions taken at incidents are dependent on the type and scale of event. Any command or cordon arrangements would be implemented in conjunction with multi-agency partners and in line with the National Ambulance Service Command and Control Guidelines. Technical advice on the management of the given scenario would fall outside the purview of the Ambulance Service.

- 16. What other agencies will you call on in the event of a Major Incident concerning Lithium Ion batteries, Solar Panels, Sub-Station and other equipment associated with a Solar Panel Farm.**

The Ambulance Service operates as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act, 2004 and therefore participates in resilience planning and response in collaboration with the various Local Resilience Forums within the South-East region. The Trust operates under the doctrine of the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) and in compliance with the NHS England Core EPRR Standards and National Interoperability Standards.

- 17. What is the agreed response times for the “other agencies”?**

The Trust does not record or agree response times with external agencies. Those agencies that are public authorities should maintain a process whereby you can request disclosure of information – which they have on record – from them under the FOIA.

Regarding Trust response times to emergency incidents, we have included here a web link to the page on our website which describes our Response Time Targets: <https://www.secamb.nhs.uk/how-we-do-it/our-performance/response-time-targets/>.

Please note that any reported incident will be triaged by Trust call handlers and assigned a category for response. This is based on whatever information is communicated in the individual circumstance, and is most closely related to the severity of reported or suspected condition of patients requiring emergency care.



Next steps

We hope you find the information provided to be of some assistance.

Should you be dissatisfied with our response, kindly in the first instance contact Caroline Smart, Head of Information Governance via the following email address: FOI@secamb.nhs.uk

You can ask us to review our response. If you would like us to carry out a review, please let us know within 40 working days. This will be conducted by someone who was not involved in reviewing the original response, ordinarily, the Trust Data Protection Officer.

Should you remain dissatisfied following our internal review, you can complain to the [Information Commissioner's Office](#) (ICO). You should make complaints to the ICO within six weeks of receiving the outcome of an internal review. The easiest way to lodge a complaint is through their website: www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints.

The ICO's postal address is:
Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely,

Freedom of Information Coordinator
South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust



Saving Lives,
Serving Our Communities

Chair: Usman Khan CEO: Simon Weldon