

Briefing note

08 October 2013

Subject

Cable Cutters

Brief for

ODCB (14 October 2013, Item 7)

Author

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As requested at the last ODCB meeting, this briefing note details the current position relating to the introduction of cable cutters in to operational service by mid November.

Cable Cutters & Pouches

Earlier in the year the Brigade purchased 1,860 cable cutters using an underspend in Operational Procedure's (OP) 'operational equipment' budget. This left one outstanding issue to resolve in relation to how the cable cutters would be attached to the Breathing Apparatus (BA) Set. Detailed below are key milestones relating to the procurement of this outstanding item of equipment:

- 29 July - a revised output based specification for the cable cutter pouches was re-submitted to the manufacturers. This revised output based specification was provided to clarify those aspect of the Brigade's specification which were not met by the original samples submitted to the Brigade.
- The revised samples, including updated costings, were received by the Brigade on 22 August and the evaluation was concluded on 27 August. The product offered by First Products Ltd was identified as the best solution to meet the Brigade's requirements. See appendix 1: images.
- The contract for the provision of 1,600 cable cutter pouches was awarded on the 6 September. These will be distributed as follow:
 - 11 Aerial appliances - 2 sets = 22 pouches
 - 112 Pump Ladders x 5 sets = 560 pouches
 - 57 Pumps x 4 sets = 228 pouches
 - 16 Fire rescue Units x 5 sets = 80 pouches
 - 300 Training sets = 300 pouches
 - 112 RPE boxes at stations = 112 pouches
 - 110 Emergency contingency sets = 110 pouches

Total pouches required for operational BA sets = 1,412

15% surplus (prediction by PEG based upon similar BA ancillary equipment over 3 year period) = 1,600 pouches

Budget

The unit price of each pouch is £14.73, which gives a total expenditure for the pouches of £23, 568. The cutters also require a lanyard to secure them to the pouch, which cost a further £1, 860. This gives a total additional equipment budget requirement to implement the cable cutter solution of £25,428. This cost pressure is being met by using OP's 2013/14 Operational Equipment Budget.

Operational Procedure

Both the technical and operational risk assessments (RA) have been completed for the cable cutters. Amendments have also been made to Policy Notes (PN) 798 (Respiratory protective Equipment – ancillary equipment – technical information) and PN 466 (Respiratory protective equipment - breathing apparatus – operational procedures). Both notes are currently under Heads of Service (HoS) review.

The amendments to these policies include updated A and B test protocols and a description of the Best Practice Assessment (BPA) for this equipment. The cable cutter BPA will need to be undertaken by all staff before mid November 2013 (the target implementation date) or when they return to duty, if they are absent before that date.

Staff side have been involved in the formulation of this policy and provision of the equipment and have been very supportive of placing this equipment into operational service. In this context, it has been indicated by the Staff side Joint Secretary that both the risk assessment and operational procedure will be agreed at the next Brigade Joint Council for Health and Safety at Work meeting (BJCHSW), which is scheduled to take place on the 17th October 2013.

Information required to support the implementation of the solution will be available on Hotwire week ending 11th October 2013. This information will explain to operational staff how to order replacement cable cutting equipment and inform staff that a single pair of cable cutters and carrying pouch will be delivered to stations for familiarisation purposes.

The technical information required to support the fitting of cable cutting equipment to Breathing Apparatus (BA) sets, which will include a series of step by step photographs to illustrate the correct procedure, will be available within *PN 798 Respiratory protective equipment - ancillary equipment - technical information*. This information will be provided with the cable cutting equipment when it is sent to stations.

Testing and Maintenance

Health & Safety Services (HSS) have recommended a daily, weekly and after use visual inspection to check the integrity of electrical insulation, serviceability of cutting edges, action of mechanism and working order of cutters. This will require minor amendments to current A and B test procedures. The Communications team have drafted updated copies of the aide memoirs for use in BA maintenance rooms and on the rear of appliances. These will be printed and delivered to stations with the cable cutters week commencing 28 October 2013.

HSS have also recommended testing of a random sample of the cable cutters in 12 months time which will identify the long term integrity of the cable cutters inline with manufacturers specifications (BS EN 60900:2004 – this includes electrical testing).

BA log books will require minor amendments for future print runs to incorporate the recording of the cable cutter tests. It is proposed that firefighters should include a comment in the remarks column stating the daily tests have been undertaken and the cutters have passed. This information will need

to be included in the BA log book until the new print run of books incorporates this change. The works request for the new print run has been submitted and the template updated.

The Purchase Order Management System (POMS) has also been updated to incorporate the option to order replacements for either the cable cutters or the pouches as separate items. This will allow station based staff to order the items independently and thereby minimise wastage by allowing staff to only replace defective or lost items.

As cable cutters form part of the BA ancillary equipment, a BA set will come out of operational service if they are not available (this is expected to be an infrequent occurrence given their very low projected use rate). To help ensure this does not have an adverse impact on BA set availability, all stations will be provided with one spare set of cutters and pouch which will be securely stored within the station Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) spares box. Replacements will be available via POMS and Protective Equipment Group (PEG) will also keep 25 sets of spares, in case there is a replacement required out of office hours.

Cable cutters and pouches will be exchanged on a one for one basis or where a lost report is provided. Given the value of these items (approximately £50 retail) and fact they will be a safety critical item of equipment, Operational Procedures recommend that any loss of cable cutters is robustly investigated and individuals and their line managers held accountable for any unexplained loss. POMS has been set up to permit a maximum order quantity of 1 item ensuring any multiple loss is identified by the relevant station manager. Station Managers will be required to authorise the ordering of cable cutters and pouches. The relevant Borough Commander will be informed of any cable cutter and pouch orders within their area, so that any excessive or unusual losses can be effectively monitored.

An option exists to run a POMS report over the first 6 months of implementation to ensure there is no unusual or unexpected trends with regard to orders for this equipment.

Training

A Training Commissioning Alteration Process (TCAP) was submitted to the HR&D team on the 2 August and the first internal stakeholder meeting was held on the 16 August 2013. The training solution will be divided into two phases; Short term solution - enabling the cable cutters to be fitted to BA sets and used operationally, and a long term solution, which will be incorporated within BA refresher training. This will provide practical training and experience in the operational use of the cable cutter in a realistic environment.

A request to instigate the amendments to the Station Dairy, which will enable watch officers to plan training and BPAs as well as record the outcomes, has been drafted. This will be implemented to support the implementation timescales.

Communication strategy

It is proposed that the October issue of 'Update' is used to communicate the implementation of the cable cutters in conjunction with an e-mail to all staff. A covering letter will also accompany the equipment, aide memoirs etc. which will be delivered to all stations during November.

A slot has been booked at the next Borough Commanders meeting on 22nd October 2013 where the cable cutter solution will be presented.

Appendix 1: Pouch and cable cutters



Pouch fitted to BA set



Cable cutters and pouch