
TETRA (Terrestrial Trunked Radio) (formerly Airwave)

Version 4

1. Policy statement

The Police Federation of England and Wales believes that TETRA (Terrestrial Trunked Radio) provides huge potential for significant operational benefits as it allows for communication in remote locations.

However it has not yet been proven to be safe for users and the public and this is an unacceptable situation. Worldwide scientific opinion remains divided on the long-term health effects on TETRA users and residents who live in the vicinity of digital communication masts. The Federation believes it is essential to monitor the effect of TETRA on users.

2. Responsibility

The National Board is responsible for all policy formation

3. Summary

The Police Federation of England and Wales recognises the value of TETRA in terms of greatly improved communications and therefore, greater officer safety and improved service to the public. However we remain concerned about having a system imposed before the full results of long and short term health effects are known.

Having repeatedly called for effective communications in the police service, the Police Federation will continue to assess the benefits and risks presented by TETRA.

Scientific knowledge and understanding change all the time. A number of programmes have been conducted into the health effects of TETRA though most research has proved inconclusive or is still to be completed. Opinion remains divided on the long term health effects of TETRA and the sighting of masts.

In 2003, the Home Office commissioned a £5 million health monitoring study¹ to look into claims by scientists that TETRA could be harmful to a users' health. PFEW is represented on the Steering Group and Ethics Group for this study. Doctors and scientists have monitored over 50,000 members of the police family to check whether there are any short and/or long-term effects on health. The research is due for completion in 2018. Due to Home Office budget cuts and the study reaching its agreed quota, health screening examinations were stopped in April 2015. We continue to hear of

¹ Imperial College Airwave health study

previously undiagnosed health conditions being identified in those taking part in the study so we believe the College of Policing should look at ways to extend the screening programme.

PFEW welcomes the opportunity to engage in the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme, which is overseeing the retendering of the TETRA contract, so that police officers views are made known and the service they require day to day is maintained and at least a comparable service to what officers have with Airwave. Anything less will simply not be acceptable.

An effective mobile communication system is vital to keep both our members and the public safe. Policing and keeping the public safe is at times highly complex. We need a communication system that can provide a lone officer in a rural location the same degree of confidence that it provides to a force control room dealing with multiple incidents or large scale disorder. Lives are at stake if we get this wrong and this is an area where the PFEW will simply not accept a replacement service that is inferior to what we already have. Cost savings should not be put before the safety of any police officer or member of the public.

4. Procedures/implementation

PFEW will continue to monitor the effect of TETRA on users and will seek to identify independent experts to advise us.

We will continue to encourage and monitor all research into TETRA usage and keep officers informed. We will work closely with the College of Policing to look at ways of extending the health screening programme.

PFEW will engage in the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme, led by the Home Office, which is overseeing the tendering process for the replacement TETRA contract between 2016 and 2020.

Responsibility is delegated to the National Secretary and/or the appropriate sub-committee.

	Author	Date	Review date	Change
Version 1	EP-KP	January 2015	January 2016	
Version 2	EP-KP	March 2016	March 2017	Title change – previously named Airwave Changes to section 3 to take account of H&S Sub-Committee report to Annual Conference 2015
Version 3	EP-KP	March 2017	March 2018	Changes to reflect PFEW consultation response to consultation on replacement of ESM

				communications programme (November 2016)
Version 4	KP	January 2019	March 2020	Minor changes

Signed by:



National Chair



National Secretary