



Freedom of Information Request

24th June 2024

Question

I am requesting information on the testing and compliance of ambulance sirens used by the Scottish Ambulance Service. Specifically, I would like to know the following:

- Do you regularly test the volume of the sirens on your ambulances?
 - If so, how frequently are these tests conducted?
- What are the standard decibel readings for the sirens during these tests?
- Could you provide the range of decibel levels recorded in these tests over the past year?
- Are there specific protocols or standards that the Scottish Ambulance Service follows for maintaining the siren volume within the prescribed limits?

Please provide detailed information, including any relevant documents or records, related to the testing procedures, results, and standards for siren volume.

Answer

The primary legislation relating to audible warnings is based in The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 and subsequent amendments. Provision is made in this legislation and the 2015 Deregulation Act to allow defined emergency response vehicles to make use of audible and visual warning systems to warn other road users of their presence ensuring the safety of those in the vehicle, other drivers and other persons that may be at risk if unaware of the emergency vehicle. These road users could have loud music playing, windows up or wearing a helmet, headphones or ear plug, etc. So, audible warning systems need to be loud and have a variable pitch to help with localising where the siren is coming from.

The use of emergency warning systems is an essential part of safe driving in emergency conditions. Please find attached our Management of Noise at Work Policy.

The safety of our staff, patients and the public is of the highest priority. The audible warning devices used by the Scottish Ambulance Service (and other UK emergency services) have remained unchanged for over 10 years and are typically 100-watt units with speakers directed to the front of the vehicle projecting focused sound in the required direction and minimising noise to the side/rear. The traditional UK siren is a variable tone siren.

These sirens typically operate between 1kHz and 3kHz as this is where hearing is most sensitive, so the siren doesn't have to have so much power to make itself heard because our ears hear sounds in that frequency better.



**Scottish
Ambulance
Service**

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All equipment is manufactured and installed ensuring full legislative compliance and following manufacturer's installation instructions. Each vehicle in the Scottish Ambulance Service is routinely serviced once a year; siren testing is integrated into the servicing criteria to monitor the integrity of the equipment.

The Scottish Ambulance Service has applied section 17 to the section of your request asking for information on siren test results for the past year. This exemption applies if the organisation does not hold the information and would be required to create new information to answer a request.

It may be useful to note that as part of this application of this exemption, I have considered the following guidance issued by the Scottish Information Commissioner:

Public authorities are not required to create information in order to answer a request. There's a distinction between creating new information, and compiling information. Where a request can be answered by compiling information from readily available resources held by the public authority, this is not the same as creating new information. However, if collation of the information would require skill and complex judgement, the information is not held.

To explain further, the Service holds vehicles servicing records, within each record is the result of the siren servicing. However, to obtain the results would require accessing each record individually and extract the information. Due to this, to identify, collate and provide the information requested would require complex skill and judgement of multi-disciplinary teams across the Service.