News Release

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Three Words Could Save Your Life

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service have joined a number of other emergency services, in rolling out location technology in a revolutionary move to enhance emergency call taking.

The Service is now using what3words, which is designed to help respond to incidents more effectively. The technology is already being used by a number of police forces and fire and rescue services across the UK.

What3words divides the world in to 3x3 metre squares, giving each square a unique three-word address. These words could be as simple as Table. Chair. Fish.

What3words is a free app, available in multiple languages, and can be downloaded for both iOS and Android or in a browser.

The coordinates used within what3words link through to a GPS map, providing directions to the location. The app also works offline, so you can find a three-word address of a location without a data connection.

Ann Gale, Station Manager, Fire Control for Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service, said: "In an emergency situation, the control room needs to identify exactly where the help is required, and whilst all operators are fully trained in call handling techniques they still have to depend on callers providing the correct location details to ensure an effective response is achieved.

"If a caller is in an area with no address, or they are visitors to the counties of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland they can be totally unaware of their exact location, which in turn puts operators under enormous pressure.

"Members of the public can locate themselves via a pin on a map, but imagine trying to describe this pin to someone during a 999 call. In these moments, precious time can be wasted which is frustrating as crucial minutes can mean the difference between life and death."

Now, in an emergency where a location is difficult to describe, callers are able to give their three-word address from the what3words app, which gives callers a simple way to describe precisely where help is needed and allows control rooms to get resources straight to the scene.

An example of a three word address a caller could give is: ///cove.basin.prove which will take resources to a precise spot next to Rose Tree Avenue in Birstall.

This works in various emergencies from rural locations like farms, beaches, coastline or moorland where it can be complex, imprecise and difficult to communicate location without any addresses or points of reference nearby, to a well-addressed town or city. The caller could be in distress as they may not be familiar with their surroundings, or able to share a location with accuracy.

Ann Gale, added: "We encourage you to download the what3words app as you never know when you may need help, and in the event that you are unaware of your exact location, you will be helping us to ensure that we can get the assistance to you as soon as possible."

Visit what3words.com for more information, or search for what3words within Google Play for Android or the App Store for iOS to download the free app, which works entirely offline in multiple languages. Look for the red icon with three white slashes.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:
Interviews can be arranged through prior arrangement with Corporate Communications on the details below.

About the Service
Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service provides emergency response, prevention and protection services from 20 stations across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. Its headquarters is based in Birstall, Leicester.

During 2018/19, the Service attended 762 road traffic collisions, of which 125 were extrications from vehicles, in addition to 2,569 fires. We carried out 6,746 home safety checks and fitted 4,790 smoke alarms. 279 schools were visited as part of the Service's schools programme, delivering fire and road safety education to pupils. Staff organised or took part in 1,068 community safety events, promoting fire and road safety and arson prevention, and 134 Virtual Fatal Four (VF4) events as part of the Service's young drivers' road safety project.

The Service's prevention, education, enforcement and inspection programmes have resulted in significant reductions in the number of incidents. In the last ten years, fire-related incidents have reduced by over 30 percent.

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