

TEL. No.: VICtoria 4433

Any communication on the
subject of this letter should be
addressed to:—

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE,
HOME OFFICE, (FIRE BRIGADES DIVISION),
CLELAND HOUSE,
PAGE STREET,
LONDON, S.W.1.



HOME OFFICE,
CLELAND HOUSE,
PAGE STREET,
LONDON, S.W.1.

and the following number quoted:—

F.B.Gen.76/9/14.

1st July, 1940.

Sir,

Staff and Transport for Emergency
Fire Brigade Communications.

F.B. Circular 93/1940.

I am directed by the Minister of Home Security to refer to Fire Brigade Circular No. 22/1939 regarding emergency fire brigade communications services, and to ask all fire authorities and Chief Officers of Fire Brigades to review their arrangements for this purpose, if they have not recently done so, in order to ensure that the local system is capable of being brought into effective action promptly when required, and that it provides adequately against the possibility of telephone lines being put out of action during a raid.

In most areas the watchroom and messenger duties are provided for in the main by part-time personnel, and it is therefore essential to make sure that duty rotas have been arranged so as to secure that sufficient staff are always available, and that the arrangements for mobilising additional staff are adequate to ensure their prompt attendance when required.

If on a review of the situation it is found, in any considerable town or vulnerable area, that the case cannot be met satisfactorily on the present footing, the Minister will be prepared to consider proposals for the employment of additional whole-time staff provided that already the whole-time staff employed shall not exceed 3 women or 2 men telephonists and 2 messengers (who should be youths) for each fire station and auxiliary fire station approved under the emergency scheme.

The Clerk of the London County Council,
The Town Clerk,
The Clerk to the Urban District Council,
The Clerk to the Rural District Council.

The establishment of a messenger service is an important part of an emergency fire brigade communications scheme, having regard to the possibility of telephone lines being cut, and this also should be reviewed, as regards both the personnel and the vehicles available for use. Pedal cycles are no doubt in general use for this purpose, and in densely populated urban areas they will probably also be the quickest and most convenient means of locomotion, particularly in air raid conditions when roads may be rendered impassable to any other form of traffic, and youths with bicycles will no doubt be used largely for this purpose. Those who use their own bicycles may be paid an allowance of 2/6d monthly, which may be charged in the claim for the Exchequer Grant.

In cases where it is not possible to secure the use of sufficient bicycles in this way, bicycles may be purchased up to a number not exceeding half the number of messengers engaged for whole-time duty and at a price not exceeding £3. 10. 0. for each bicycle.

In large centres the messengers with bicycles should, of course, be supplemented by messengers with cars or motor cycles for longer distance work or for conveying urgent messages between the headquarter stations and auxiliary stations or between one town and another, e.g. in connection with the regional reinforcement scheme. It may also be necessary to supplement the messengers on bicycles with motor cyclist messengers where street gradients are steep. Where possible, the use of motor cycles for these purposes should be secured on a voluntary basis, subject to an allowance which may be paid in accordance with the rate indicated in the enclosures to F.B. Circular No.22/1940, but the Minister will be prepared to consider for approval the purchase of a limited number of motor bicycles in centres where the requirements cannot be satisfactorily met by other means.

A copy of this letter is enclosed for the information of the Chief Officer of the Brigade and a further copy for the information of the Financial Officer.

I am,
Sir,
Your obedient Servant,

A. L. Dixon

Copies sent for information to:
Chief Constables and
Chief Officers of Fire Brigades
in England and Wales.