

## 30% of residents to be volunteer firemen

Thousands to be fully trained by the end of five years

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Abu Dhabi, Jul 8, 2011: Nearly one-third of all residents could be trained to be volunteer firefighters within five years, a high-ranking Civil Defence official said yesterday.

The volunteer service, which would be open to any resident regardless of gender, nationality or occupation, hopes to recruit 30 per cent of the country's population by 2016.

Lt Col Rashid Al Buflaseh, the office manager for the director of Civil Defence, said a pilot programme was initially launched three years ago. Once the volunteer programme is finalised, Civil Defence will begin reaching out to residents to volunteer.

"The Civil Defence would be delighted to have any volunteers," Lt Col Al Buflaseh said. "They will be used in various capacities and will receive basic training. Retired firefighters who wish to

volunteer will be given refresher courses and will be used alongside Civil Defence personnel for the more difficult tasks."

Lt Col Al Buflaseh spoke on the sidelines of the Fire Safety Technology Forum UAE, the first regional conference and exhibition on fire safety technologies.

The forum, at the Yas Hotel, brought together fire industry professionals from Singapore, France and Hong Kong to share knowledge about the latest and best practices in firefighting and rescue techniques.

"In conducting this conference, we wish to express how important modern technology is for upgrading and developing our current and constantly evolving services," said Maj Gen Rashid Al Matrooshi, the director general of Civil Defence.



Reducing emergency response times was a key topic under discussion at the conference.

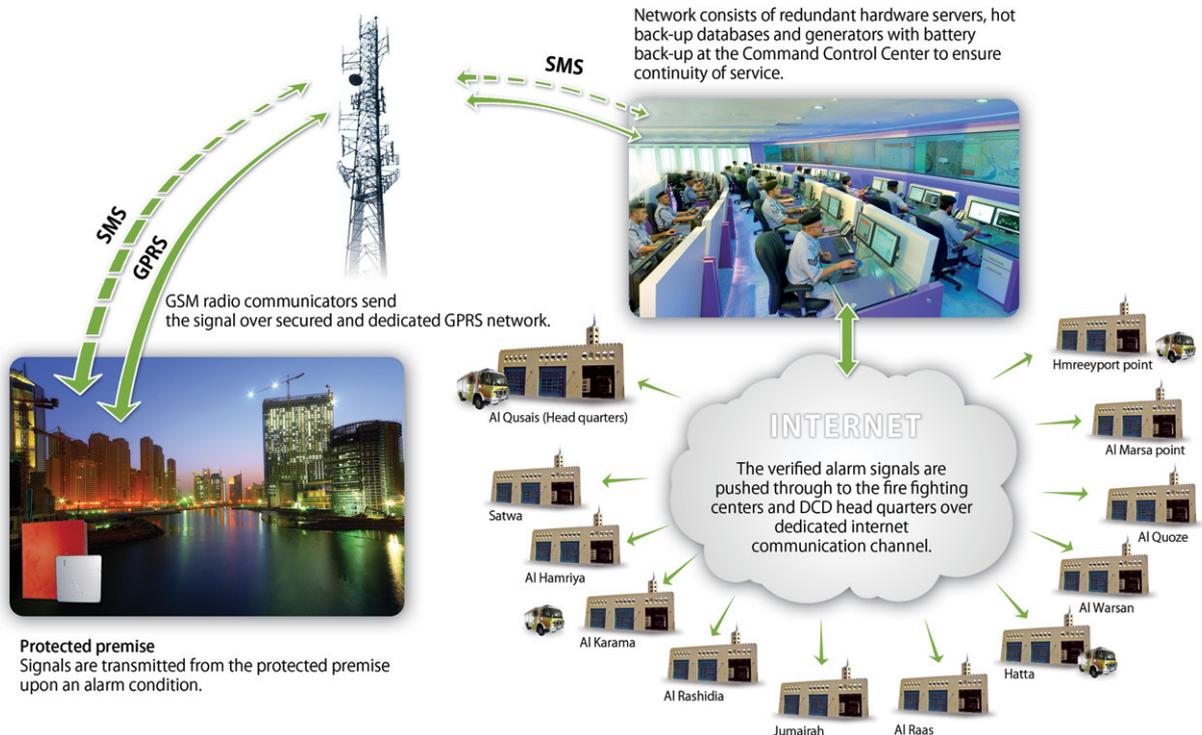
The fire industry standard advises that firemen arrive at the scene between six and eight minutes, and response time should not exceed 10 minutes. The Civil Defence meets that goal 80 per cent of the time.

“Of course, other factors affect our response time – traffic jams, cities that are far from main centres or fire stations,” Lt Col Al Buflaseh said.

“But at the Civil Defence, we have considered the whole country, even the faraway cities. Everyone is covered for fire safety.”

At a recent house fire in Al Ain, witnesses claimed firemen did not reach the scene until 15 minutes after they were called.

In Dubai, the response time is faster than the national average, and the emirate meets the standard between 90 and 95 per cent of the time.



Officials attribute the improvement to a co-ordinated network of fire stations in the emirate and increased awareness among residents on how to avoid domestic fires.

Civil Defence will also help raise response time rates across the Emirates by using unconventional modes of transport, including desert patrol vehicles and motorcycles, to get to scenes quicker.

In Dubai, a direct fire alarm system automatically notifies a command centre in the case of an emergency. The model, which has been in operation for nearly three years, is extendable and can be replicated across the UAE.

“We want to be at the scene as quickly as possible,” said Nigel Mackenzie, the chief technical officer for Pacific Controls, the company that implemented and operates the system.

“We can pinpoint exactly how long it takes to get there with a vehicle tracking system, and we can use that data to improve response time.”

Aaron Vanney, a senior consultant with Rolf Jensen and Associates, a fire consultancy company, spoke about the fire safety and prevention methods in place at the Burj Khalifa.



He explained the procedures in place to prevent and fight fires, and the building’s evacuation plan. Mr Vanney said to evacuate 18,841 people from the building, it would take 157 minutes without using the lifts.

It would take 85 minutes with the use of the lifts. He added that there are four refuge floors in the 160-storey building.

Civil Defence also said that it has developed a fire and life safety code of practice that will be on sale at the Al Qusais fire station beginning next Thursday.

The book, which took three years to develop, outlines specific fire safety standards.