



# Dorset Ambulance

AUGUST 2000



Dorset Ambulance Service



Part of the Team:  
Nick (left) and Graham



Typical Dorset vehicle



Location of speaker mounting

## Background

Earlier this year Dorset Ambulance decided to equip their fleet with the Localizer®, better known as the White Noise Siren system from Premier Hazard giving them the added benefit of directional sound. The decision was reached after 3 years of comprehensive trials and research, and two of the key people in that process, Ian Black (Clinical, Audit and Equipment Manager) and Nick Purchase (Transport Services and Estates Manager) reveal some of their experiences...

Dorset's fleet consists of 117 vehicles with four engineers responsible for maintaining Vauxhall Astra estates for paramedics' cars, Renault Lagunas for officers' cars and Iveco vans for Ambulances. Dorchester had first evaluated the Localizer around 3 years ago on two unmarked officers' cars. After positive feedback, and further successful trials on two Ambulances they decided to fit every new car with the Localizer although the conclusions were not quite so straightforward.

## Effect of the Localizer

There was much debate initially as to whether "White Noise" had any impact at all. This new technology is designed to have the dual benefit of alerting pedestrians and surrounding traffic, as well as reducing the noise pollution and stress levels to the occupants of the vehicle (crew and passengers). Some crews were under the impression that because they could not hear the Localizer very well in the cab, that it wasn't working as efficiently as the conventional siren, so they switched on both units together. Graham Bebington, lead engineer at Dorchester, in fact, when off duty and walking through the town, said he heard the Localizer perfectly on the outside, so convinced the drivers to switch off the conventional siren and run with the Localizer version on its own. The results were impressive. One particular Ambulance crew illustrated perfectly its effectiveness. Whilst participating in a trial run, and on an active response, they were quickly confronted with a ¾ mile queue of two solid lanes of traffic on a dual carriageway. They switched on the Localizer and were amazed to see the two lanes of traffic part in the middle like a wave, and were immediately provided with easy access to continue the journey.

## Installation is location-critical

Another dilemma was finding the best location on the vehicle to mount the speaker. In the case of the Paramedics Vauxhall Astra, the supplier delivered the vehicle with the siren unit mounted in probably the most ineffective position that could be found – inside the wheel arch. A joint decision by crew and mechanics concluded that the optimum position was front off-centre, pointing directly forward with no obstructions in front. The offside of the vehicle was preferred, around bumper height, where potentially the obstructing traffic would hear the siren of the oncoming Ambulance behind them, as the Ambulance was pulling out to overtake.

Dorset have now standardised on the Localizer as their preferred installed siren system and currently have around 30% of their fleet equipped.

The Localizer is a registered trademark of Sound Alert Technology plc and is protected by international Patents.

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