



Fire Brigade Rings Changes With Toyota

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More than 50 fire service staff have switched from being user-choosers to driving a range of Toyota Avensis diesel cars – and the transition has been a smooth one, says Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service's Fleet Manager John Millett.

The Avensis 2.2-litre D-4D diesels, manufactured at Toyota's plant in Burnaston, Derbyshire, used by fire officers for operational purposes and by senior and middle managers, are being ordered in saloon, hatchback and Tourer form and in T3-x, T4, T-Spirit and T180 grades.

One Avensis is assigned for use in teaching new fire officers roadcraft skills when driving under blue-light conditions.

Meanwhile three Yaris 1.3-litre T3-x diesels have been assigned to the brigade's "Red Fleet", for use on general and community liaison duties. Should they wish, officers and managers also have the option of specifying Yaris for their own use if they prefer to drive a smaller car.

The Toyotas have been introduced into the fleet on a rolling programme over the past year. "The feedback has been very good – everyone seems very happy," says Mr Millett. "You might expect some comments when staff have to move from a user-chooser scheme, but nobody has had any complaints and most have said that the Avensis is a good car. It's working out well from my point of view."

Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service's decision to move to a single-badged fleet was influenced by the recurring problem of meeting the needs of new staff who might find their predecessor's choice of ride unsuitable.

"We decided to have one car for all, and looked around for a 2.2-litre diesel with a good specification, one that would be robust enough to stand up to attending incidents, and with all the relevant safety features," said John Millett. "Naturally cost-effectiveness was also a prime consideration."

Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service, based at Littleover, obtains its cars on contract hire through Lloyds TSB, Appleyards and Automotive Leasing. With drivers paying a contribution for personal use, the Avensis cars average 15,000 miles a year and the driving-school vehicle 25,000 miles. Replacement cycles are set at three years.

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