

## **Report of Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Response & Protection)**

### **Health and Safety Committee Update: April – June 2021 (Quarter 1)**

#### **Purpose of report**

1. To provide a Health & Safety update on activities and items of significance.
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#### **Recommendation**

*It is recommended that the following issues, in particular, be noted:*

- (i) The involvement of the Service in Health and Safety initiatives;*
- (ii) Health and Safety performance information recorded during April to June 2021 (Quarter 1)*

#### **Introduction and Background**

2. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) aims to ensure the safety and well-being of its employees and reduce and prevent accidents and injuries at work, as outlined in the People Strategy 2020-2022.
3. The Health and Safety Committee is established to provide effective arrangements for the liaison and review of matters of common interest concerning Health and Safety (H&S). The Committee provides the opportunity for the Service to discuss general H&S issues and consult with the workforce via employee representatives. The Committee is chaired by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer and last met on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021.
4. The Committee has the facility to task work to the H&S Working Group, which sits beneath it and is chaired by the Group Commander responsible for Health and Safety. The group meets as and when required. At the Committee meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021, the Working Group was formally tasked with the following:
  - To implement the findings from the NFCC's Death in the Workplace report.
  - To promote and improve fitness across the Service.

## Health & Safety Initiatives Update

### National Activities

5. Updated COVID guidance has been issued by HM Government and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). This guidance provides advice and support to organisations in managing COVID restrictions, including the updated recommendations regarding self-isolation. HWFRS has implemented and managed this guidance through the COVID Response and Recovery Groups.

### Regional Activities

6. The regional audit programme, a partnership between Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) from across the West Midlands region, will be reintroduced during Quarter 2. It utilises H&S Subject Matter Experts (SME) from each FRS, with findings and learning outcomes shared across the partnership to enhance health and safety. A GAP analysis is completed following each peer assessment to ensure that HWFRS adopts any learning and maintains compliance against H&S legislation. As part of this programme, HWFRS's Health and Safety Advisor will support Shropshire FRS's audit in September.

The themes of the audit are:

- Water rescue
- Transport procurement
- Provision & Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER)
- Equipment checks and safety files.

### HWFRS Local Activities

7. Following on from the last update provided in the Quarter 4 report, HWFRS have continued to monitor and implement safe systems of work via the COVID Response and Recovery Groups. Following changes to the COVID guidance on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021, best practice guidance has been shared with departmental managers to ensure the 'Covid Secure' assessments are in place. These assessments are regularly reviewed along with other premises risk assessments, such as 'Fire Risk Assessments'. Furthermore, the changes to self-isolation procedures, implemented from 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021, have also been issued.
8. The risk assessment database (Figure 1) is owned and maintained by local managers and reviewed by the H&S Advisor. Each risk assessment has a review period, and managers are prompted to carry out reviews. Where risk assessments are no longer applicable, they are archived from the database. During Quarter 1, 396 risk assessments were reviewed, and 38 new risk assessments were created.

**Figure 1 – Risk Assessment Database**

Location	Quarter 2 (20/21)		Quarter 3 (20/21)		Quarter 4 (20/21)		Quarter 1 (21/22)	
	Reviewed	Created	Reviewed	Created	Reviewed	Created	Reviewed	Created
North District	115	12	119	6	92	14	140	6
South District	99	15	75	20	102	18	105	12
West District	128	112	95	8	69	19	89	19
Training Centre	56	1	29	2	96	2	21	0
Others	8	20	1	11	30	4	41	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>38</b>

### H&S Working Group activity updates

9. Following the last H&S Committee, the working group has been tasked with reviewing the NFCC's Death in the Workplace report. A GAP analysis has been completed, this has been circulated to the group for comment, and a meeting arranged to recommend implementing the report's findings.
10. Furthermore, a subgroup has been formed and met in early September to promote and improve fitness across the Service. This group will develop an action plan that will be brought back to the H&S Committee for consideration.

### Quarter 1 Performance Report

11. Appendix 1 provides details relating to all safety events reported and investigated during Quarter 1 of the 2021-22 reporting year (April – June).
12. The total number of safety events reported in Quarter 1 decreased by ten compared to the previous quarter. The most significant decrease, and reason for the overall reduction, was in reporting of Near Hit / Cause for Concerns (-6). However, there has been a slight increase in personal injuries (+1) and vehicle collisions (+1). All other categories observed a slight decrease in occurrences.
13. During the period, there were two Violence and Aggression incidents. The first of these incidents was minor in nature and controlled by the local officer in charge with no requirement for police assistance. However, the second incident involved a threat from a member of the public who had a firearm. Crews withdrew and requested assistance from West Mercia Police.
14. During the period, there has been a slight increase in Vehicle Collisions. There have been a number of events involving emergency vehicles responding to incidents in congested/restricted access areas. As a result, local action has been taken in these areas to educate residents on the requirements of access for emergency vehicles.

15. Two injuries have been reported to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) under the RIDDOR regulations. Both of these cases were reported because they involved injuries that were over seven days in duration. One basic specialist investigation occurred linked to RIDDOR due to a personal injury, where a hospital visit was required.
16. Finally, manual handling continues to account for the largest proportion of personal injury incidents. This trend is mirrored across the region. As a result, a regional action plan is currently being developed to address this situation. Internally, HWFRS's Operational Assurance team will be undertaking an audit of manual handling training to ensure competence is being maintained across the entire workforce.

### Corporate Considerations

<b>Resource Implications</b> (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	Contained within H&S budgets and departmental capacity.
<b>Strategic Policy Links</b> (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	Corporate Strategy: ensuring firefighter safety.
<b>Risk Management / Health &amp; Safety</b> (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	Reduces the overall impact for H&S management in the areas identified and safeguards the Services legal requirements.
<b>Consultation</b> (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	Representative bodies attend H&S Committee and are fully consulted on H&S matters.
<b>Equalities</b> (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	N/A
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b> (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)	N/A

### Supporting Information

Appendix 1: Quarter 1 (April to June 2021) Event Reporting and Summary