

Report of Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Health and Safety Committee Update: October – December 2021 (Quarter 3)

Purpose of report

1. To provide the Committee with a Health and 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 October to December 2021 (Quarter 3)*

Introduction and Background

2. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) aims to ensure the safety, health and well-being of its employees and reduce and prevent accidents and injuries at work, as outlined in the People Strategy 2022-25 and recently noted by the Fire Authority.
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 16 March 2022.
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.
5. The Working Group is currently formally tasked with the following:
 - To implement the findings from the NFCC's Death in the Workplace report.
 - To promote and improve fitness standards across the Service.
6. The Group meets regularly, ensuring actions are monitored and implemented at the earliest opportunity.

Health & Safety Initiatives Update

National Activities

7. The NFCC has issued a questionnaire to all services relating to the management systems and processes that each service either already has in place or is considering implementing. HWFRS's H&S Department completed the return and it is envisaged further best practice guidance / consideration will be shared by the NFCC once responses have been collated.

Regional Activities

8. The regional audit programme, a partnership between Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) from across the West Midlands region, is being reintroduced during Quarter 4, 2021-22.
9. H&S Subject Matter Experts (SME) from each FRS, with findings and learning outcomes shared across the partnership to enhance health and safety.
10. A GAP analysis is completed following each peer assessment to ensure that HWFRS adopts any learning and maintains compliance against H&S legislation.
11. As part of this programme, HWFRS's Health and Safety Advisor will support Shropshire FRS's audit.
12. The themes of the audit are:
 - Water rescue
 - Transport procurement
 - Provision & Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER)
 - Equipment checks and safety files.
13. Another regional audit will take place at Staffordshire FRS during Quarter 2 2022-23; further information will be shared when the themes are agreed.

HWFRS Local Activities

14. Following on from the last update provided in the quarter 2 report, HWFRS have continued to monitor and implement safe systems of work via the COVID Recovery Group. Managers have been supplied with best practice guidance issued by Government, NFCC and the HSE to ensure that workplaces and work activities are assessed to prevent the transmission of COVID whilst at work.
15. A new Covid-19 variant of concern 'Omicron' has been identified within the UK. HWFRS reviewed the updated government guidance with organisational working practices focusing on essential activities to keep vulnerable groups safe from potential exposure. Staff are continuing to use the Hybrid Working Trial during this time, to minimise the likelihood of unnecessary workplace transmission.
16. There has been a recent occurrence reported via the equipment defect system (standard routine testing). The reported defect was in relation to the Pressure

Reducer handwheel nut on a Breathing Apparatus set being found to be loose, causing leakage of air. An investigation was carried out by Draeger and the subsequent findings of this investigation concluded:

‘A significant contributing factor to this issue, is when a cylinder is attached to a PSS backplate whilst the assembly is laid horizontally on a flat surface. This results in the cylinder being manipulated into position onto the pressure reducer handwheel which is known to apply excessive force to the nut which over time, results in it becoming loose’

17. Crews have been reminded of the correct technique to use when attaching a BA cylinder to a set. The Equipment Safety File has also been updated to reflect this advice, using the information supplied by Draeger, and Training Centre have amended the CTR packages to reflect this update.
18. Of the current 27 Health & Safety Policies there are 5 under scheduled review, which include:
 - Health & Safety Policy
 - Management of Contractors
 - The Production of H&S information
 - Major Event Response Protocol (Death in Workplace)
 - The Misuse of Alcohol and Substances
19. These policies will be reviewed in line with legislative and sector best practices and will undergo formal consultation across the organisation, prior to publication.
20. 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 3, 279 risk assessments were reviewed, and 27 new risk assessments were created.

Figure 1 – Risk Assessment Database

Location	Quarter 4 (20/21)		Quarter 1 (21/22)		Quarter 2 (21/22)		Quarter 3 (21/22)	
	Reviewed	Created	Reviewed	Created	Reviewed	Created	Reviewed	Created
North District	92	14	140	6	85	5	97	12
South District	102	18	105	12	109	18	78	4
West District	69	19	89	19	89	20	66	10
Training Centre	96	2	21	0	44	2	20	0
Others	30	4	41	1	24	2	18	1
Total	389	57	396	38	351	47	279	27

H&S Working Group activity updates

21. The group is progressing the identified action points against the Death in the Workplace analysis. A key area identified as an area of improvement is the training of welfare officers, HWFRS are in discussions with partners to provide training during 2022.
22. The group has identified several areas of work required in order to implement the new Fitness service policy which is under development/consultation in order to promote fitness across the service. The draft policy will be circulated for consultation during Quarter 4.

Quarter 3 Performance Report

23. Appendix 1 provides details relating to all safety events reported and investigated during Quarter 3 of the 2021-22 reporting year (October – December).
24. The total number of safety events reported in Quarter 3 decreased by 10 compared to the previous quarter. The most significant decrease, and reason for the overall reduction, was in the reporting of Personal Injury category which reduced by 6 and Violence and Aggression by 3.
25. During the period, there has been a slight increase in Property and Equipment Damage reported events (+2) and Vehicle Accidents (+1).
26. No injuries have been reported to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) under the RIDDOR regulations.
27. No basic Specialist Investigations occurred.
28. Finally, following the previous review of the accident data, manual handling continues to account for the largest proportion of personal injury incidents. Therefore, the H&S Advisor has worked with Training Centre and 10 response staff have received the manual handling 'Train the Trainer' course to improve manual handling training across the Service.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	Contained within H&S budgets and departmental capacity.
Strategic Policy Links (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.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (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.
Consultation (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.
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	N/A
Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)	All personal data has been removed from the reports contained within Appendix 1.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1: Quarter 3 (October to December 2021) Event Reporting and Summary