

10. Chief Fire Officer's Service Report

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the Authority of recent key developments and activities together with performance information for the period 1 January 2011 to 31 March 2011.

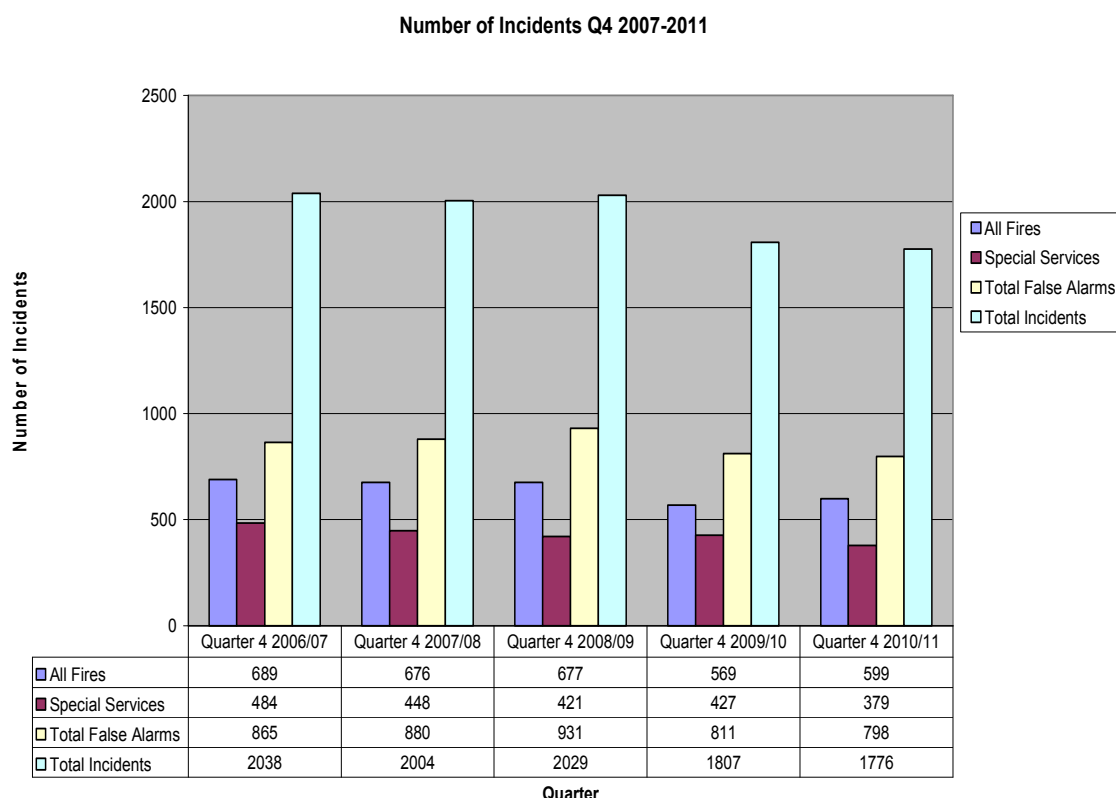
Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer recommends that the report be noted.

Performance

Operational Incidents and Total Number of Fires Attended

2. Figure 1 below demonstrates overall operational activity during Quarter 4 2010-2011 compared with the fourth quarter in the previous 4 years:



(Figure 1 – Comparative number of incidents Q4 2007-2011)

3. Total incident numbers for Quarter 4 2010-2011 show a decrease on the same quarter last year. This is due to decreases in the number of false alarms and special services attended. The total number of incidents has decreased from 1807 in Quarter 4 2009-2010 to 1776 in Quarter 4 2010-2011, (-1.7%) and is the lowest number of incidents attended in the fourth quarter in the last five years.

4. The number of fires has increased slightly from 569 in Quarter 4 2009-2010 to 599 in Quarter 4 2010-2011, (+5.3%).

	Quarter 4 2009-10	Quarter 4 2010-11	Percentage change
Primary Fires	288	310	+7.6%
Secondary Fires	152	190	+25.0%
Chimney Fires	129	99	-23.3%
Total Fires	569	599	+5.3%

(Table 1 – Total Fires Q4 09-10 and Q4 10-11)

5. Table 1 above demonstrates that the increase in total fires is mainly due to an increase in secondary fires in Quarter 4 2010-2011 compared with Quarter 4 2009-2010. Secondary Fires tend to be more prevalent in the summer periods but the table below illustrates that there have been increases in the number of secondary fires attended in each of the three months of the quarter when compared with the same quarter last year.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Quarterly Total
Secondary Fires Q4 09-10	21	44	87	152
Secondary Fires Q4 10-11	29	60	101	190
Percentage Change	+38.1%	+36.4%	+16.1%	+25.0%

(Table 2 – Secondary Fires per month Q4 09-10 and Q4 10-11)

6. Further analysis indicates that there has been an increase in secondary fires starting in loose refuse, small refuse/rubbish containers and tree scrub in Quarter 4 2010-11 compared with the same quarter last year. There were 52 loose refuse fires in Quarter 4 2010-11 compared with 45 in the same quarter last year, 45 small refuse/rubbish container fires compared with 32 in the same quarter last year and 25 tree scrub fires compared with 17 in the same quarter last year. The total proportion of secondary fires caused accidentally has increased in Quarter 4 2010-11 compared with the same quarter last year, 85 out of 190 or 44.7% were caused accidentally compared with 61 out of 152 or 40.1% of secondary fires caused accidentally in Quarter 4 2009-10.
7. However, the number of secondary fires attended in both Quarter 4 2010-11 and Quarter 4 2009-10 are a significant reduction on the number of secondary fires attended in the same quarter in previous years. The average number of secondary fires attended in Quarter 4 2006-07 to Quarter 4 2008-09 was 236 incidents.
8. The number of special service incidents has decreased in Quarter 4 2010-11 compared with the same quarter last year with 379 incidents attended in Quarter 4 2010-2011 compared with 427 in Quarter 4 2009-2010, (-11.2%).

	Quarter 4 2009-10	Quarter 4 2010-11	Percentage change
RTC Incidents	164	164	0.0%
Flooding	37	23	-37.8%
Other Special Services	226	192	-15.0%
All Special Services	427	379	-11.2%

(Table 3 – Special Services Q4 09-10 and Q4 10-11)

9. The number of false alarm incidents has decreased in Quarter 4 2010-11 with 798 incidents attended in Quarter 4 2010-2011 compared with 811 in Quarter 4 2009-2010 (-1.6%):

	Quarter 4 2009-10	Quarter 4 2010-11	Percentage change
Malicious False Alarms	11	18	+63.6%
False Alarm Good Intent	179	187	+4.5%
Automatic False Alarms	621	593	-4.5%
Total False Alarms	811	798	-1.6%

(Table 4 – False Alarms Q4 09-10 and Q4 10-11)

10. Although there has been a large percentage increase in malicious false alarms when compared with the same quarter last year (+63.6%), in real terms there has only been an increase of 7 incidents. There is no discernable trend or pattern emerging from this increase in incidents. Fire Control continue to call challenge suspected malicious calls and 35 hoax calls were challenged and no attendance made in Quarter 4 2010-11.
11. The 4.5% reduction in automatic false alarms compared with the same quarter last year has resulted in the overall reduction in false alarms comparing the same quarter.
12. Quarter 4 performance and the Annual Performance Report 2010/11 were considered in detail at the Policy and Resources Committee on 8 June 2011. The Service has seen its best performance ever in many of its performance indicators and the Chief Fire Officer recently congratulated everyone in the Service, through the weekly staff Bulletin, on the performance levels achieved, noting that our communities have been made safer by their efforts.

Health and Safety

Incidents and Injuries

	Jan	Feb	Mar	This Quarter Total	Previous Quarter Total
Serious Incidents ¹	2	4	4	10	9
Near Hit/Cause for Concern ²	1	5	5	11	7
Potential Exposure ³	3	0	2	5	8
Total Incidents	29	19	27	75	69
Specialist Investigations ⁴	2	3	3	8	7

¹ Incidents either actually resulting in, or having the potential to result in a fatality, serious personal injury or significant loss or damage.

² Incidents that almost resulted in an injury or conditions identified that have the potential to cause injury, loss or a near hit but have not done so up to the time of reporting – e.g. items falling from shelf near to people or unbalanced and overhanging items stored on a shelf.

³ Incidents where persons were potentially exposed to hazardous substances (usually during operational duties) – e.g. exposure to river water during swift water rescue training, exposure to asbestos during firefighting.

⁴ Of incidents either actually resulting in, or having the potential to result in serious injuries or losses and incidents involving Breathing Apparatus.

Analysis

13. Of the reported Health and Safety incidents this quarter, only 8 were, or had the potential to be, 'serious incidents'. However, when compared with the previous quarter the number of serious incidents has increased by one.
14. Furthermore, the number of near hits and causes for concern continues to represent a small proportion of all reported incidents. These incidents present an opportunity for the organisation to take action to prevent the circumstances deteriorating and resulting in injury or loss and reporting is encouraged.
15. The serious incidents this quarter comprised of the following:
 - One incident resulting in unsecured Breathing Apparatus cylinders moving around a vehicle during transit, and a subsequent exposure of noise for the driver.
 - A firefighter's ankle twisted when they stepped down from the appliance, causing swelling.
 - An automatic appliance bay door came down on top of the appliance as it was leaving the station.
 - Two incidents of verbal abuse from a group directed at a fire crew attempting to extinguish a fire.
 - During PAT (Electrical) testing, a fault was found in the CFS trailer electrical connections.
 - A roof tile hit a firefighter in the face during the latter stages of an incident.
 - Overheated fluorescent light fitting resulted in a minor fire.
 - Shorting in high voltage underground cabling, resulted in fire, however crew unaware of cabling presence and so potential for use of water and with it electrical hazard.
16. A total of eight Specialist investigations were mobilised this quarter, however only four subsequently required a full investigation and they comprise of the following:
 - The uncontrolled release of Breathing Apparatus cylinders - unsecured during transport.
 - Slipped when dismounting appliance.
 - Bay door came down onto an appliance.
 - Firefighter being hit in the mouth with a falling roof tile.
17. This quarter, our potential exposure records indicate that only two incidents occurred during operational activities. In addition, there were 7 incidents of verbal abuse to crews during operational activities, one involved a firefighter being pushed whilst another involved comments of a sexual nature. Whether this trend is an increase of these types of occurrences or an increase in levels of reporting is yet to be determined.

18. The Authority's commitment to Health and Safety is reflected in the training the staff receive:

Training Delivered During the Last Quarter 2010-2011

- 14 Station commanders received training in managing contractors.
- 18 personnel received training in assessing display screen equipment and users.
- 12 personnel received training in managing hazardous substances.
- 14 personnel received training in risk assessment.

Training Planned For the Year 2011-12

- 15 managers are to receive advanced level NEBOSH training
- 30 watch and crew commanders are to receive IOSH Managing Safely training.
- 36 personnel to undertake risk assessment training.
- 30 personnel are to undertake training in managing hazardous substances.
- 9 Fleet Technicians are to receive training in abrasive wheels and job specific training.
- Refresher training to be arranged in food safety.

19. In early June 2011 the Service was made aware of a potential Health and Safety issue following a safety event (accident) in another English Fire and Rescue Service. Whilst being used for training a 13.5m ladder had catastrophically failed, causing serious injury to at least one firefighter. Following consultation with the local trade union the Service's entire operational and training ladder stock was inspected by both operational staff and qualified ladder maintenance technicians. Pending the outcome of the accident investigation being made known a number of control measures were implemented to enable the ladders to continue to be used effectively but with reduced working loads - these control measures were purely precautionary. This adhoc inspection and testing regime took place on a Saturday and Sunday with a large number of staff coming into work off duty at short notice.

Items of Interest

Recovery of costs (charging policy)

20. Following the decision taken at the December Authority meeting to recover the costs for lift rescues and Environment Agency related incidents, the Service has now combined all elements of cost recovery and charging into one policy.
21. This new policy was issued in early April with a scheduled "go live" date of 1 July 2011. The reason for the delay between the issue and "go live" date is to complete a programme of staff education and training, and to allow the Service to effectively communicate these changes to key stakeholders. The Service will be writing to all premises involving lift rescues over the last 3 years, to inform them of the change in policy. In future, the owner of a premise (not the person who calls the Service or is rescued) will only be permitted one free initial call to a lift rescue, with any subsequent calls being charged.

22. It has to be emphasised that this policy is to recover costs for non-life threatening incidents and does not in any way involve charging the public for an emergency response.
23. The cost for a fire appliance per hour is £217, which is similar to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and lower than many other Fire and Rescue Services.
24. Incident types covered by this policy are:
 - Lift Rescues/Gaining Access to property (locked out)
 - Environmental Protection - Fuel Spillage, Chemical Release, Clean Up
 - Water Removal/Aspiration (oxygenation)
 - Pumping In/Out (note: water cannot be supplied or obtained by the Service)
 - Dangerous Structures (USAR)
 - Clearing of flooded commercial premises
25. Also included in the policy are charges under FOI and data requests that we can legally apply.

Evesham Crew Commended by Chief Fire Officer

Outstanding Service Medal - Firefighter Jason Mayhew

26. On 11 February 2010 Firefighter Jason Mayhew responded as part of Evesham crew 282 to an incident described as a 'car in river' at Boat Lane, Evesham on the River Avon. Upon arrival it was apparent that a child was trapped in a submerged car. Jason entered the water with Firefighter Richard Young and quickly located the car. However, the immersion suit and buoyancy aid worn by Jason prevented him from diving down to attempt a rescue. Without full regard for his own wellbeing, Jason requested permission to remove his buoyancy aid and flood his immersion suit enabling him to dive deeper. Despite a water temperature estimated to be only one degree Celsius, Jason made repeated attempts to dive down to locate and rescue the trapped child. Naturally a water temperature so close to freezing point makes arduous tasks nearly impossible but this did not deter Jason and he continued his rescue attempts for 10-15 minutes until he was ordered out of the water for his own safety.
27. When safely on the riverbank, information was received that it may be possible for a child to survive for up to 90 minutes when immersed in water that cold. With this new information Jason, again without full regard for his own safety, volunteered to re-enter the water to attempt rescue. Jason continued further rescue attempts until it became physically impossible for him to carry on and the chances of survival of the occupant of the car had unfortunately diminished.
28. For his bravery, courage and fortitude under the most arduous of emotional and physical conditions, Firefighter Jason Mayhew is awarded Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority's Outstanding Service Medal.

Chief Fire Officer's Commendation

29. On 11 February 2010 crews from Evesham responded to an incident described as a 'car in river' at Boat Lane, Evesham on the River Avon. Upon arrival the crews were informed that there was a young girl trapped in a car in the river. They then began the arduous task of attempting to rescue her.
30. Utilising water rescue equipment, including lines, immersion suits and a boat, the crew of 282 tried valiantly for 90 minutes to rescue the trapped child. During the rescue attempt normally accepted protocols had to be suspended in order to give the crew the best chance of achieving a successful rescue. The rescue attempts required the crew to act under intense pressure in very arduous circumstances and also required the command officers to display a high degree of bravery in their command decision.
31. For the bravery in command displayed by Station Commander David Holland and Watch Commander Julian Jenkins, and the courage displayed by all of the 282 crew members, the Evesham 282 crew was awarded the Chief Fire Officer's Commendation.

Young Firefighters' Passing Out Parade

32. Over 150 family members watched on at Droitwich Fire Station on Saturday 21 May as their youngsters took part in a passing out ceremony to celebrate the completion of the Young Firefighters Association (YFA) training programme.
33. The 22 teenagers, from both the Droitwich and Redditch branches of the YFA, have all recently completed the 13-week training course with Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (H&WFRS) and each Young Firefighter was presented with a certificate by Chief Fire Officer Mark Yates at the ceremony to mark this achievement.
34. They also demonstrated some of the skills they have learnt during the course of their training, such as hose running and ladder climbing, as well as demonstrations on car fire and house fire rescues.
35. Participants who have previously completed the programme learned skills that have enabled them to get a head start for their future careers and have achieved the following successes to date:
 - 2 females recruited as on-call firefighters;
 - 4 males recruited as on-call firefighters;
 - 2 males recruited as wholetime firefighters (one to West Midlands Fire Service);
 - 4 have joined the Ambulance Service (1 male and 3 female)
 - 2 joined the Royal Navy (1 male and 1 female); and
 - 1 male has joined the Royal Marines.
36. During the event the Chief Fire Officer praised the volunteer co-ordinators from H&WFRS who give up their time to assist with the YFA scheme.

37. The Droitwich branch of the YFA meet every Wednesday evening at Droitwich Fire Station while the Redditch branch meet every Thursday evening at Redditch Fire Station, both between 7pm and 9pm. There are also plans to set up a new branch of the YFA in Evesham.

Contact Officer

Mark Yates, Chief Fire Officer

0845 1224454

Email: myates@hwfire.org.uk