

## 6. 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 July to 30 September 2010.

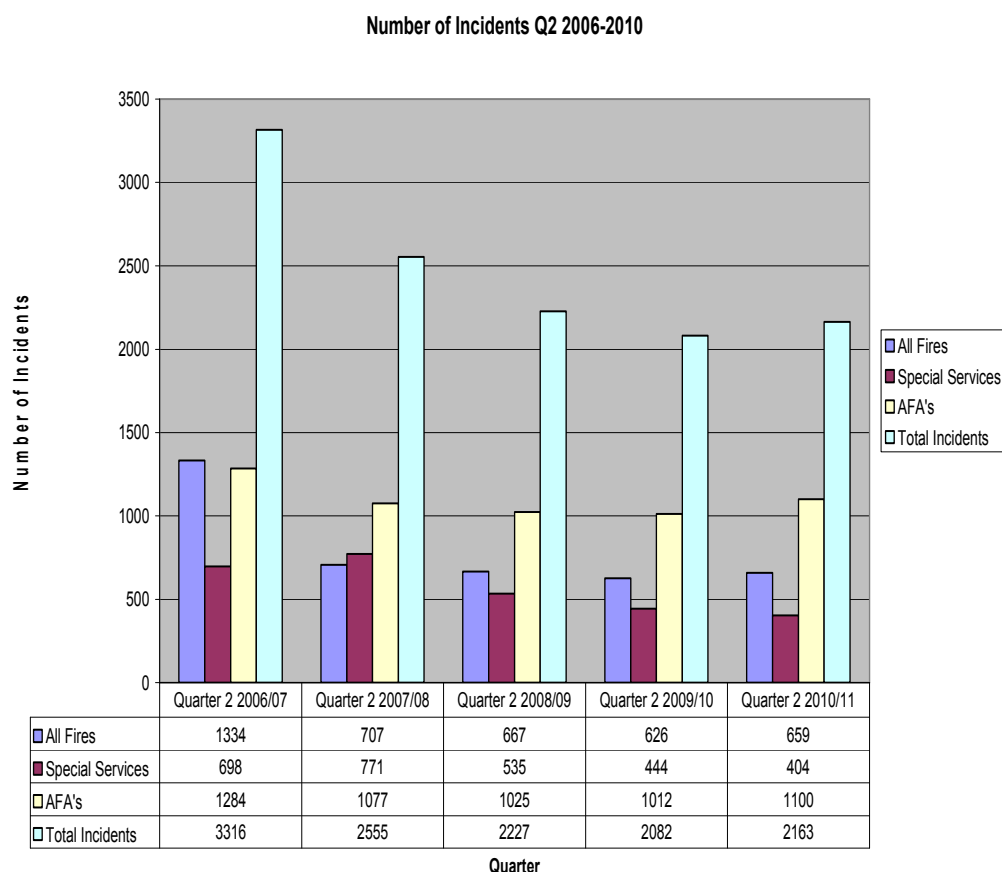
### Recommendation

*The Chief Fire Officer recommends that the report be noted.*

## Performance

### Operational Performance Update Quarter 2 2010-11

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



*(Figure 1 – Comparative number of incidents Q2 2006-2010)*

3. Total incident numbers for Quarter 2 2010-2011 show a slight increase on the same quarter last year. This is due to increases in the number of fires and false alarms attended. The total number of incidents has increased from 2082 in Quarter 2 2009-2010 to 2163 in Quarter 2 2010-2011, (+3.9%).

4. The number of fires has increased from 626 in Quarter 2 2009-2010 to 659 in Quarter 2 2010-2011 (+5.3%).

	Quarter 2 2009-10	Quarter 2 2010-11	Percentage change
Primary Fires	311	324	4.2%
Secondary Fires	307	318	3.6%
Chimney Fires	8	17	112.5%
<b>Total Fires</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>5.3%</b>

*(Table 1 – Total Fires Q2 09-10 and Q2 10-11)*

5. Table 1 above demonstrates that the increase in total fires is due to increases in primary, secondary and chimney fires which have all increased in Quarter 2 2010-2011 compared with Quarter 2 2009-2010. Further analysis of the stop messages for Chimney Fires indicates that 9 out of the 14 incidents in September 2010 were from Agas or wood burning stoves and the remaining 5 were fireplace chimney fires. There were no peak periods when the incidents occurred throughout the month.
6. These increases are mainly due to an increase in primary and secondary fire activity in July 2010 compared with the same month last year:

	July	Aug	Sept	Quarterly Total
Primary Fires Q2 09-10	88	105	118	311
Primary Fires Q2 10-11	117	110	97	324
<b>Percentage Change</b>	<b>33.0%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>-17.8%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>

*(Table 2 – Primary Fires per month Q2 09-10 and Q2 10-11)*

	July	Aug	Sept	Quarterly Total
Secondary Fires Q2 09-10	66	108	113	307
Secondary Fires Q2 10-11	147	115	56	318
<b>Percentage Change</b>	<b>122.7%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>-57.9%</b>	<b>3.6%</b>

*(Table 3 – Secondary Fires per month Q2 09-10 and Q2 10-11)*

7. Tables 2 and 3 illustrate a large increase in activity in July 2010 compared with the same month last year for both primary and secondary fires which were compensated by improved monthly performance in September 2010 in comparison with September 2009. The average number of secondary fires incidents attended in July over the past five years has been 175 incidents so it should be noted that last July 2009 was a very low month in terms of activity with only 66 secondary fires attended.
8. The number of chimney fires has also increased in Quarter 2 2010-2011 compared with the same quarter last year with 14 chimney fires attended in September 2010 compared with only 4 in September 2009. Chimney fires are subject to seasonal variation and it seems that the autumn-winter increase has started earlier than in previous years. A media release warning people against dangers of chimney fires was issued by our press office on 8 September 2010 and the narrative logs state that fire safety leaflets were provided to the occupants at these incidents.

9. The number of Special Service incidents has reduced with 404 incidents attended in Quarter 2 2010-2011 compared with 444 in Quarter 2 2009-2010 (-9.0%).
10. The number of False Alarm incidents has increased with 1110 incidents attended in Quarter 2 2010-2011 compared with 1012 in Quarter 2 2009-2010, an increase of 8.7%:

	Quarter 2 2009-10	Quarter 2 2010-11	Percentage change
Malicious False Alarms	31	22	-29.0%
False Alarm Good Intent	227	240	5.7%
Automatic False Alarms	754	838	11.1%
<b>Total False Alarms</b>	<b>1012</b>	<b>1110</b>	<b>8.7%</b>

(Table 4 – False Alarms Q2 09-10 and Q2 10-11)

11. The overall increase in total false alarms is mainly due to an 11.1% increase in the number of automatic false alarms attended compared with Quarter 2 2009-2010 as these make up the largest part of the total alarms' figure.

	July	Aug	Sept	Quarterly Total
Auto False Alarms Q2 09-10	246	263	245	754
Auto False Alarms Q2 10-11	257	292	289	838
<b>Percentage Change</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>18.0%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>

(Table 5 – Automatic False Alarms per month Q2 09-10 and Q2 10-11)

12. Table 5 illustrates that this increase in automatic false alarms was due to increases in the number of automatic false alarms attended in July, August and especially September where the number increased from 245 incidents attended in September 2009 to 289 incidents attended in September 2010 (an increase of 18.0%). The increase in AFAs from the same quarter last year is partially due to an increase in AFAs at domestic properties as opposed to non-domestic properties. Domestic AFAs accounted for 41.6% of all AFAs (349 out of 838) in Quarter 2 2010-11 compared with 28.8% of all AFAs (217 out of 754) in Quarter 2 2009-10.

## Health and Safety

### Incidents and Injuries

	<b>Total Incidents*</b>	<b>RIDDOR Reportable</b>
July – Sept 2009	46	4
October – December 2009	72	6
January – March 2010	103	11
April – June 2010	88	4
<b>July – Sept 2010</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>5</b>

\*includes all H & S Incidents (injuries, fleet H & S incidents, near hits, etc)

### Analysis

13. The number of reported Health and Safety incidents/injuries this quarter has decreased significantly when compared with the previous quarter – from 88 down to 53 – but has increased when compared with the same period last year – up from 46.

14. The number of incidents reportable under RIDDOR has increased slightly when compared with both the previous quarter and the same period last year – from 4 to 5. All of these incidents were reportable as the person was unable to work for more than 3 days, though one was the subject of a specialist investigation as a member of the Retained Duty System was involved in an RTC whilst responding to their pager from their home address.
15. Of the numbers of reported incidents this quarter, only 10 were injuries. The remaining 33 incidents comprised of low level incidents of verbal abuse against staff, potential exposure to substances, fleet incidents, near hits and causes for concern.
16. As identified in previous periods the significant number of all Health and Safety incidents continue to involve Operational personnel.

### **Health and Safety Training**

17. Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH), Risk Assessment and Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) courses were programmed for October and November. This provides the underpinning skills and knowledge required and forms part of the Service's commitment to promote the training and safety of all our personnel.

## **Items of Interest**

### **Fire in Hereford City Centre**

18. In the early hours of Thursday 21 October 2010, fire crews from across Herefordshire and Worcestershire attended a serious fire in Hereford City Centre. The fire was particularly difficult and resource intensive to deal with due to it being fully developed on arrival and also the tightly packed and complicated building structures encountered by the initial crews attending.
19. The fire, although serious, was contained within a relatively small section of the City Centre and was resolved without injury to firefighters or members of the public.
20. Following the initial firefighting actions and the fire being brought under control, the focus of the incident moved towards returning the City Centre to normality and mitigating the already extensive structural and potentially economic damage.
21. In this phase of the incident Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service crews worked extensively with partners, including Herefordshire Council Building Control Officers, to ensure public safety whilst parts of buildings were demolished and/or made safe.



22. The fire is being described in the media as: 'the largest fire in Hereford in a generation' and was resolved in safety by all responding agencies having appropriate plans and training in place. The Chief Fire Officer, who at the height of the fire was in charge of the incident, believes a safe resolution was brought about because of the professionalism and skills of all concerned, both firefighting staff and partner agencies including the Police, Ambulance, Herefordshire Council and voluntary organisations. Fire and Rescue Service crews finally left the scene on the afternoon of Sunday 24 October, some three and a half days after the Service's initial attendance.
23. H&WFRS received a number of messages after the fire including:
24. Luke Conod, one of the Business owners wrote: *"Just to reiterate that I have been speaking to my colleagues in both retail and other business in the City and we were very impressed with the professional and courteous manner that you and the police dealt with a very difficult situation, by not only kept us informed but also got things back to normal for most of us by 11am the same morning. Once again thanks very much..."*
25. Councillor Roger Phillips, Leader of Herefordshire Council wrote: *"On behalf of Hereford Council, its partners and other organizations in the City, I wanted to write to you to place on record our thanks for the professionalism and successful handling of the recent fire in Hereford High Town. Obviously, but for the work of our emergency services, this incident as it was could have been far worse. While the initial fire is obviously a focus of people's attention, the support and work of other agencies and individuals is important to ensuring that the communications and impact of the incident are managed successfully. In Herefordshire we have many examples of good partnership working but it is important to properly record thanks and appreciation to all those individuals and agencies who have been involved in this emergency."*
26. The Countess of Darnley, Lord Lieutenant of Herefordshire wrote: *"Your fire crews did a wonderful job of containment; it looks as if the buildings were almost built into each other. Please pass on my thanks and congratulations on another professional job done to protect the people of Herefordshire."*

### **Young Firefighters' Association (YFA) Scheme**

27. The Service has been operating a Young Firefighters' Association (YFA) scheme for nearly 10 years and although Members will be aware of the scheme's existence the detail may not be so well known. As the tenth anniversary approaches, the Service is about to move from a set of broad guidelines for the scheme to a fully consulted policy which lays out the various aspects of the scheme as well as containing the expectations for the scheme and the young people involved. The YFA is governed by the Executive Committee which is Chaired by Councillor Lucy Hodgson and has representatives from the Service including the Chief Fire Officer.
28. The YFA commenced its first training course at Droitwich in January 2001 with the instructors having used almost all of 2000 to make the preparations for such a significant undertaking. Pat and Monty Wild (retired Watch Manager) along with Sue and Watch Manager Ade Taylor played the lead role in the setting up of the group on a voluntary basis and although Monty retired from the YFA as an instructor in 2005 he still helps out when needed. Ade Taylor remains as the branch coordinator with plenty of invaluable support from Sue, his wife, who is

also the branch event planner, promotion officer, administrator and marketing manager. Throughout 2009 Sue and Ade helped and advised Redditch to set up a further branch, with Firefighter Peter Hope as branch coordinator, and continue to support this group to ensure their many years' of experience benefit both the instructors and young people of that fledgling group. Both groups could not function without the help and support of the team of instructors who are all voluntary. These instructors have varying backgrounds: operational, (retained and wholtime), community safety, support services and some that have no link with the Service at all.

29. From the very start of the Service's YFA scheme it was agreed that the instructors must have aims and objectives for the groups and needed to keep these in sight at all times. These were agreed as follows.
- **To develop young people to their full potential as individuals, as team members and as part of their local communities.**
  - **To provide young people with the opportunity of joining a uniformed, disciplined, organisation affiliated to a statutory body.**
  - **To support the members' development, both mentally and physically, whilst promoting self discipline, social consciousness and community awareness.**
  - **To foster a spirit of adventure and develop qualities of leadership, team building and promote active participation amongst the members.**
  - **To positively promote HWFRS and contribute to its objectives relating to the promotion of Community Safety.**
30. The young people attend a large amount of social and charity events around both Herefordshire and Worcestershire on behalf of the Service, our partner agencies and other organisations. These events can broadly be divided between 'Service events' such as the Three Counties Show, Awards Evenings, Carol Service, Community Safety Days, etc. and 'local events' such as car washes, bag packs, fire station open days, school and village fetes, etc. Many of these events help to raise funds for other charities with a percentage of the funds raised being donated to the YFA to help fund their annual camp (camping equipment, team building days and the cost of external outward bound instructors). The annual camp, which is held over one week in the summer in the Forest of Dean, is funded in its entirety by fundraising by the YFA and is considered to be an important part of the YFA's calendar. The camp is designed to assist in the development of the young people and also as a thank you for all the hard work the young people have carried out throughout the year.
31. This year (2010) alone the YFA has attended over 50 events, many of these events would not have been as successful as they were had the YFA not attended. Becky Valendar, Community Safety Advisor South District, commented recently "at more than one event this year the young firefighters proved invaluable as I would not have managed without them, they attract the younger people of our community to these events and can communicate with them at the same level".
32. Evesham has recently expressed an interest in having a branch of the YFA and two people have signalled their intention to help set up a group. Once again Sue and Ade Taylor are willing to act in an advisory capacity to help with this. The Chief Fire Officer is keen to expand the YFA but as all instructors are appointed

on a voluntary basis this is only possible when staff come forward. He would certainly like to see the expansion of the YFA into Herefordshire and volunteers are sought!

33. The YFA has become an integral part of the Service and a valuable resource to all departments. From the inception of the scheme until now the YFA has followed guide lines from a set of draft policies and it is now time to fully embed the YFA and its activities into the Service by bringing their guidelines into the Service's policy framework. The full policy (31 pages) is available upon request.

#### **Senior Management Board (SMB)**

34. On 1 January 2011, the Principal Management Meeting will be re-constituted as the Senior Management Board (SMB) with clear terms of reference and the expectation that strategic decision making and unity at the very top of the Service reflects the expectations of the Service. The new SMB, which will have one less Assistant Chief Fire Officer than we currently have, will include all Area Commanders and support staff equivalents alongside Principal Officers, to ensure that the decisions made and strategies taken are fully informed. This change is recognition that with one less Principal Officer, the Area Commander level is fundamental to the strategic running of the Service and needs to be more involved at the highest level of the organisation. The Area Commander level should also be more in tune with the day-to-day running of the Service so this level is key to ensuring messages to and from SMB are sent and received without distortion

#### **Fire Service launches new Environmental Protection Unit**

35. The official launch took place at 2.00pm on Wednesday 8 December at Stourport-on-Severn Fire Station in Foundry Street, Stourport-on-Severn. The new EPU carries a specially trained crew of four and provides specialist equipment to contain spillages of chemicals that might harm the environment and wildlife. This is in addition to first line response of using environmental grab bags, which are carried as standard on all fire appliances.
36. The unit replaces the original trailers which were supplied by the Environment Agency to the Fire Service as part of a national initiative that recognised that Fire Services can provide a quick response to environmental incidents. These trailers, which have been in use for over 10 years, will be taken out of service following delivery of the new EPU vehicle.
37. This new unit has been part funded by the Environment Agency and is specially designed with enhanced stowage facilities and the welfare of the crew taken into account. It will be based permanently at Stourport Fire Station, and will be called to respond to any incidents across the two counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire involving chemicals or hazardous substances. This could include any incident where there was a risk of fire or spillage into waterways, where there was a road incident involving a tanker or a confirmed carrier of hazardous waste, or any other specific request from the incident commander for the EPU to attend.

#### **Chief Fire Officer and local MPs meet Fire Minister**

38. Chief Fire Officer Mark Yates, accompanied by Martin Reohorn, Director of Finance with H&WFRS, met with Fire Minister Bob Neill MP and Members of Parliament from Herefordshire and Worcestershire on 11 November to discuss the impact of the potential cuts the Service may be facing as a result of the recently announced Comprehensive Spending Review. Also at the

meeting were Sajid Javid MP (Bromsgrove), Karen Lumley MP (Redditch), Robin Walker MP (Worcester), Harriet Baldwin MP (West Worcestershire), Mark Garnier MP (Wyre Forest) and Bill Wiggins MP (North Herefordshire)

39. CFO Yates briefed the Minister on the historical imbalance within the grant funding from government to H&WFRS and explained the potential impact that the reductions in grant might have on the Service, especially considering the particular challenges associated with more rural areas.
40. Chief Fire Officer Mark Yates said: "The Minister listened intently to what we had to say, and while no promises were made, he certainly seemed to have a good understanding of the difficulties we face in providing fire and rescue cover across our rural communities.
41. I appreciate the support we have received from our local MPs regarding this matter and feel reassured that the Minister has listened to and understands the challenges that a Fire Service like Hereford & Worcester faces with its predominantly rural geography."

### **Fire Service launches Christmas safety campaign**

42. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (H&WFRS) launched its annual Christmas safety campaign in November. The campaign features a range of safety advice relevant to the winter months and Christmas and Community Safety Officers from the Fire Service highlighted key fire safety messages at some of the Christmas light switch on events around the two counties. These included Christmas Light switch-on events at:
  - The Kingfisher Shopping Centre in Redditch (Thursday 18 November);
  - Broad Street, Worcester (Thursday 18 November);
  - Stourport town centre (Friday 19 November);
  - Market Square, Ross-on-Wye (Friday 19 November);
  - Kidderminster town centre (Saturday 20 November);
  - High Town in Hereford (Sunday 21 November);
  - Evesham town centre (Sunday 21 November);
  - Bewdley town centre (Saturday 27 November); and
  - Corn Square, Leominster (Saturday 27 November).
43. Community Safety Officers were joined by Young Firefighters and Community Safety Volunteers at the events to hand out a range of safety advice leaflets, including 'Good feeling gone' flyers, to remind residents how dangerous unattended candles, wrappings and overloaded sockets can be. The leaflets also highlight the important of testing smoke alarms every week.
44. Posters featuring the same message will also be displayed in schools, libraries and hospital and doctor's waiting rooms in the run up to Christmas, in a bid to reach as many people in the community as possible. The Community Safety Team will also be in supermarkets across the two counties during December to promote the Christmas safety message to shoppers.



## Worcestershire Partnership Board

45. Following consultation on proposals for a restructure, the Worcestershire Partnership Board has now agreed to streamline the Partnership structure and reduce the resources required to support it. The previous Partnership Board dissolved itself with effect from 27 October and subsequently the new Board assumed responsibility for the Partnership. The new Partnership Board now includes the Chair or Vice Chair of other public sector bodies, including the Fire & Rescue Authority as non-executive members. The Authority Vice-Chair, Cllr Stephen Clee will now represent the FRA on the Worcestershire Partnership Board.
46. The first meeting of the new Board took place on 3 December to:
- Appoint a Chair;
  - Agree Terms of reference/governance arrangements for new partnership structure;
  - Finalise the Public Sector membership;
  - Agree Voluntary and Business Sector representation;
  - Consider and consult on Worcestershire Forum;
  - Decide on consultation on Theme Groups
  - Consider the role of District Local Strategic Partnerships

### Information for Members

47. **Requests for Information**  
**Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)/ Data Protection Act (DPA)/**  
**Environmental Information Regulations (EIR)**

Q2	FOI Requests received and completed	DPA Requests received and completed	EIR Requests received and completed	Total
July 2010	15	0	0	15
August 2010	15	1	0	16
September 2010	21	2	0	23
TOTALS	51	3	0	54
Requests received January – September 2010			181	

### Freedom of Information Act Compliance

48. The Information Commissioner (ICO) is now publishing a list of public authorities that are being monitored for freedom of information compliance on a quarterly basis. The list will contain the details of those authorities that repeatedly or seriously fail to respond to freedom of information requests within the appropriate timescales.
49. The current list of authorities being monitored can be found at: [List of ICO monitoring](#).

50. In putting the list together the ICO looked at the number of complaints received and data that showed less than 85% of requests had received a response within appropriate timescales. They also considered occasions where authorities had exceeded time limits by a significant margin.
51. Since FOIA was introduced in 2005, HWFRS has effectively answered 1043 requests for information and has missed only 1 response deadline.

### **Complaints, Concerns, Compliments and Donations**

	<b>July-10</b>	<b>Aug-10</b>	<b>Sept-10</b>
Complaints/ Concerns	2	1	4
Compliments	5	6	9
Donations	3	3	1

52. There was an increase in the number of compliments received by the Service in September owing to various community engagement programmes, including attending Age Concern Hereford and Localities' Energy Event and the Urban Search and Rescue team's support of Merseyside Fire and Rescue's recent emergency Exercise.

### **Corporate Risk**

53. At the time of writing there is no known escalation of risks on the National, Local or Strategic Risk registers. However, the outcomes of both the Strategic Defence and Security Review and the Comprehensive Spending Review have implications for the Service which are being assessed and will most likely increase risks in certain areas.
54. The Cabinet Office has recently issued guidance on the role of the Local Resilience Forums. Taken together, there is potential for these changes to affect the Service and its Risk Management (LRF).
55. Exercises to test the preparedness of the Service and its partners to deal with threats and hazards continue. Exercise Watermark is a significant national exercise to be held in March 2011. As previously recorded (June 2010) the Service continues to play its part in preparing for this exercise.

### **New Draeger PSS 7000 Breathing Apparatus**

56. Members will be aware that the Service has been progressing with the introduction of a new breathing apparatus set throughout the Service. This project commenced early in 2010 and was unfortunately delayed through some necessary changes to the cylinder valve configuration and training programme. Officers of the Service have worked very closely with end users and the Trade Unions to ensure the adoption of a thorough training and implementation programme. The Chief Fire Officer is delighted to bring to Members' attention that the new Draeger PSS 7000 breathing apparatus set went on the run during the week of 6 December 2010 and ensures that the firefighters of Hereford & Worcester have the most up-to-date respiratory protection on the market.

## **Local Incidents and Initiatives to Note**

### **Redditch MP visits Young Firefighters**

57. Karen Lumley, Member of Parliament for Redditch, went along to Redditch Fire Station on Thursday 23 September to meet the Young Firefighters at their weekly training session. She was welcomed by Redditch Station Manager Phil Griffiths and then went to watch the group as they started their weekly drill. She heard how each young firefighter learns basic firefighting skills during a 13-week training course and then takes part in a passing out parade in front of senior officers, family and friends. She also heard about the community safety and local fund-raising initiatives the young firefighters get involved with and about the adventure-based activities they can try at summer camp. She spoke individually to each young firefighter and praised the firefighters who run the initiative for giving youngsters the chance to get involved in such a positive scheme.

### **Roof of manor house damaged in fire**

58. Fire crews were called to South Littleton in Evesham on Wednesday 29 September following reports that the roof of a large mansion in Main Street was on fire. Two pumps from Evesham, one from Pebworth and one from Broadway attended along with the aerial ladder platform and support pump from Worcester, and while firefighters in breathing apparatus tackled the fire from inside the house, firefighters also worked at height externally to bring the fire under control. Thankfully the occupants had noticed the fire in its very early stages and although a large area of the wooden roof had to be cut back to ensure the fire was fully extinguished and there was some smoke damage in the top floor area, fire officers at the scene reported that it had the potential to be far more serious. The owners of the property paid tribute to firefighters in the local media following the incident.

### **Fire at recycling plant in Kidderminster**

59. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service were called to the site of an industrial waste recycling plant in Kidderminster in the early hours of Tuesday 5 October following reports of an alarm and a smell of smoke coming from the premises. Firefighters from Kidderminster were at the scene within minutes and seeing smoke issuing from the premises, immediately called for an extra four pumps (a further pump from Kidderminster plus pumps from Stourport, Bewdley and Bromsgrove). The Command Support Unit (CSU) and the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) from Stourport also attended. Three firefighters in breathing apparatus gained access to the building and two covering jets and one high pressure hose reel were also used to help tackle the fire. An effective sprinkler system at the premises and the early actions of fire crews prevented a more serious fire breaking out, and ensured business continuity at the plant.

### **Fire at Worcester hostel**

60. Damage from a fire that broke out in a hostel in Tallow Hill, Worcester on Friday 8 October was limited to just one room, thanks to the prompt intervention of fire crews. Three pumps from Worcester and one from Droitwich attended, with firefighters in breathing apparatus quickly gaining access to the first floor bedroom, where they rescued the occupant and put out the fire. Firefighters also led two other residents from nearby bedrooms to safety. Police also attended the incident, assisting with the evacuation of around 120 people, many of them children who were attending evening prayer lessons at nearby premises.

## **Herefordshire Awards Ceremony**

61. Firefighters and staff were honoured at an Awards Ceremony held at Hereford Town Hall on Friday 15 October. This was the second of two awards ceremonies held by H&WFRS this year, and it followed a similar format to the Worcestershire event held on 3 September at the Guild Hall in Worcester. Station Manager Neil Pigott acted as Master of Ceremonies, and Lady Susan Darnley, the Lord Lieutenant of Herefordshire, joined Chief Fire Officer Mark Yates and Councillor Brigadier Peter Jones CBE, Chairman of Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority, to present the awards. These included seven Long Service Good Conduct Medals for 20 years service with H&WFRS and three Long Service Awards for 30 years service, as well as the presentation of the Ivor Owen Award to this year's top new recruit and the Chief Officer's Letter of Appreciation to Jacqueline O'Mahony from Herefordshire Council for her work with the Service.

## **Trailer collides with a house in Bosbury**

62. Firefighters helped to rescue an elderly couple from their home in Bosbury in Herefordshire on Sunday 17 October after a tractor and trailer collided with their house. Fire crews from Ledbury were assisted by the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team, the Incident Support Unit from Droitwich and the Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) from Hereford, while police and the Highways Agency also attended. The tractor driver and the couple, who were in their sitting room at the time of the incident, were all taken to hospital with minor injuries but were discharged later the same day. The house, meanwhile, suffered major structural damage and may have to be re-built.

## **Flat fire in Kidderminster**

63. Firefighters from Kidderminster and Bewdley extinguished a kitchen fire at a flat in George Street in Kidderminster on Monday 18 October after neighbours were alerted by a smoke alarm. The male living in the flat had left his cooking on a low heat on the stove while he went out and it had caught fire. Following the incident, H&WFRS issued a warning reminding people not to leave cooking unattended, and highlighting the vital role a working smoke alarm had played in this incident.

## **Royal visit**

64. His Royal Highness, The Duke of Gloucester, visited Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service on Wednesday 20 October as part of a wider look into flood resilience planning in the region. His visit included a demonstration of flood mapping technology used by the Fire Service Control Room staff during the summer floods of 2007 and a brief on the current flood threat to Worcestershire. After a lunch at Fire Service Headquarters, His Royal Highness accompanied CFO Mark Yates to Worcester Fire Station where he met Control Staff and some of the firefighters involved in recent flood rescues. He also looked at water rescue equipment used during the floods and at some more recently acquired rescue equipment, including the new rescue boat recently delivered to Worcester fire station. The Duke then visited a number of sites in Worcester where he met local residents whose homes have been affected by flooding and was given information from The Environment Agency Area about the flood defence project.

## **Sheep die following trailer collision**

65. Twenty-one sheep died after the container they were being transported in came off a trailer and overturned in Bransford in Worcestershire on Thursday 21 October. Crews from Malvern and Droitwich attended along with the Incident Support Unit, and were able to open the rear door of the trailer and guide some of the sheep to safety in a nearby field. They then used cutting equipment to help release other sheep trapped by metalwork inside the container. Around 60 sheep survived and were checked by a vet following their release from the container.

## **Bonfire Night Assemblies**

66. Community Safety Advisors from the Fire Service held a series of assemblies in schools across the two counties in October and early November to highlight bonfire and firework safety to Year 7 students (aged 11 and 12). They reminded youngsters about the Firework Code and explained how much safer it is to attend an organised bonfire and firework display rather than holding a celebration at home.

## **Electric blanket testing sessions**

67. With the onset of winter, the Community Safety Team from H&WFRS took part once again in a number of electric blanket testing sessions across Herefordshire and Worcestershire, often in partnership with Age Concern or other agencies. Around a third of all blankets tested failed the safety checks, with Community Safety Advisors reporting that several of the blankets they saw posed a high risk of fire or electrocution. Free replacement blankets were offered for those failing the safety checks, effectively removing many unsafe blankets from use. The defective blankets then had their electrics and wires removed and were then donated to local dog care charities.

## **Chimney safety warnings**

68. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service were called to 14 chimney fire incidents in September this year compared to just 4 in September 2009. While this may be weather related to some extent, the Community Safety Team have highlighted this trend in a bid to encourage residents across the two counties to make sure their chimneys are swept and ready for winter. Explaining that chimney fires can prove very serious, they advised that regular inspection and cleaning of chimney flues will help eliminate the build-up of soot from coal, wood, oil and gas fired systems, while sweeping will also clear obstructions like bird nests, leaves and debris.

## **Chemical Leak**

69. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (H&WFRS) were called to Hopwood Services, off Junction 2 of the M42 motorway on Wednesday 8 December following reports of a chemical leak from a tanker. The call was received at 6.10am and three fire crews from Redditch plus one from Bromsgrove attended along with the Incident Response Unit from Droitwich and the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) from Stourport. The Command Support Unit (CSU) and supporting appliance from Malvern also attended.

70. On arrival, crews found that a tanker containing around 23,000 litres of hydrochloric acid was leaking, and so they set up a safety cordon and started to put environmental measures in place to contain the leaking acid. Station Manager Phil Griffiths from Redditch explained: "Firefighters in breathing apparatus initially helped to assess the situation and we now have a specialist environmental cleaning company on site working with us to help contain the leak and limit any environmental impact. "We are currently planning for the chemical to be decanted into a second tanker later today and fire crews will remain at the scene until this has been completed." He also confirmed that the lorry driver and three members of the public have been assessed by ambulance staff as a precautionary measure after possible exposure to fumes. None of the four had suffered any ill effects.
71. An estimated 200 litres of acid is believed to have leaked from the tanker. The motorway services have remained open throughout the incident, and while access to fuel was restricted earlier, this is now operating as normal. The acid was safely decanted to an empty tanker (and four plastic barrels) later that day, and that the EPU returned to Stourport in time for its official launch at 2pm.

### **Contact Officer**

Mark Yates  
Chief Fire Officer (0845 1224454)  
Email: [myates@hwfire.org.uk](mailto:myates@hwfire.org.uk)