

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 October 2012 to 31 December 2012.

Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer recommends that the report be noted.

Performance

Operational Activity – Total and Fire Incidents – Quarter 3, 2012-13

2. The total number of incidents attended in Quarter 3 2012-13 shows a decrease compared with the same quarter last year. This is mainly due to a large reduction in the total number of fires attended.

Total Incidents	Quarter 3 2011-12	Quarter 3 2012-13	Percentage change
All Fires	555	432	-22.2%
Special Services	379	445	17.7%
False Alarms	870	813	-6.6%
Total Incidents	1804	1691	-6.3%

(Table 1 – Total Incidents Quarter 3 2011-12 and 2012-13)¹

3. The reduction in the total number of fires attended is mainly a result of a significant reduction in Secondary Fires attended in Quarter 3 compared with the same quarter last year. This reduction is mainly due to the predominantly wet weather conditions in Quarter 3 2012-13 compared with the same Quarter last year.
4. Special Service incidents totals have been adversely affected by an increase in flooding and other water related incidents throughout Quarter 3.
5. The total numbers of false alarm incidents have decreased when compared to Quarter 3 last year and also against the last three years' Quarter 3 average.

¹ the above figures include 27 incidents that have not been quality assured.

Health and Safety

Incidents and Injuries

6. A total of 84² Health and Safety related incidents were reported this quarter.

- 6 were/had potential to be 'serious incidents'³;
- 26 were incidents involving exposure to contaminated water whilst fire fighting at Lawrence's Recycling;
- 20 were vehicle collisions (detail is given later in this report);
- 18 were causes for concern or near hits.

	Oct	Nov	Dec	This ¼ Total	Prev.¼ Total
Serious Incidents ³	3	3	0	6	2
Near Hit/Cause for Concern ⁴	8	7	3	18	11
Specialist Investigations ⁵	3	2	0	5	4

Analysis

7. The serious or potentially serious incidents this quarter comprised of the following:

1. During a breathing apparatus drill involving the connecting and disconnecting a second person attachment the set went into free-flow. There were no injuries.
2. Difficulties manoeuvring boat when conducting an in-water rescue due to number of occupants.
3. During daily check on a breathing apparatus set could not hear the low pressure warning whistle operating - further investigations revealed it was missing.
4. Momentary loss of air supply to a firefighter whilst wearing breathing apparatus.
5. Leakage of air from the Y piece attachment on a breathing apparatus set.
6. Rescue boat hit a submerged metal bracket attached to the wall of a submerged property, puncturing the sponson.

² Serious injuries, minor injuries, vehicle collisions, potential hazards, near hits.

³ Incidents either actually resulting in, or having the potential to result in a fatality, serious personal injury or significant loss or damage.

⁴ 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 but not injuring anyone.

⁵ Of incidents either actually resulting in, or having the potential to result in serious injuries or losses.

Fleet Incidents

Station	Total	Response
19 USAR	1	0
21 Worcester	2	0
23 Bewdley	1	0
24 Kidderminster	2	1
27 Redditch	2	1
28 Evesham	1	1
31 Pershore	1	0

Station	Total	Response
41 Malvern	1	0
44 Ross-on-Wye	2	1
46 Hereford	1	1
48 Eardisley	1	1
Headquarters	3	0
Ops Log	1	0
South District HQ	1	0
Total	20	6

8. Of the total of 20 driving-related incidents reported this period:
- 15 were as a result of our driver error;
 - 6 were whilst responding to incidents;
 - 6 occurred during reversing manoeuvres;
 - 12 incidents involved front-line appliances; and
 - 7 incidents involved officer's vehicles or their non-uniformed equivalent.
9. Work is now ongoing to collate regional and national fleet incident statistics to enable comparisons to be made. It is anticipated that these figures will be available for the end of year paper.

Items of Interest

Property Project Updates

10. The New Year has seen the start of many key pieces of work contributing towards the many capital projects the Authority is currently undertaking. The training facility at Evesham is rapidly nearing completion with the fit out of the LPG hot-fire system being due for completion before the end of January. Once this facility is up and running, the project to enhance the LPG hot-fire facility at Kidderminster will begin. January saw the commencement of works at Peterchurch to deliver a wood burning hot-fire training facility and if the weather remains fairly stable the project should see good progress. It is hoped that there will be some movement on the Kingsland project during the Spring, by which time there will be three training facilities up and running.
11. The work to convert the Operational Logistics site at Betony Road into a temporary fire station, to allow the construction of the new Malvern Fire Station, is now nearing completion. These works are due for completion in early February, but unfortunately there are contractual issues outside of these enabling works which have added a delay to the start of the fire station project itself. However, this will allow more time to complete the decant of staff from Malvern Fire Station to Betony Road.

12. South District staff from Malvern moved to Service Headquarters (SHQ) at the end of January. For the rest of the SHQ building, the next phase is to facilitate a space within the building which can be leased out to create further efficiencies through better partnership working.
13. Bromsgrove Fire Station is progressing well with the foundations complete and weather permitting, is all set to be delivered within the project timescales for opening in the Spring of 2014.

Lawrence Recycling Fire

14. The Service first attended Lawrence's Recycling on Stourport Road, Kidderminster on the morning of 12 December 2012 to reports of a fire within a large pile of household waste, stored pending recycling within a series of extremely large industrial buildings.
15. The Service's attendance quickly escalated to over fourteen appliances and support vehicles in the early stages. There was a severe and extensive fire in an estimated quarter of a million tons of household waste stored within the buildings. The fire was confined to the waste material and had not spread to the buildings themselves. Weather conditions on the day were poor and prevented the noxious smoke from dispersing and general working conditions on the site were unsanitary and difficult.
16. Whilst the fire itself produced copious amounts of smoke, the flames were barely visible as the fire was extremely deep seated within the waste pile. The pile spread for over a 100 metres in both directions and was over 20 metres in height. Water could not penetrate into the pile to extinguish the fire, and all subsequent firefighting activities produced large amounts of contaminated waste water that needed careful management to avoid contaminating nearby water courses.
17. From the outset the Service worked closely with the site owners and other partner agencies, including the Environment Agency, and immediately commenced a long term plan, assisted by contractors, to excavate the waste pile and extinguish the fire as it was exposed. The waste was then removed to landfill for final disposal off site.
18. This was a labour intensive process that required a continual high level of Service presence on site for 24 hours a day for the first few weeks. The estimated additional salary costs incurred during this period for this incident alone are in excess of £40,000. Service staff were in attendance throughout the Christmas period and finally left the site just before New Year's Day. In addition the Service attended the site to carry out daily inspections until Friday 11 January when the incident was finally closed.
19. This incident, whilst not necessarily severe in itself or the cause of significant damage, had a prolonged and high level impact on the Service's resources. The incident involved extremely difficult, unsanitary and arduous working conditions for all the staff who attended, which was virtually every operational Firefighter and Officer in the Service, many of them who attended numerous times!

Celebration of Success

20. The Service hosted its annual Celebration of Success event on 24 January 2013 at Worcester Guildhall. This was held to recognise the achievements of operational and support staff who have passed various qualifications. It was also an opportunity to thank the staff for the hard work they put in to completing these achievements.
21. The awards were presented by CFO Mark Yates and the Chairman of the Authority, Councillor Derek Prodger MBE.
22. There were 44 awards presented in total and these included awards for recipients who had completed their Trainee Firefighter Programme, their Development Programme, A1 Assessors Awards, Diplomas, NVQ awards and one Masters Degree.
23. The event proved to be a great success and the 70 guests who attended to see their friends and families be presented with their certificates enjoyed the evening.

Exercise Cerberus

24. The Service's annual training programme includes a series of regular exercises ranging in scale from local station exercises through to those involving resources from across the Service. Each year a major exercise, its theme determined by the DCFO Director of Service Delivery, is conducted to test operational deployments and procedures for larger and more complex incidents. This year Exercise Cerberus will be held on Sunday 17 March 2013 from 1000 to 1600 hours. The aim of the exercise will be to examine the Service's capability to support the deployment of resources to three medium scale incidents spread across the Service's area. Each scenario will require the deployment of at least 6 pumping appliances and the timing of the scenarios will be such that tactical and strategic decision making processes will be required to enable effective use and prioritisation of resources.
25. A brief overview of the scenarios is as follows:
 - North District – Chateau Impney, Droitwich – Incident requiring mass casualty decontamination
 - South District – Amcor, Evesham – Incident involving sandwich panels and a chemical release within a factory
 - West District – Richard Lloyds, Tenbury Wells – Incident involving a factory fire with structural collapse and trapped persons
26. The exercise will provide an opportunity to deal with challenging simultaneous incidents and will involve a wide cross section of staff from the Service. A detailed and structured debrief will occur post exercise to draw out learning points to inform adjustment or improvements to training, procedures and operational response tactics.

Ultra Heavy Rescue Pumps

27. The Service has now taken delivery of two new fire appliances with an enhanced upgraded rescue capability to be based at Droitwich and Hereford.
28. As part of the strategy to respond to RTCs involving large vehicles and heavy machinery, the Incident Support Unit (a special appliance based at Droitwich) has maintained enhanced equipment termed “Ultra Heavy Rescue” for the last nine years. Unfortunately the travel times for deployment of this equipment across both counties has led to long delays in the equipment being available on scene.
29. The Service subsequently developed a plan to upgrade the capability of two normal Scania appliances with an “Ultra Heavy Rescue” capability and phase out the requirement for the Incident Support Unit to provide this provision. The Senior Management Board also agreed to consider a further two appliances of this type based upon feedback from the initial two vehicles. This is a cost effective option and does not cost significantly more than a normal fire appliance.
30. The two new vehicles are now on their stations and in the process of undergoing final acceptance testing and staff training. A further benefit of this project is that the two heavy rescue appliances and equipment that have been displaced from Droitwich and Hereford will upgrade the appliances at Leintwardine and Ewyas Harold in Herefordshire from standard rescue to heavy rescue appliances to enhance the RTC provision in Herefordshire.

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