

6. Chief Fire Officer's Service Report

Purpose of Report

- To inform The Authority of recent key developments and activities together with performance information for the period 1 October 2010 to 31 December 2010.

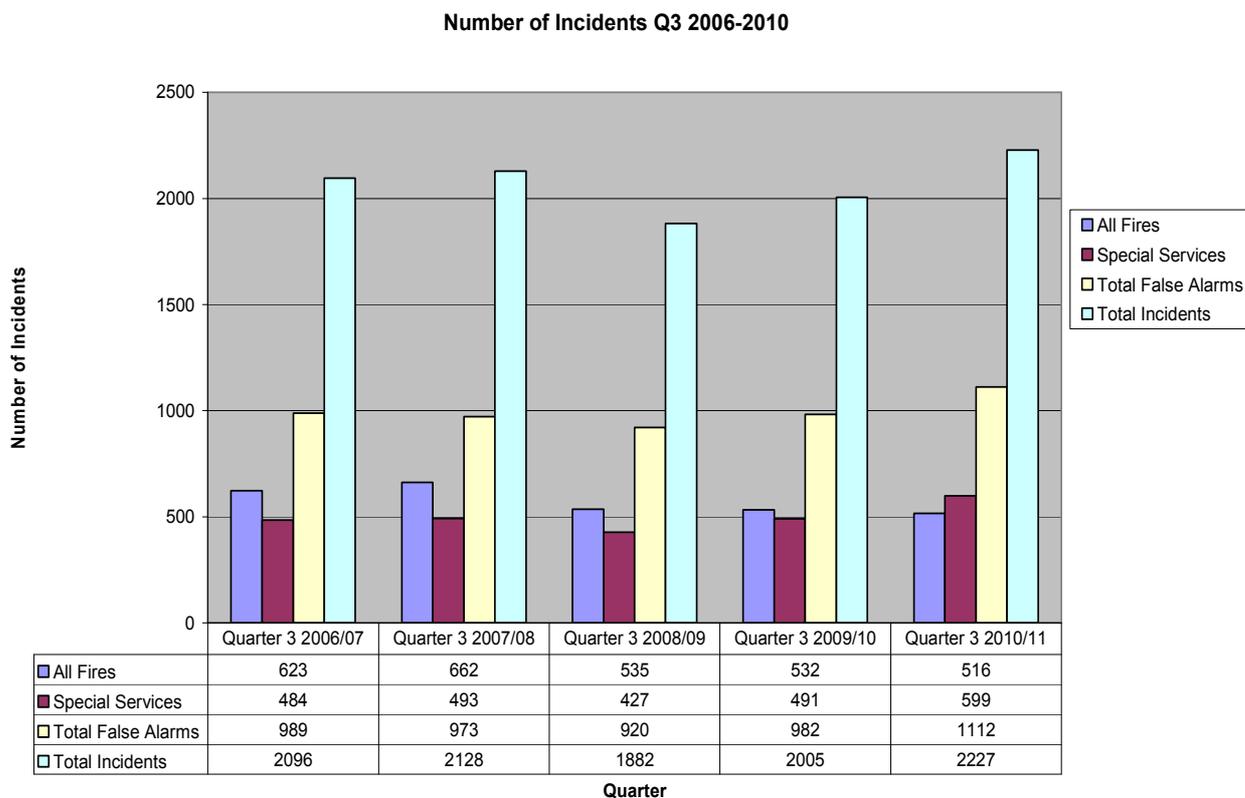
Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer recommends that the report be noted.

Performance

Operational Incidents and Total Number of Fires Attended

- Figure 1 below demonstrates overall operational activity during Quarter 3 2010-2011 compared with the third quarter in the previous 4 years:



(Figure 1 – Comparative number of incidents Q3 2006-2010)

- Total incident numbers for Quarter 3 2010-2011 show an increase on the same quarter last year. This is due to increases in the number of false alarms and special services attended. The total number of incidents has increased from 2005 in Quarter 3 2009-2010 to 2227 in Quarter 3 2010-2011, (+11.1%).

4. The number of fires has decreased from 532 in Quarter 3 2009-2010 to 516 in Quarter 3 2010-2011, (-3.01%).

	Quarter 3 2009-10	Quarter 3 2010-11	Percentage change
Primary Fires	299	277	-7.4%
Secondary Fires	152	135	-11.2%
Chimney Fires	81	104	28.4%
Total Fires	532	516	-3.01%

(Table 1 – Total Fires Q3 09-10 and Q3 10-11)

5. Table 1 above demonstrates that although overall total fires have decreased, there has been an increase in chimney fires in Quarter 3 2010-2011 compared with Quarter 3 2009-2010. This increase is perceived to be due to the severe weather conditions in December 2010 together with the previously reported autumn/winter increase in chimney fires starting earlier than in previous years. Our Press Office has issued monthly media releases warning of the dangers of chimney fires during this period.
6. The number of special service incidents has increased with 599 incidents attended in Quarter 3 2010-2011 compared with 491 in Quarter 3 2009-2010, (+22.0%).

	Quarter 3 2009-10	Quarter 3 2010-11	Percentage change
RTC Incidents	234	178	-23.9%
Flooding	19	178	836.8%
Other Special Services	238	243	2.1%
All Special Services	491	599	22.0%

(Table 2 – Special Services Q3 09-10 and Q3 10-11)

7. Table 2 above demonstrates that flooding is the main reason for the increase in special services incidents in Quarter 3 2010-2011 compared with Quarter 3 2009-2010. A total of 178 flooding incidents were attended compared with 19 in the same quarter last year. The severe cold weather conditions in December led to 155 out of the 178 flooding incidents and the majority of incidents required the isolation of water and/or electricity supplies to properties. Table 3 below shows a breakdown on the actions required as a result of all 178 flooding incidents in Quarter 3 2010-11:

	Quarter 3 - 2010-11
Flooding – Isolation of Supplies	116
Flooding – Pumping Out	17
Flooding – Isolation of Supplies and Salvage of Goods	16
Flooding – Advice only	12
Flooding – Isolation of Supplies and Water Removal	8
Flooding – Salvage of Goods only	6
Flooding – Evacuation	2
Flooding – Standby – no action	1
Total Flooding Incidents	178

(Table 3 – Flooding incidents by action taken Q3 10-11)

8. The number of false alarm incidents has increased with 1112 incidents attended in Quarter 3 2010-2011 compared with 982 in Quarter 3 2009-2010, an increase of 13.2%:

	Quarter 3 2009-10	Quarter 3 2010-11	Percentage change
Malicious False Alarms	20	13	-35.0%
False Alarm Good Intent	199	222	11.6%
Automatic False Alarms	763	877	14.9%
Total False Alarms	982	1112	13.2%

(Table 4 – False Alarms Q3 09-10 and Q3 10-11)

9. The overall increase in total false alarms is mainly due to a 14.9% increase in the number of automatic false alarms attended compared with Quarter 3 2009-2010 as these make up the largest part of the total alarms figure.

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Quarterly Total
Auto False Alarms Q3 09-10	276	259	228	763
Auto False Alarms Q3 10-11	279	271	327	877
Percentage Change	1.1%	4.6%	43.4%	14.9%

(Table 5 – Automatic False Alarms per month Q3 09-10 and Q3 10-11)

10. Table 5 above illustrates that the largest monthly increase of automatic false alarms when comparing the two quarters was in December and this was partially due to a spike of incidents occurring over the Christmas period. There were 33 incidents on 26 December 2010 alone. The majority of these attendances were due to faulty systems which could have been exacerbated by buildings left empty over the Christmas period.
11. There was a smaller increase in false alarm good intent in Quarter 3 2010-11 compared with the same quarter last year which also contributed to the overall increase in false alarms. 222 incidents were attended in Quarter 3 2010-11 compared with 199 in the same quarter last year, an increase of 11.6%. Further analysis indicates that the increase is mainly from incidents that do not fall within the categories of false alarm good intent set by the CLG. There have been 82 incidents categorised as 'other' on the IRS system in Quarter 3 2010-11 compared with 64 in Quarter 3 2009-10. Other incidents include suspected car engine fires and alarms mistaken for fire alarms which do not fall within the main IRS categories.

Health and Safety

Health and Safety Training

12. Eleven staff were trained in Managing Hazardous Substances, 13 were trained in conducting risk assessments and 7 completed a course in Managing Safely during the last quarter. These courses equip staff with the skills and knowledge they require and form part of the Service's direction to promote the training and safety of all our personnel. This in turn will assist in reducing injuries and loss.

Incidents and Injuries

	Oct	Nov	Dec	This Quarter Total	Previous Quarter Total
Serious Incidents ¹	5	1	3	9	7
Near Hit/Cause for Concern ²	6	0	1	7	11
Potential Exposure ³	2	5	1	8	9
Total Incidents	24	26	19	69	52
Specialist Investigations ⁴	2	2	3	7	3

Analysis

13. Of the 69 reported Health and Safety incidents this quarter, only 9 were or had the potential to be 'serious incidents'. However, when compared with the previous quarter the number of serious incidents has increased by two.
14. Furthermore, the number of near hits and causes for concern continues to represent a fraction of all reported incidents. This is disappointing as these incidents present an opportunity for the organisation to take action to prevent the circumstances deteriorating and resulting in injury or loss.
15. The serious incidents this quarter comprised of the following:
 - An individual undertaking a Home Fire Safety Check was subjected to suggestive comments and briefly locked in the room by the householder;
 - A fleet technician hit himself in the face with the winding handle of a press;
 - The roller-shutter door came down on to the Water Rescue Vehicle;
 - A group of Property Technicians were exposed to brown asbestos when they inadvertently damaged a panel at one of our premises;
 - A firefighter slipped and broke his foot when responding to his alerter. This incident was not investigated as a specialist investigation due to a delay in the incident being reported to us;
 - A firefighter broke his wrist when attempting to start the light portable pump using the pull start during a drill.
 - Smoke issuing from an appliance at an incident;
 - An appliance skidding on black ice into a third party whilst responding; and
 - The Combined Aerial Rescue Pump (CARP) double jacked during training causing it to lean precariously.

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 fire fighting.

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

16. The Specialist investigations mobilised this quarter comprise of the following:
- A fleet technician hit himself in the face with the winding handle of a press;
 - The roller-shutter door came down on to the Water Rescue Vehicle;
 - A firefighter broke his wrist when attempting to start the light portable pump using the pull start during a drill;
 - Smoke issuing from an appliance at an incident;
 - An appliance skidding on black ice into a third party whilst responding;
 - The Combined Aerial Rescue Pump (CARP) double jacked during training causing it to lean precariously;
 - One other investigation was instigated but stood down shortly after as it did not warrant this level of investigation.
17. This quarter, our potential exposure records indicate that only one incident occurred during operational activities, whilst 7 occurred during operational training. A further 2 incidents involved non operational staff: one as a result of disturbing brown asbestos, the other as a result of exposure to firefighting foam when working on the engine.

Items of Interest

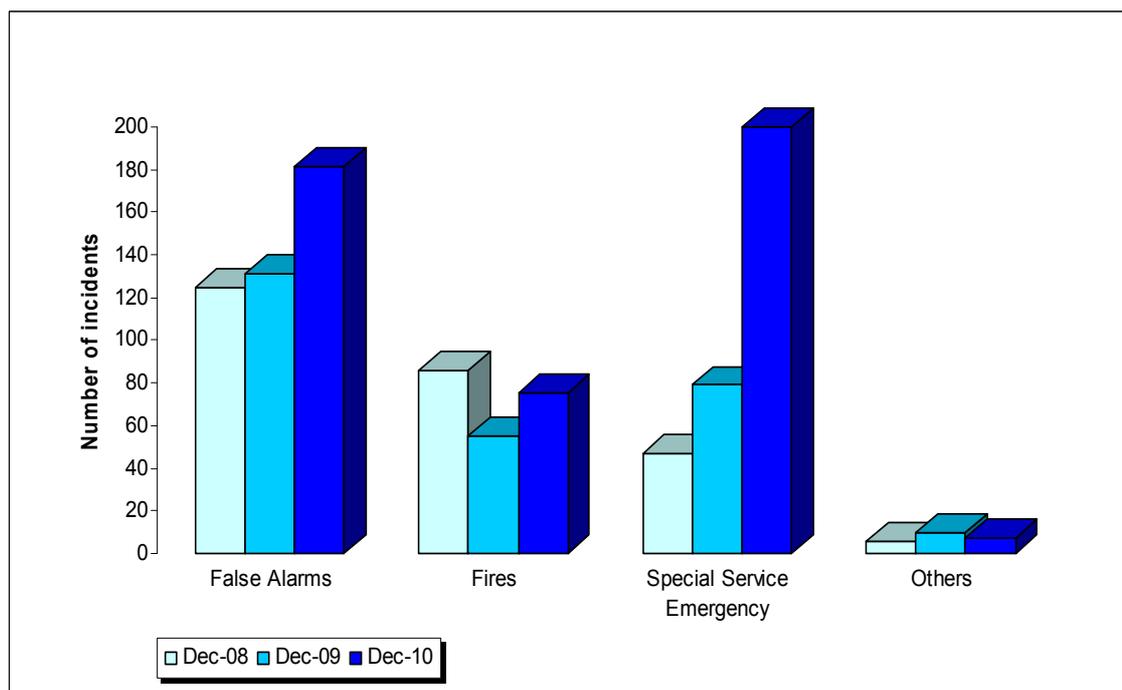
Operational activity report during snow disruption period 19 December to 31 December 2010

18. December 2010 proved to be an exceptionally cold month, mean temperatures were 5°C below the 1971-2000 average and it was the coldest December for over 100 years. There were some severe frosts and the number of days with air frost was the highest in December for over 50 years. On Saturday 18 December a band of snow swept across the two Counties causing widespread disruption. Further snowfalls coupled with freezing temperatures meant that many roads were impassable. The Service has been exposed to similar weather conditions in the past, (albeit not so severe or prolonged), and contingencies regarding mobilising and vehicle allocations were instigated.
19. During the period 19 - 31 December the Service responded to 463 incidents compared with 275 and 264 during the same period in 2009 and 2008 respectively. There has been a significant increase in the total of all incidents compared with previous years, the biggest increase being the attendance at Special Service Emergencies highlighted in Figures 1 and 2 below.

Fig 1.

Incident type	19- 31 Dec-08	19- 31 Dec-09	19 – 31 Dec-10
False Alarms	125	131 ↗ 5%	181 ↗ 38%
Fires	86	55 ↘ 36%	75 ↗ 36%
SSE	47	79 ↗ 68%	200 ↗ 153%
Others	6	10 ↗ 66%	7 ↘ 30%
Total	264	275 ↗ 4%	463 ↗ 68%

Fig 2.



20. The increase in Special Service Emergency incidents can be attributed to the effect of the severe cold on water pipes and the associated flooding of properties that often affects the electrical supply. The response to flooding incidents was 123 which accounted for 21% of incidents during this period.
21. On 19 December the Duty Operations Commander instigated the Service's severe weather response protocol which is detailed in Appendix 1. The rationale behind this is to provide a minimum level of response but takes into consideration the hazardous driving conditions for personnel turning into a Fire Station from home and for those driving to incidents.
22. The Service has several specialist emergency four wheel drive vehicles based at Stations that respond to incidents including Water Rescue, Environmental Protection, off-road firefighting and incidents with restricted access. These vehicles responded to 27 incidents during the severe weather. Assistance was provided to other agencies on 11 occasions during the icy conditions. In addition, there are four Toyota Hilux vehicles which can be used for personnel and equipment transportation when there is limited traction due to flooding or ice.
23. Following the snow disruption in the winter of 2009/10, the Service has made additional 4x4 provision for Officers through its fleet replacement programme. This has greatly improved the resilience and response capability of the Service. In the recent period of significant snow which impacted our two counties Officers' Land Rover Freelanders proved invaluable in maintaining the effective running of the Service. This included effective response to incidents during extremely challenging road conditions and the transportation of Fire Control personnel, Firefighters and support staff to and from their places of work. The immediate availability of sufficient 4x4 vehicles has proven to be of immense operational benefit and is now considered to be an important component of the Service's fleet provision.

Freedom of Information/Data Protection Act and Environmental Information Regulations Requests

24. These will now be reported to the Policy and Resources Committee as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

Complaints, Concerns, Compliments and Donations

25. These will now be reported to Members via a monthly Members' Bulletin.

Local Incidents to note

26. These will now be reported to Members via a monthly Members' Bulletin. In addition all incidents are reported to the Chair, Vice Chair and Group Leaders on a daily basis.

Supporting information:

Appendix 1: The Severe Weather Response Protocol

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