

## 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 2012 to 30 September 2012.

---

### Recommendation

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

<b>Performance</b>
--------------------

### Operational Activity – Total and Fire Incidents – Quarter 2, 2012-13

2. The total number of incidents attended 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 2 2011-12	Quarter 2 2012-13	Percentage change
All Fires	886	405	-54.3%
Special Services	371	461	24.3%
False Alarms	979	912	-6.8%
<b>Total Incidents</b>	<b>2236</b>	<b>1778</b>	<b>-20.5%</b>

*(Table 1 – Total Incidents Quarter 2 2011-12 and 2012-13)*

3. The reduction in the total number of fires attended is primarily a result of a significant reduction in Secondary Fires attended in Quarter 2 compared with the same quarter last year. This reduction is largely due to the predominantly wet weather conditions in Quarter 2 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 in July 2012.
5. The total numbers of false alarm incidents have decreased when compared to Quarter 2 last year and also against the last three years' Quarter 2 average.

## Health and Safety

### Incidents and Injuries

6. A total of 56<sup>1</sup> Health and Safety related incidents were reported this quarter.
- 2 were/had potential to be 'serious incidents'<sup>2</sup>; and
  - 3 were incidents of sexual harassment (by telephone): one to a female firefighter on station from a member of the press and a further two from a member of the public to two fire control operators.

	Jul	Aug	Sep	This ¼ Total	Prev.¼ Total
Serious Incidents <sup>2</sup>	0	0	2	<b>2</b>	2
Near Hit/Cause for Concern <sup>3</sup>	2	6	3	<b>11</b>	14
Specialist Investigations <sup>4</sup>	2	0	2	<b>4</b>	1

### Analysis

7. The serious or potentially serious incidents this quarter comprised of the following:
1. Issue with the tolerances on the RTC gear tray on the new Scania appliances leading to a manual handling injury – this was investigated and remedied the same day by our Fleet Team.
  2. Contamination of external cylinder lockers with water, dirt and debris – this was investigated and remedied the same day by our Fleet Team.

### Fleet Incidents

Station	Total	Response
24 Kidderminster	2	1
25 Bromsgrove	2	1
26 Droitwich	1	0
27 Redditch	1	1
28 Evesham	2	1
41 Malvern	1	0
42 Ledbury	1	1

Station	Total	Response
45 Whitchurch	1	1
46 Hereford	3	1
52 Leominster	2	2
Headquarters	2	0
Training Centre	1	0
West District	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>9</b>

<sup>1</sup> Serious injuries, minor injuries, vehicle collisions, potential hazards, near hits.

<sup>2</sup> Incidents either actually resulting in, or having the potential to result in a fatality, serious personal injury or significant loss or damage.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Of incidents either actually resulting in, or having the potential to result in serious injuries or losses.

8. Of the total of 20 driving-related incidents reported this period:

- 18 were as a result of our driver error;
- 9 whilst responding to incidents;
- 9 occurred during slow speed manoeuvres;
- 4 occurred during reversing manoeuvres;
- 16 incidents involved front-line appliances; and
- 1 incidents involved non-operational support vehicles.

### **Items of Interest**

#### **Worcestershire Medals and Awards Ceremony**

9. Firefighters and staff from Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service were honoured at a Medals and Awards Ceremony held on Friday 28 September at the Guildhall in Worcester.
10. During the evening, medals for Long Service and Good Conduct were presented by David Blakey CBE, Deputy Lieutenant of Worcestershire, as the Queen's representative, and also by Chief Fire Officer Mark Yates and Councillor Derek W Prodger MBE, Chairman of Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority. The High Sheriff of Worcestershire, Penelope Lewis, also attended the ceremony to present the High Sheriff's Award to the top Young Firefighter while Grant Wills, Group Commander with Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, acted as Master of Ceremonies.

#### **Herefordshire Medals and Awards Ceremony**

11. Firefighters and staff from Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service were honoured at a Medals and Awards Ceremony held on Friday 23 November at Hereford Town Hall.
12. During the evening, medals for Long Service and Good Conduct were presented by The Countess of Darnley, Lord-Lieutenant of Herefordshire with commendations being presented by Chief Fire Officer Mark Yates and long service awards being presented by Councillor Derek W Prodger MBE, Chairman of Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority. The High Sheriff of Herefordshire Lieutenant Colonel Charles Thwaites MBE, also attended the ceremony to present the High Sheriff's Award to the Community Safety Volunteer of the Year. Station Commander Neil Pigott with Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service acted as Master of Ceremonies.

#### **Operational Assurance audit (OP A)**

13. As part of a voluntary process facilitated by the Local Government Association, the Service has recently undertaken a peer review operational audit.
14. Between 5 and 8 November the Service hosted a multi-disciplined peer review team that looked at areas of operational performance and specific areas such as operational training, HR, Procurement and Risk Information. The spirit of the assessment was to provide rigour and challenge and to act as a critical friend.

15. The assessment was extensive involving 44 meetings and 188 staff and Members giving the peer review team a diverse audience group and a good basis on which to base their judgments.
16. Paul Raymond, the CFO of Shropshire and team leader presented the team's provisional findings on the last day of their visit and early indications are that the Service is well led, motivated and has some areas of notable practice. A final report outlining all findings from the visit will be analysed and presented to the Audit Committee.

### **Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)**

17. The Service is developing a new risk management plan. Formally known as the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), it will be suggested that the new name be adopted; the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) more readily reflects the emphasis of the document and the desired target audience.
18. The document will span a seven year period between 2013-2020 giving the Authority an opportunity to articulate its broad vision of how services will be delivered and what challenges the Service will face going into the future.
19. Recently officers of the Service have conducted several risk planning days inviting all staff and Members to contribute to the development of the new CRMP. This has involved staff discussing many areas such as the social and environmental impacts that we might experience, through to the political and legal challenges that the Service might face.
20. The sessions have been positively received and have acted as an excellent engagement mechanism for staff to have their say.

### **Workwear**

21. In September this year, the Senior Management Board made the decision to change the colour of the workwear provided to Service staff from the existing 'brushed titanium' (grey) to dark blue. Firefighters, Crew Commanders and non-operational staff will move to blue shirts and blue trousers whilst Watch Commander to CFO will be issued with white shirts and blue trousers. Senior Officers will have the discretion to wear the appropriate style of workwear or uniform to suit the occasion.
22. Having listened to the opinions of our staff, the grey colour has never been popular with operational staff. The decision to change to the blue is as a result of consultation and communication with personnel and will help to reinforce pride and ownership within the Service.
23. The new work wear will be introduced in the spring of 2013 and it is important to note that the change is achievable within existing uniform budgets and will be part of the natural and programmed replacement with our existing supplier.

## **Thermal Image Cameras (TIC)**

24. The Service has recently begun the purchase of new Thermal Image Cameras. Feedback from operational crews has indicated thermal image cameras greatly enhance their ability to deal with fires in compartments and as such are recognised as an essential item of operational equipment.
25. Until now provision across the Service has been limited to selected appliances. In response to the feedback from crews and in order to enhance firefighter safety and operational effectiveness, the new programme will allow for one TIC to be provided to the majority of front line appliances and in all cases one per station.
26. The roll out of the cameras will start in December 2012 with all relevant appliances completed by the end of January 2013.

## **Cable Entanglement**

27. Incidents have occurred nationally involving firefighters becoming entangled within electricity and other cables whilst tackling compartment fires with potential serious consequences. The Service has moved to provide equipment to deal with this type of scenario and has carried out trials locally and with regional partners to determine the correct equipment provision.
28. By the end of January 2013, crews entering compartment fires wearing breathing apparatus will be provided with cable cutters and rescue knives. In addition, a further set of heavy duty cable cutters will be provided to all breathing apparatus emergency teams. This equipment will fill a gap in existing provision and demonstrates the Service's commitment to learn from national incidents and whilst it will not prevent entanglement, it will ensure that crews have the best capability to free themselves should it happen.

## **Roxel Fire**

29. A well-rehearsed emergency plan at the Roxel site in Kidderminster played a key part in ensuring an incident on 16 November was dealt with so effectively.
30. The Service was called to the Summerfield Lane site just after 8.30am on this Friday morning following reports of a fire in a single storey building. Six fire crews attended (from Worcester, Kidderminster, Bewdley, Stourport, Bromsgrove and Tenbury) along with the Command Support Unit from Malvern, the Incident Support Unit from Droitwich and a Restricted Access Vehicle from Whitchurch. Police and ambulance crews also attended the incident.
31. In line with the company's emergency plans, local residents and business premises in the immediate area were evacuated as a precautionary measure and a 600-metre cordon was set up. The A449 was also closed from Hoobrook Island through to Black Bridges during the incident.

32. The fire had broken out in a workshop area at the Roxel site, and with two ground monitors and three covering jets in place, and a compressed air foam jet ready to be used if required, firefighters wearing breathing apparatus and protective clothing went into the affected building where they used specialist ventilation equipment and thermal imaging cameras to ensure the fire was fully extinguished.
33. Once it was confirmed that there was no further risk of fire, the cordon around the site was lifted and the road was re-opened, with local people allowed to return to their homes mid-afternoon.
34. There were no injuries during the incident and damage was confined to the building where the fire broke out.

## **Flood Incidents**

35. Following a period of intense rain which started in the afternoon of Saturday 24 November, the Service received more than 160 calls in the 48 hour period from 24 November to 26 November. 80 of these were to flood-related incidents. The majority of these calls were taken from 10.30pm to 3.00am on Saturday night/Sunday morning with Evesham, Hereford, Ross on Wye and Worcester being particularly badly affected; mostly involving either motorists stranded in their vehicles in flood water or residents with flood water in their properties.
36. Fire crews and Water First Responders helped rescue occupants of vehicles stranded in flood water across the two counties and also over the border at in Gloucestershire and Warwickshire.
37. Fire Crews and Water First Responders rescued 50 people including the rescue of 15 residents in Kempsey at 5.00am on 25 November, after the water rose so quickly that they became trapped in their houses. 2 people were evacuated from their property in Bevere, Worcester and taken to safety by one of the Service's water rescue boats. One of the most serious incidents occurred at Coughton in Warwickshire when specialist crews from Evesham rescued three people trapped in a car that had been washed down stream whilst attempting to drive through a swollen ford. There was little doubt that the lives of the three elderly individuals were in grave danger and images from this rescue have appeared in many national media outlets.
38. Fire Control operators also received 53 calls where they gave advice and the attendance of a crew was not required. In addition to this they also dealt with a significant number of other non-flood related incidents such as road traffic collisions and fires.
39. The Service has repeated its warning for motorists to take extreme care and to heed any road closure or flood warning signs.

## **Contact Officer**

Mark Yates, Chief Fire Officer  
0845 12 24454  
Email: [myates@hwfire.org.uk](mailto:myates@hwfire.org.uk)