

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

9. Chief Fire Officer's Service Report

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the Authority of recent key developments and activities.
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Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer recommends that the report be noted.

Items of Interest

Croft Farm Leisure Park

2. At 00:57 hours on Sunday 24 November, crews from Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service were called to a large fire at Croft Farm Leisure Park, Bredons Hardwick, Tewkesbury. The fire involved approximately 50 towing caravans and mobile homes in storage. No persons needed rescuing in the incident, but several propane cylinders stored within the caravans were involved. Crews prevented fire spreading to a 2000 litre LPG storage vessel using water jets and a ground monitor. At the height of the fire, 10 pumping appliances were in attendance as well as a Water Carrier, Environmental Protection Unit and Command Support Unit. The fire was contained on site and was not a risk to the surrounding local population. Crews remained on scene through the night damping down and turning over.

New Firehouse Training Facilities at Peterchurch Fire Station

3. A demonstration of the new Firehouse and training facilities at Peterchurch fire station was held on Saturday 9 November and was attended by various Herefordshire Councillors and Parish Councillors including FRA Members and Jesse Norman MP. The event started with a brief introduction to the history and purpose of the facility and practical demonstration that was supported by Training Centre instructors and crews, both wholetime and retained fire fighters from Hereford and Peterchurch stations. This firehouse allows the burning of real wood and provides realistic conditions for fire fighters in which to train. Attendees had the opportunity to tour the firehouse before the fires were lit, and observe first-hand the conditions produced. Jesse Norman MP then took the opportunity to wear fire kit and breathing apparatus and enter the firehouse whilst the fires were burning to witness the conditions from inside the building at close quarters.

4. The demonstration provided an opportunity to witness the range and quality of training that can be provided by this type of facility, which does not only provide training in hot fire scenarios, but also road traffic collisions (RTC), sewers, confined spaces and rescues from heights. Those who attended gained a real insight into how this significant investment by the Authority in our training facilities provides an efficient and effective training model and leads to providing our communities with well trained, safe and highly skilled staff.

Award Ceremonies

5. The Annual Medal and Award Ceremonies were again split this year between Hereford and Worcester. The Worcestershire Medal and Award Ceremony took place at Worcester Guildhall on Friday 20 September 2013. The Herefordshire Medal and Award Ceremony took place on Friday 22 November 2013 at Hereford Town Hall.
6. Various awards were presented to Service personnel including Long Service and Good Conduct Medals, 30 Year Awards, Outstanding Service Medals, Silver Axe for the Top Recruit and the High Sheriff Awards for the YFA and community volunteer. Chief Fire Officer Commendations and Certificates of Appreciation were also presented to both members of the Service and members of the community who had performed brave and meritorious acts. The events were attended by a range of dignitaries including the Lord Lieutenants and High Sheriffs of both counties, the Chairman on the FRA as well as representatives from partner agencies and the Mayors of both Hereford and Worcester.

Wiseman Dairies

7. The Service attended a significant incident at approximately 10.00pm on Monday 14 October 2013. This was a major fire at Wiseman Dairies milk processing plant in Hampton Lovett near Droitwich Spa and was brought under control at approximately 2.00am on 15 October. The Wiseman plant is an extremely large operation employing over 700 people and operating a large fleet of delivery vehicles
8. The fire was both large in scale and complexity as a number of on-site hazards impacted on firefighting operations. There was also quite difficult access to the fire compartments. The fire originated in an electrical switch room on the second floor but spread to adjacent compartments on either side and below.
9. In all 10 fire engines were required to fight the fire along with specialist foam units, the Command Support Unit and an Aerial Ladder Platform. Overall around 75 firefighters attended this serious fire. Crews in breathing apparatus were committed to the building to extinguish the fire which was contained to areas of the second and first floor. Crews worked in very arduous conditions and through their excellent and professional work prevented the fire spreading to the main building which is over 200 metres long. The highly professional and tenacious firefighting actions of our crews and officers ensured that this large and extremely challenging fire was tackled successfully and ultimately saved the significant majority of this building.

10. Members may be aware that the Service actively gathers risk information for premises across our two Counties to assist fire fighters in their tactical decisions and to ensure they can be aware of building layouts and hazards prior to arrival and during actual operations. As a result of this risk intelligence process the Service has well documented information for the Wiseman site which is readily available to attending crews and this was used to good effect to assist dealing with the fire and to prevent a more catastrophic escalation that could have impacted on the local area.

BA Challenge

11. On Saturday 12 October 2013 two teams from Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service competed in the National BA Challenge at the Fire Service College. In total, 19 teams from around the country took part in the challenge which tested members on their ability to resolve 30 minutes time scenarios involving building fires with multiple persons reported.
12. The standard was extremely high and resulted in a very close result with teams being split by a matter of a handful of points from the hundreds available.
13. I am pleased to report that this year the HWFRS teams achieved good results both in terms of finishing positions as well as Worcester RDS team being awarded the Best BA Wearers & the Best Entry Control Officer of the whole competition. Worcester RDS achieved 7th place overall. This is without doubt great recognition of the skills and professional abilities demonstrated by our crews on a daily basis.
14. Events such as the BA challenge are an excellent way of developing knowledge and skills and also showcasing the professionalism of our personnel to the wider fire service community.
15. I would like to congratulate both teams and all of the organisers/assessors on their performances and thank them for representing the Service at this event.

Animal Rescue Stations

16. HWFRS has historically responded to large animal rescue incidents utilising existing equipment. In 2008 the Chief Fire Officers Association National Animal Rescue Practitioners Forum was established in recognition that fire and rescue services were becoming increasingly involved in such rescues. HWFRA considered large animal rescue incidents as part of the cost recovery review in 2011 and agreed to continue to carry out this function at no cost to animal owners.
17. A recent project has reviewed existing HWFRS policies, training and mobilising criteria for large animal rescue incidents and as a result the Service now has two stations (Pershore and Bromyard) specifically trained and equipped to deal with rescues involving large animals. In addition to these animal rescue teams, all operational staff are receiving a basic level of refresher training in the subject and there are a number of personnel who have become animal rescue instructors.

18. The animal rescue stations went live in September 2013 and have already improved the safety of firefighters and members of the public involved in such incidents whilst reducing the number of resources initially required to be sent to the scene

Improving Efficiency, Interoperability and Resilience of our Blue Light Services

19. A national report was published in June 2013 entitled “Improving Efficiency, Interoperability and Resilience of Our Blue Light Services” which was authored by Tobias Ellwood MP and Mark Philips on behalf of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Homeland Security.
20. It is unclear how much influence the report will have on government policy and strategy and therefore it is difficult to predict the exact implications for this Authority. Some of the recommendations in the report are radical and would require a complete change in direction from the government. There would also be a need to amend primary legislation for some of the recommendations to be implemented.
21. The report covers six main areas:
- Emergency Services Landscape;
 - Emergencies and the Role of Central Government;
 - Increasing Tri-service Cooperation;
 - Improving Local Resilience;
 - Merging the Fire and Ambulance Services; and
 - Protecting Critical Sectors.
22. The report states that improving the interoperability of the country’s resilience capability is long overdue and that over the past decade incidents of all scales have demonstrated persistent policy, cultural and technical shortcomings in the ability of different departments and agencies to work together despite the professionalism and dedication of individual staff.
23. This report is brought to Members’ attention as it is part of a widespread debate on the future of emergency services and the Fire and Rescue Service.
24. It is anticipated that the Government will produce a white paper which will outline their response to the “Facing the Future” report (which has previously been reported to the FRA) and it is likely that this paper will indicate how much weight government has given to “Improving Efficiency, Interoperability and Resilience of Our Blue Light Services”
25. The full report can be viewed at http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Blue-light-Report_LR.pdf.

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