

9. Service Report

Purpose of Report

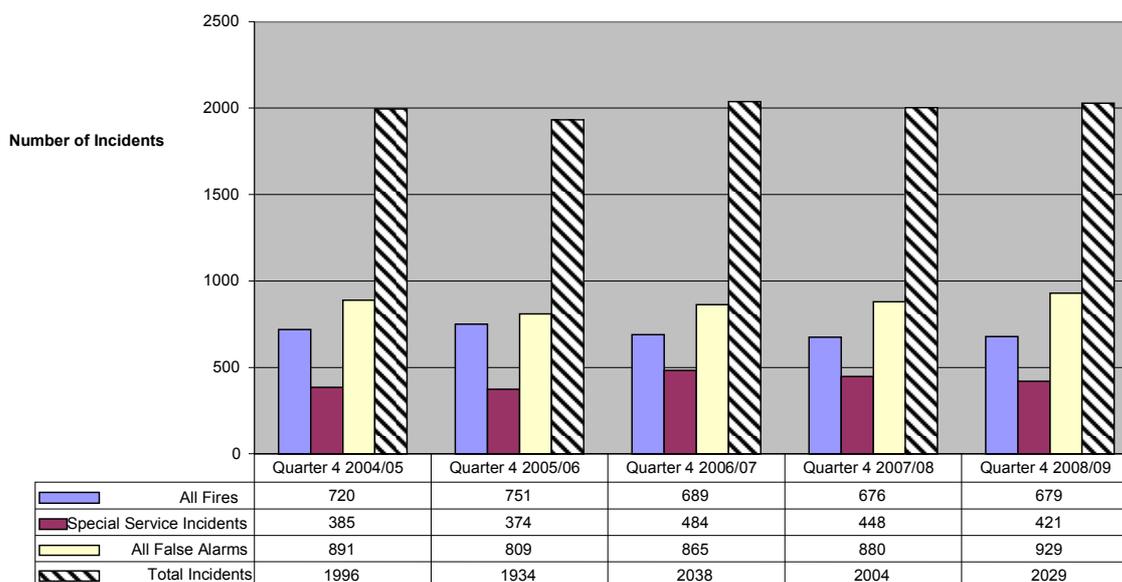
1. To inform Members of recent key developments and activities together with performance information for the period 1 January 2009 to 31 March 2009.

Performance

Incident Statistics

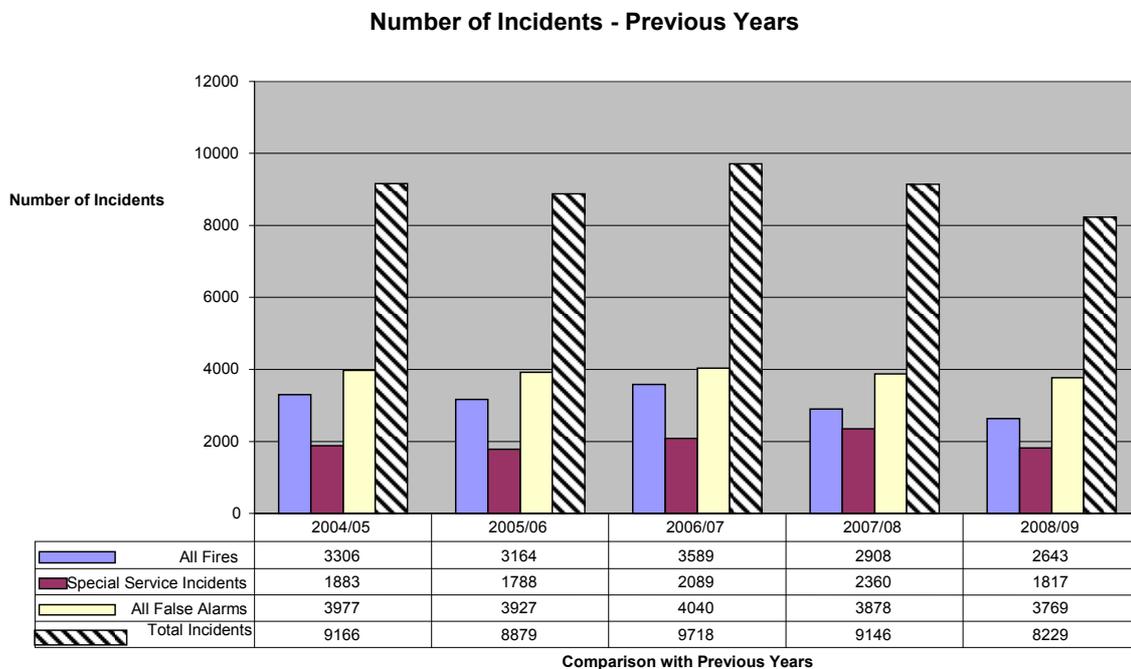
2. The number of fires attended during Quarter 4 was 679 compared with 676 in the same quarter last year. This equates to an increase of 0.44% compared with the Quarter 4 2007-08.
3. The number of Special Service incidents attended during Quarter 4 was 421 compared with 448 in the same quarter last year. This equates to a decrease of 6.03% compared with Quarter 3 2007-08.
4. The number of False Alarms attended in Quarter 4 was 929 compared with 880 in the same quarter last year. This equates to an increase of 5.56% compared with Quarter 4 2007-08.
5. A total of 2029 incidents were attended in Quarter 4 compared with Quarter 4 2007-08 where 2004 incidents were attended. The total number of incidents has increased by 1.24% when compared with Quarter 4 2007-08. The total number of incidents for Quarter 4 2008-09 is 1.81% higher than the four year average for this quarter at 1993 incidents.
6. The following chart demonstrates this quarter's activity with the 4th Quarter for the last four years:

Number of Incidents - Previous Years



Q4 Comparison with previous Years

7. At this time, it is also appropriate to look at the end of year performance. The Quarter 4 performance for 2008-09 should be taken in the context of the best ever yearly performance in 2008-09 of the last five years. The graph below illustrates the reduction in the number of incidents attended:



8. We continue to perform well in excess of our current (LAA) targets relating to deliberate primary and secondary fires in South Worcestershire, Redditch and Wyre Forest.

Health and Safety Incidents and Injuries

	Incidents	RIDDOR	% Rate on Establishment
Jan – March 2008	27	3	3
April – June 2008	27	5	3
July – Sept 2008	31	7	4
October – December 2008	42	12	4.5
Quarter 4	21	4	2

9. The number of reported Health & Safety Incidents/Injuries this last quarter of 2008-09 has fallen sharply when compared with the same quarter last year, down from 27 to 21, and has halved when compared to the immediately preceding quarter, down from 42 to 21. Furthermore, the number of incidents reportable under RIDDOR has also fallen: from 12 to 4 when compared to the immediately preceding quarter. However, there has been an increase of 1 when compared with the same period last year.
10. Encouragingly, analysis of all reported incidents has shown a drop in slips, trips and falls (from 12 to 3 incidents), Manual Handling incidents (from 6 to 3 incidents), and exposures to hazardous substances (from 7 to 2 incidents).

11. However, operational staff continue to dominate the figures; being involved in 67% of all incidents and there was also an act of violence against one of our Community Fire Safety staff involving a member of the public, though no injury was sustained.
12. Of the 4 incidents reportable under the RIDDOR, 2 were the result of manual handling: one was as a result of using cutting gear during extrication of a casualty at a road traffic collision and one occurred whilst closing the appliance door. Of the remaining two, one was a minor Breathing Apparatus malfunction, whilst the other involved a firefighter being hospitalised with an illness initially suspected to be related to submersion in water. Test results later appeared to refute that the illness was related to this training.
13. This incident was also subject to a specialist investigation, as was another incident where a member of the public collided with one of our appliances whilst stationary on the M42 when providing assistance at a road traffic collision. The driver of the third party vehicle was killed. Following an investigation by the police, no action is to be taken against Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service.
14. The number of reported Near Hits and Potential Hazards has risen sharply in comparison to previous quarters with 20 incidents being reported.
15. A total of 14 Fleet Health & Safety Incidents were reported this quarter. Of these incidents 64% occurred whilst responding but no injuries have been sustained by Fire Service personnel.
16. A review of RIDDOR statistics for the past 9 years has been undertaken, and the findings analysed; it is proposed to present this Report to the September meeting of the Authority.

Complaints, Concerns, Compliments and Donations

17. During the period 1 January 2009 to 31 March 2009 the Service received 2 complaints, 3 concerns, 12 compliments and 7 donations. All letters will be made available for Members' perusal at the meeting.

Information Management

Requests for Information

Q4	FOI Requests received and completed	DPA Requests received and completed	EIR Requests received and completed	Requests received to date
January 2009	21	1	0	
February 2009	13	0	0	
March 2009	28	3	1	
TOTALS	62	4	1	67
Requests received January – March 2009			67	

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)/Data Protection Act (DPA)/Environmental Information Regulations (EIR)

18. The Service is currently experiencing a steep rise in the numbers of information requests received. The rise fits into the national picture and the increased awareness of the use of Freedom of Information.

Items of Interest

HWFRS supports Fire Service College after fire

19. On Saturday 16th May, the Fire Service College suffered an extensive fire in its appliance bays that resulted in the loss of 11 fire engines used to train junior officers from the UK's Fire and Rescue Services. The College is run as an executive agency of Communities and Local Government and operates under trading status as an independent organisation. This structure presents it with a unique set of problems in terms of contingency planning for events such as this.
20. To ensure that the College could continue to deliver the level of training we all wish for whilst permanent replacements are found, on behalf of the Chief Fire Officers Association, this Service offered to facilitate the Country's Fire and Rescue Services, to provide a fleet of fully kitted-out loan appliances appropriate to enable planned programmes to be delivered.
21. A team was established at Fire Control in Worcester to co-ordinate offers that were coming in and quickly accepted equipped appliances from: West Midlands, East Sussex, Hereford & Worcester, Lancashire, Wiltshire, Kent and Gloucestershire. These appliances travelled to the College over the weekend for kit checks ahead of the courses that started on the Monday morning. It was to the credit of those services involved that all courses started on time with no interruption to training experienced.
22. These arrangements have been designed to provide for the first six weeks and the service has also supported the College in developing a longer-term replacement strategy.
23. The Service has received the following message from the Chief Executive of the College:

“Thank you all for the instant and unequivocal support you have given the College today. We have all been really overwhelmed by the kind support from the Service and the Fire Resilience Directorate. The 6 appliances we need to continue to deliver our courses next week will arrive tomorrow from 5 brigades whose willingness to help was fantastic. As a result, not only will we be able to continue to deliver business as usual but the College feels like an integral part of the Service and that is a powerful and very welcome message to us here at the College and to the outside world.”
24. And this from the President of the Chief Fire Officers Association:

“I just wanted to say a big "thank you" for the instant and generous support your service has offered the College following the unfortunate events yesterday. I know from speaking to Sally that it means a great deal to know that the support is there and we have once again demonstrated the willingness and capacity of the service to help out when most needed.”

HWFRS awarded prestigious Silver Awards Certificate

25. HWFRS has been awarded a Silver Awards Certificate for its Payroll Giving Scheme to good causes and the local community. The Silver Award is a symbol of excellence and, funded by HM Government, recognises and rewards businesses for making Payroll Giving available to staff. The Payroll Giving Scheme was first introduced to HWFRS in 2003 and enables employees to give to any UK charity of their choice directly from their salaries.

Retained Duty System Review

26. During 2008/09 the Service carried out an extensive review of the management arrangements for its Retained Duty System. Implementation of the recommendations of this review will commence in 2009/10, however this work is extensive and far reaching and it is likely that this will continue into 2010/11. The Service is committed to strengthening the management of the Retained Duty System in order to ensure Operational readiness.

Technical Fire Safety Review

27. During 2008/09 the Service undertook a detailed review of its Technical Fire Safety function to ensure the efficient delivery of the function across the Service. The implementation of the recommendations from this review will commence in 2009/10.

Risk Impact – Economic Downturn

28. The Service continues to monitor both impact and implications for the organisation in the current economic downturn. A detailed paper will be presented to Members in September 2009.

29. In the meantime work continues with our partners to review key strategic references for potential organisational risks. Internal consultation is continually ongoing, monitoring change and measuring the effect on the Service as whole and individual directorates.

Swine Flu (Pandemic Influenza) Update

30. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 imposed additional responsibilities on public sector organisations, specifically to make plans which enable them to be able to continue discharging their statutory duties in spite conditions, an example of which is an influenza pandemic causing prolonged disruption from the loss of critical functions.

31. Swine flu has been confirmed in a number of countries and it is spreading from human to human, which could lead to what is referred to as a pandemic flu outbreak. Pandemic flu is different from ordinary flu because it's a new flu virus that appears in humans and spreads very quickly from person to person worldwide.

32. The Service has robust plans in place to deal with the current pandemic alert (Swine Flu) and meets on a regular basis to discuss appropriate actions in line with National and Regional guidance. We are currently working to (UK) Alert Phase 1 – Planning Phase and World Health Organisation (WHO) alert Phase 5.

33. With so much media coverage of the developments around Swine Flu, the five Fire Services of the West Midlands Region have collaborated to provide all staff within the West Midlands area with a briefing informed by national events. Each Service has its own planning arrangements which are led through the Local Resilience Forums which involve all of our Services and other partners with which we are working. Please be assured that we are all working closely with each other to ensure the very best services continue to be delivered.

34. Regional teams have been established to consider all aspects of our operational response. It is hoped that we can both reduce the impact on any one individual Service as well as ensure consistency in our response across the region.

35. In so far as the exigencies of the Service allows, the Service will support the strategies developed by regional and local Health Authorities where they can achieve maximum impact in support of the general health of the community. Simultaneously, the Service will strive to maintain optimum front line service delivery to the public, as well as maintaining business continuity with our industrial and commercial partners where it is practicable to do so, during what could potentially be a prolonged phase of high level absenteeism.
36. The Service has provisions to adopt a dynamic approach to accommodate rapid changes to the status of the epidemic.
37. In the event of major staff shortages, priority will be given to safeguarding front line services to the public. Departmental contingency plans will be adjusted to ensure they support these critical functions and other objectives may need to be reconsidered to ensure service delivery is not compromised.

Clarification on 0845/0800 Telephone Number Costs

38. At the previous Authority meeting the cost of calling the Service on the 0845 number from a mobile phone was discussed. The Service currently have two 0845 numbers in place, the main Headquarters number and the Benevolent Fund number. In addition, there is one 0800 number for Fire Safety.
39. An **0800** number is free to the caller but means that the company (H&WFRS) picks up all the call charges & rental for the use of the line, except in cases of mobile phones, where the mobile phone provider charges the user. Currently BT charge £10 a quarter for the rental and £0.019 (1.9p) a minute for the call charges.
40. An **0845** number means that the Service picks up all the rental and some of the call charges (a portion) of the caller charge. The caller is getting charged a standard rate for a Lo-Call i.e. a non-geographic cheaper rate, but not a local rate. Currently BT charge us £10 per quarter and no call charges (OGC/government deal), which is a very good rate. If a caller is calling out of area - in our case, outside of the 01905 area code - they get charged less than a national rate call (currently 7.7p per minute between 6am and 6pm Monday to Friday) but similar to a local rate call (currently 3.8p per minute between 6am and 6pm Monday to Friday). This is especially relevant as the Authority covers a national boundary area. For example, it is a national call rate charge to dial Worcester from Hereford from a land-line. Call charges from mobiles to 0845 numbers varies considerably and can be up to 35p per minute depending on the provider.
41. Alternative numbers are:

An **0844** number where calls are charged a £0.03 (3p) a minute at all times to the caller, have no per minute charge for the Service, carry no connection charge and cost £10 per quarter rental.

An **0300** number is charged to us at 0.5p per minute and the caller pays a national rate. There is no connection charge to us and cost £10 per quarter rental.

Mobile charges to these numbers also vary considerably, and can be up to 35p per minute depending on the provider and subject to network charges.

42. Summary of the different numbers

Number prefix	Fire service Pence per minute	Caller Pence per minute
0300	0.5	National rate (7.7 peak time)
0800	1.9	Free
0844	Free	3.0
0845	Pays Part of caller charge	3.402
Calls to any of these numbers from mobiles vary considerably, based on network providers, and are up to 35p per minute.		

43. In summary the **0844** number is marginally cheaper than the **0845** number, although this is negligible. However, for the public the **0800** number offers no cost to the caller and may be preferable, but there is a cost for the service. Calling either number from a mobile would be expensive.

Information for Members

Young Firefighters Association (YFA) Update

44. The Executive Committee has met twice since the last FRA meeting. The Droitwich group has taken a new cohort which passed out in May. The Malvern Branch continues to be suspended with further attempts being made to encourage Instructors. The new Redditch Branch will launch in the Autumn with a series of events being planned ahead of this date. Finally, efforts continue to establish a Branch at Herefordshire and opportunities to work with the police are being maximised in the meantime.

Update of the Best Value, Policy and Performance Committee

45. The Committee met on 30 March 2009 to consider the third quarter analysis of the Performance Plan 2008/09 and also received an update on the Local Area Agreements 2008-11. The Committee was informed about Charter Mark as well as 2008 Performance Assessment Results that showed the Authority is *An Authority that is improving strongly*.

46. The Committee was also informed of the Risk Implications of the current economic downturn on the Fire & Rescue Service. A full report will be presented to the September Meeting of the Authority.

Update of the Standards Committee

47. The Committee met on 17 April 2009 to approve its draft Annual Report for 2008/09, and to adopt Criteria and Procedures for Local Assessment of Allegations of Breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct. The recommendations of the Committee are included in the agenda for this meeting.

Local Incidents to Note

Modern Firefighting Technology Significantly Reduces Impact of Fire

48. Around 80 Firefighters from across Herefordshire and Worcestershire dealt with a severe fire that broke out at just after 3.30 am on Wednesday, June 17 at the packaging site, Skymark, Southern Avenue in Leominster. A 400m exclusion zone was set up in the area as the site contained a large quantity of chemicals. Homes in the nearby vicinity were asked to keep their windows and doors closed and a number of local schools were closed for the day.
49. Our priorities for this incident were twofold. Firstly, to deal with a significant chemical fire and a risk of explosion but, more importantly, to help other Authorities in the Leominster area deal with the substantial toxic smoke plume. At an 8am briefing, it was predicted that the major fire could be burning for anything up to two days.
50. Not under estimating the impact of such a long incident on local businesses and the wider community, the decision was taken to deploy a new form of foam developed to support Firefighting in rural communities around Herefordshire where water is in short supply.
51. The new Compressed Air Foam System (CAFS) from Peterchurch Fire Station was sent to the scene and had an immediate impact on reducing the volume of smoke and virtually stopped the plume that was causing such problems.
52. A further deployment of the High Volume Pumping Unit and Urban Search and Rescue Crews resulted in the fire being extinguished shortly after midday, some eight hours after its discovery.
53. A/Deputy Chief Fire Officer Jon Hall said: "Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority were one of the first in the country to invest in this new technology - making the decision to purchase it to protect rural communities. To see it used to such dramatic effect on this incident is testament to the decision that was taken by the Authority."

Woman rescued after car plunged 30 ft down hillside

54. A young woman was rescued by firefighters from Malvern and Ledbury after her car left the A449 at Chances Pitch near British Camp on the night of Tuesday, February 10. The car had rolled down the hillside before coming to rest against a tree. The crews cut the roof off the car to free the woman who was then winched to safety on a spinal board by the line rescue team. The rescue operation took two hours.

Driver trapped for 22 hours in overturned 4x4

55. A woman was trapped inside her overturned 4x4 car for 22 hours before she was found and rescued by crews from Leominster and Bromyard. The vehicle had left the narrow road near Risbury and fell 15ft down the embankment into a stream. The woman suffered head injuries and was flown to hospital by air ambulance on Friday February 27. She has subsequently made a full recovery.

Whistle sounded to evacuate crews before roof collapsed

56. The evacuation whistle was sounded to warn firefighters to evacuate three terraced houses in Cookley, near Kidderminster on March 24. A fire had started in the roof of one of the houses and spread to the other two. The roofs did collapse after the evacuation. No one was injured. The fire was caused by a fault to an internal heating boiler.

Guests safely evacuated from hotel fire

57. Six guests together with the landlord and his wife followed their safety and evacuation procedures when fire spread through the 16th Century Talbot Hotel, Ledbury on the night of March 28. The Fire Service had inspected the hotel in 2007 and offered advice on how fire safety equipment and procedures could be improved. A man was subsequently arrested and charged with arson with intent to endanger life.

Cannabis plants destroyed in barn fire

58. Several hundred cannabis plants were destroyed when fire damaged a barn at Charley, near Moberly on April 14. The fire was caused by a fault in the electrical system used to heat the interior of the barn to assist the plants to grow.

Mother and children escape from house fire

59. A mother and her three children escaped unharmed from their home in Fairfield Close, Worcester on March 29 after a severe fire in the kitchen. The fire started as a result of a washing basket and clothes being left on an oven that had been accidentally switched on.

Five cars burnt out in arson attack

60. Five cars parked in the driveway of four homes in Marsh Avenue, Warndon Villages, were burnt out following an arson attack in the early hours on May 10. No one was injured.

Prize bull rescued from farm well

61. A prize bull, weighing two tonnes, was lifted to safety after falling 15ft into a well at a farm at Bellbroughton on Friday May 15. Fire crews from Bromsgrove pumped water from the well to enable USAR equipment to be put around the animal before it was lifted out using a farm vehicle. The operation took two hours.

Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer recommends that the report be noted.

Appendices

None