

## Report of the Chief Fire Officer

### 14. 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.***

#### Health and Safety

##### Quarter End Incidents and Injuries

2. A total of 61<sup>1</sup> Health and Safety related incidents were reported this quarter.

- 6 were/had potential to be 'serious incidents'<sup>2</sup>;
- 2 were incidents of verbal abuse;
- 11 were causes for concern or near hits.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	This ¼ Total	Prev.¼ Total
Serious Incidents <sup>2</sup>	3	1	2	6	6
Near Hit/Cause for Concern <sup>3</sup>	4	4	3	11	18
Specialist Investigations <sup>4</sup>	3	1	2	6	5

#### Analysis

3. The serious and potentially serious incidents this quarter comprised of the following:
  - Operational incident - arcing electricity caused a small explosion throwing debris causing minor burns to a firefighter. Investigation completed
  - Breathing apparatus drill - the pressure relief valve on first stage reducer activated. There were no injuries. Investigation completed and debrief arranged.

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<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.

- Cause for Concern – smell of burning and potential scorch marks noted on a stowed Breathing apparatus set. Investigation completed: no fault found.
- Breathing apparatus drill – loss of air due to kinked air. There were no injuries. Investigation completed and debrief arranged.

## Year End Incidents and Injuries

Totals	12-13	11-12	10-11
RIDDOR absence	5	23	21
RIDDOR Major Injuries	1	4	2
RIDDOR Dangerous Occurrence	6 <sup>5</sup>	2	4
Serious Incidents	18	34	40
Incidents of aggression/abuse	6	13	17
Exposures	32 <sup>6</sup>	15	15
Near Hit/Cause for Concern	55	48	39

## Fires at Recycling Plants

- At the last Authority meeting Members were informed that in December 2012 the Service attended Lawrence's Recycling on Stourport Road, Kidderminster to reports of a fire within a large pile of household waste, stored pending recycling within a series of extremely large industrial buildings. Crews attended this incident for several weeks and it can be seen from the health and safety information above that this incident accounted for the majority of exposures met by our firefighters in the previous quarter.
- The Service was called to Sims Metal UK in Long Marston on 3 April at 5.40pm to a deep seated fire of approximately 4000 tonnes of waste material. Crews were in attendance for 24 hours. West Mercia Police and the Environment Agency attended regarding road closures and advice to residents due to wind plume.
- Unfortunately, the Service was again called to Sims Metal UK at 9.10pm on Tuesday 30 April after a fire broke out in a large pile of recycling material at the site. Eight fire crews were in attendance at the height of the incident, and local residents were advised, as part of a multi-agency approach involving police, the Environment Agency, Public Health England and the local councils, to keep doors and windows closed to minimise the impact of the smoke.
- A few weeks later on Monday 20 May, the Service was called to a fire at another recycling plant, this time a factory dealing with cooking oil recycling in Stourport-on-Severn. Fire crews from Stourport and Kidderminster were first to arrive at Pelican

<sup>5</sup> These relate predominantly to BA Events

<sup>6</sup> These relate predominantly to the fire at Lawrence Recycling

Foods in Barracks Lane, and finding a severe fire at the unit, they immediately requested extra resources.

8. At the peak of the incident, there were 70 firefighters using 10 fire appliances to tackle the blaze, which involved around 60 tonnes of waste oil and 500 tonnes of kerosene. Crews worked throughout the night to bring the fire under control. The Environment Agency also attended to help prevent the oil from the factory and the water and foam used in firefighting from entering the river nearby. West Mercia Police and West Midlands Ambulance Service attended and assisted with the evacuation of some local residents to a rest centre organised by Worcestershire County Council.

### **Factory Fire at Rotherwas**

9. Fire crews were called just before 8am on Wednesday 17 April to a serious fire at premises on the Rotherwas Industrial Estate in Hereford. The fire involved a warehouse at Bathgate Flooring Ltd in Fir Lane where, at the height of the incident, 10 fire engines were in attendance along with water carriers, an aerial ladder platform, plus Command and Incident Support Units. While the fire was contained fairly rapidly, firefighters remained at the premises throughout the remainder of the week and through the weekend, working to damp down and fully extinguish the blaze.
10. Their attendance was scaled down gradually and crews left the premises at around 3.30pm on Monday 22 April 2013, although further re-inspections were carried out later that evening and during the morning of Tuesday 23 April 2013.
11. The factory unit was severely damaged as a result of the fire and there was also extensive smoke damage in the office space, but some machinery at the site was salvaged. The Fire Investigation, completed on Monday 22 April 2013, concluded that the fire started accidentally and was believed to have been caused by an electrical fault.

### **Fatal Car Fire - Bromsgrove**

12. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service was called to a car fire in Bromsgrove Road in Marlbrook at 11.10pm on Monday 11 March 2013. Fire crews from Bromsgrove and Redditch attended and firefighters in breathing apparatus extinguished the fire using one hose reel. They also helped gain access to the car.
13. A single male occupant of the car was confirmed dead at the scene and fire crews worked with the police to investigate the incident.

### **New Fire Engines – Ultra Heavy Rescue Pumps**

14. Earlier this year the Service took delivery of two new fire engines with an enhanced “Ultra” heavy rescue capability (termed UHRP’s). These fire engines operate as a normal fire engine most of the time, but also have an enhanced capability to deal with road traffic collisions that involve heavy or large vehicles, such as lorries, trains or coaches. This type of incident requires specialist equipment and training to safely deal with extremely large vehicles and structures, under emergency response conditions. The capability to deal with these incidents was previously not

incorporated into a normal fire engine, but formed part of a separate specialist response vehicle based at Droitwich, which has now been decommissioned.

15. The new vehicles are now fully operational following an extensive period of training and familiarisation and are based at Droitwich and Hereford Fire Stations, offering an improved level of operational cover, equipment and response times across both counties. An additional benefit from the provision of these two new fire engines is that it has displaced the two previous fire engines based at Droitwich and Hereford and allowed them to be relocated to Ewyas Harold and Leintwardine in Herefordshire. This has led to an upgrade in the level of Road Traffic Collision equipment that is provided at these two locations, at no additional cost.

## **Large Animal Rescue**

16. The Service has now adopted the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) model for the management of incidents involving the rescue of large animals. This will mean that all operational staff will receive standard training across the summer on how to deal with these incidents as the first responding crew. This training will be augmented by the provision of two specialised teams in Bromyard and Pershore that will be trained to a higher level to resolve large animal rescue incidents by in-house instructors.

## **Property Update**

### **Malvern Fire Station**

17. Planning approval for a replacement fire station was gained on 22 November 2012 and the proposal will replace the fire station at the existing location in Malvern Link. Whilst construction work is being undertaken, the fire station staff, equipment and vehicles have been temporarily relocated to the Service's Operational Logistics site at Betony Road in Malvern. The project has been tendered and construction commenced in May 2013: by using the existing foundations and part of the existing steel structure, significant cost reductions have been realised.

### **Bromsgrove Fire Station**

18. Construction commenced in November 2012 to deliver a jointly occupied building with West Mercia Police. The Authority will enter into a lease arrangement where the building is owned by the Police who have undertaken design and construction works in conjunction with officers of the Service. The project has been adapted with facilities to accommodate the new shift system which will be operated in Bromsgrove. The building is due for completion in Spring 2014.

### **Worcester Fire Station**

19. Work continues to bring this project to fruition. It is anticipated that an announcement will be made shortly.

## **Strategic Training Facilities**

20. The Strategic Training Facilities (STF) project proposed two types of training facility which would provide realistic hot-fire training scenarios for fire fighters and support their essential training programme. The first type of facility burns wood within a steel structure, broadly resembling a residential property and one such facility for South Herefordshire at Peterchurch is nearing completion. Unfortunately the proposal to deliver a facility at Kingsland in North Herefordshire will not proceed due to planning and land purchase issues. The second type of training facility utilises Liquified Petroleum Gas to create fire situations housed within a brick built building which resembles a traditional residential property. This type of facility has been constructed at Evesham and one is also under construction to enhance an existing facility at Kidderminster. The Evesham STF was completed in March 2013 with Kidderminster due to be completed during the summer.

## **Hereford Fire Station**

21. Officers of the Service have been in extensive discussion with Herefordshire Futures, an organisation leading on the regeneration of Hereford City. Two sites have been examined in detail as part of a major link-road development scheme, but unfortunately neither satisfies minimum requirements for a new fire station location. Officers are now examining other options including development of the existing site.

## **Redditch Fire Station**

22. Similarly to the work in Bromsgrove, it was hoped that a joint Police and Fire Station could be developed at the existing Fire Station location in Redditch. This would have been a reciprocal agreement to the Bromsgrove arrangement and it was proposed that the Fire Service would own the site and manage the construction with West Mercia Police leasing part of the building. Draft site drawings were completed but the Police requirements have changed to the degree that they will now be making alternative arrangements. Officers will examine other options including development of the existing site.

## **Evesham Fire Station and Strategic Training Facility**

23. Officers of the Service are working with Wychavon District Council to examine the feasibility of replacing Evesham Fire Station and the Strategic Training Facility at an acceptable location within Evesham. This project forms part of a wider development scheme to regenerate Evesham town centre, being led by Wychavon District Council. If the scheme is cost effective for the Authority a proposal will be brought to the Policy and Resources Committee.

## **Fire Control Officially Opened**

24. The new control room was officially opened at headquarters on Monday 25 March 2013 by Lt Col Patrick Holcroft, LVO, OBE, the Lord-Lieutenant of Worcestershire. The previous control room operated from the fire station in Copenhagen Street in Worcester for the last 50 years.

25. The new system enables control room staff to quickly identify the location of the person placing the emergency calls and can identify the closest fire engine even if it's already on the move.
26. The next phase of the fire control project will involve linking our mobilising system to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service. This will enable us to take emergency calls for each other during extreme busy periods which are often caused by significant weather events.

### **Excellence Awards**

27. On Thursday 18 April 2013 the Service held its inaugural Excellence Awards evening at Eastnor Castle, near Ledbury. The entire event was sponsored by Telent Technology Services Ltd, who recently provided the Service with its new command and control mobilising system as part of the wider Fire Control project.
28. The evening recognised the achievements of staff and some of our partners. All nominees were winners in their own right. The event itself was inspiring and touching – so many achievements and so many dedicated individuals.
29. The individuals announced as winners in their category were as follows:
  - Community Excellence Award – Watch Commander Bob Morris (Redditch)
  - Fire Fighters Charity Fundraiser of the Year – Station Commander Martin Lown (Training & Development Centre)
  - Outstanding Contribution from Support Staff - Sonja Sinclair-Elechi (Payroll, HQ)
  - Outstanding Contribution from Operational Staff – Firefighter Andrew Davies (Malvern)
  - Partnership Achievement Award – Dr Hall (BASICS volunteer, Chairman of MARS)
  - RDS Employer of the Year – 2017 Ltd, Hereford
  - Leadership Achievement Award – Watch Commander John Chance (Eywas Harold)
  - Sporting Achievement Award – Firefighter Hannah Densley (Hereford)
  - Outstanding Contribution to HWFRS – Watch Commander John Chance(Eywas Harold)

### **Young Firefighters Passing out Ceremony 2013**

30. A group of 19 teenagers celebrated the completion of a 13-week training course at their annual Young Firefighters passing out ceremony at Droitwich Fire Station on 11 May 2013. The group, which included ten from the Droitwich branch of the Young Firefighters Association (YFA) and nine from the Redditch branch, have all recently completed the YFA training programme.
31. At the passing out ceremony they were presented with a certificate of achievement by Chief Fire Officer Mark Yates and they also demonstrated to their families, Fire Service personnel and local dignitaries some of the skills they have learnt during their training. This included a hose running drill, a ladder climb, a simulated car fire and a house rescue demonstration.

32. Congratulations to all of those Young Firefighters who worked hard to pass their training course. Thanks and congratulations must also go to the instructors who give their own time to support the young people throughout the year.

### **Facing the Future: A review of efficiencies and operations in Fire and Rescue Authorities in England**

33. In December 2012 Ministers commissioned Sir Ken Knight, the outgoing Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor, to conduct an independent review of efficiencies and operations in Fire and Rescue Authorities in England and on Friday, 17 May 2013, his long awaited report, 'Facing the Future', was published.
34. The report details the findings of Sir Ken's review of fifteen Fire and Rescue Authorities, chosen for their spread across government types and geographical and industrial differences. The report highlights the need for all Fire and Rescue Services to consider a flexible approach to service provision both now and in the future, including collaboration with other Services, flexible staffing arrangements, procurement and innovation in service delivery.
35. On 23 May 2013 senior officers of the Service participated in a teleconference with the Fire Minister, Brandon Lewis MP, and Sir Ken Knight, during which it was made clear that the government will engage in a period of intense consultation on the document, with all Fire and Rescue Services and the wider Fire Sector, between now and the autumn, at which point they intend publishing a formal response.
36. Senior officers have already commenced careful consideration of all aspects of the report and how these relate to the Service. Early indications are that Hereford & Worcester has already implemented, or is planning to, many of the recommendations made within the report.
37. The Service will be preparing a comprehensive response to the document, incorporating feedback from both Authority Members and Service personnel, which will be reported to the Policy and Resources Committee on 4 September 2013.

### **Fire Fighters' Charity**

38. The Fire Fighters' Charity aim is to support serving and retired members of the fire service community and families when they are in need. It relies solely on fundraising activities and donations received from its supporters and costs in the region of £9 million a year to run.
39. The support for fire and rescue staff and families falls into two broad categories:
- Beneficiary Support and;
  - Rehabilitation/Recuperation Service
40. Beneficiary support is provided through a confidential helpline where a team of trained advisors provide impartial advice, guidance and support on a wide range of concerns. Examples include; signposting for debt advice, advice on grants and benefit claims or funding for building alterations required through injury or illness.

41. To enable rehabilitation and recuperation support, the Charity maintains three centres based in Devon, Cumbria and West Sussex. These centres offer a range of support programmes including physiotherapy, aimed at improving the well-being of those attending the centres. To aid emotional recuperation one or two week breaks are also available, which are designed to help those who have suffered injury, illness, stress or bereavement.
42. Locally, Hereford & Worcester has an established Fire Fighters' Charity Committee chaired by Chief Fire Officer Mark Yates. Its aim is to raise awareness of the Charity and provide guidance and support for local, regional and national fundraising events. In turn each location across the Service has the support of a local representative who acts as a point of contact for staff to provide advice or support on Charity matters.
43. Thanks to the volunteer support and commitment from staff across the Service, Hereford & Worcester raised £80,940 in the last financial year. A breakdown of how this money was raised is given below:

Individual Giving (donations outside of events)	1,511
Fire Service Regular Giving (fixed donations from pay)	18,679
Public Regular Giving (fixed donations by direct debit)	75
Volunteer Fundraising	15,409
Regional Fundraising	12,791
Sporting & Overseas Events (overseas treks and expeditions)	8,016
Fire Service Lottery	12,014
Merchandising (sales at open days)	4,547
Recycling (clothing banks at fire stations)	7,898
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	<u>80,940</u>

44. Within the region the Service has an excellent reputation for fundraising and support of the Fire Fighters' Charity and the aim is to continue to build on this reputation as well as the sums raised year on year.

## Contact Officer

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