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THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS FIRE BOARD
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER'S ACTIVITY/PROGRESS REPORT
NOVEMBER 2006

Agenda Item	19
Report No	FIRE 56/06

Summary

The information attached provides an overview of the Service's activity for July, August and September 2006.

1. COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT

This report is intended to give members an overview of the community fire safety initiatives being progressed by the Service. It is the second report of the year.

During this second quarter considerable resources continued to be committed to preparing the Service to become the enforcing authority for Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act which came into force on the 1st October 2006. In order that Services throughout Scotland can adopt a common approach to the Act resources are being shared via a partnership approach, with each service taking the lead on specific issue for the benefit of all.

Despite this the CRM Department has continued to progress a wide range of initiatives aimed at enhancing community safety. These include;

- The Service has secured a successful bid to the Big Lottery fund being awarded £58,002 over 4 years to extend its work with young people.

Through the Award, young people aged 12 – 15 years will learn just how the Fire Service operates and will be trained in teamwork skills.

This work will allow us to engage with young people in the community, particularly those who would benefit from the positive influence of our staff

We will be working in partnership with other agencies including Education Services; Police and Social Work Services.

It is anticipated that the first round of courses will commence from November 2006 initially be offered to young people in the Wick, Invergordon, Fort William and Stornoway areas. Thereafter, we will extend the course to other areas of the Service.

Through IRMP we are committed to promoting community safety and along with our safety partners; we have a shared objective to develop strong, safe and sustainable communities. In working to achieve this, we recognise that whilst in-migrant workers have a positive impact on the economic and cultural development of the area, there are

safety issues for individuals and families in the workplace and at home that require be addressed.

For these workers we recognise that we may not be communicating safety messages effectively especially for those residents who do not have English as their first language. We also wish to encourage employers of inward migrants to access safety presentations / advice to improve safety in the workplace.

Through a pan Highland bid to the European Social Fund, The Service is seeking match funding to employ a Community Safety Advocacy worker to extend and expand the range of existing work. It is our aim to identify how best to target our prevention work with a particular focus on reducing incidences of fire at home and at work, enabling a comprehensive community safety advocacy programme to take place to address language/cultural differences that have an impact on the potential number of fire related incidents in the area. We will also work with other agencies in relation to reducing road traffic collisions and alcohol related deaths.

The Service is at an early stage in the development of this bid and aims to work with partner agencies to ensure that the bid fits with the Highland Strategy for working with inward migrants. Results of the funding bid to the ESF will be reported to a future meeting of the Board.

- The Highland Council, via the Inverness City Partnership (ICP) has established a new community information service for the Inverness area. Working with Highland Wellbeing Alliance partners, local partnership TV will provide an effective and responsive medium for putting out messages on a wide range of local initiatives.

The Inverness Community Partnership Television Network will be launched on Wednesday 15 November 2006, 12.30pm at the Town House, Inverness. This very useful initiative will see large screen TV's being placed in prominent public locations throughout Inverness with the aim of conveying safety messages from all partner organisations. Initially the scheme will operate only in Inverness although, as more partners subscribe, it is hoped to extend the project to cover a wider area.

- Our key risk reduction initiative remains the completion of Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC) and reports from stations are already highlighting that the safety messages and advice being delivered by Service personnel are having a positive effect. Feedback information has shown that members of the public have taken heed of safety advice and changed previous habits. At one recent accidental fire vulnerable persons were able to act on the advice given which allowed them to limit the fire damage and safely evacuate the premises.
- Further to the HFSC targets allocated to Retained and CRU's for 2006/2007, each whole time watch has now also been allocated targets for the number of HFSC they should complete.

2. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

For any organisation to be successful it must be aware of what it is trying to achieve and have a clear vision and focus, and means to robustly monitor its performance.

To manage performance effectively, the Service has 3 suites of performance indicators, each providing a snap-shot on progress to date, (in this instance, end of second quarter 2006) and monitor year end results. Performance indicators facilitate the mapping of year-on-year performance assisting the Service to set targets utilising the SMART criteria. They also allow benchmarking against other Fire and Rescue Services, both Scotland and UK wide.

2.1 STATUTORY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (SPI's)

The 4 SPI's in this suite allows the Accounts Commission and other interested parties to compare the performance of Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service (HIFRS) with that of other fire and rescue services. When published they provide the main measurement for performance.

For the 4 SPI's, HIFRS is currently progressing satisfactorily. In particular for SPI 2, (the number of accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 population), with an annual target of 7.8, our actual performance achieved for the second quarter is 6.8.

2.2 SCOTTISH LOCAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (SLPI's)

In keeping with the Governments Modernisation Agenda for public services the Chief Fire Officers Association (Scotland) agreed a suite of 20 Scottish wide Local Performance Indicators (LPI's) which reflect the work of modern Scottish fire and rescue services.

HIFRS is currently achieving satisfactory progress in the majority of these indicators. Of note, is LPI 10 (female employees as a percentage of total employees), with an annual target of 6%, and for which our actual performance achieved is 9.52%.

2.3 LOCAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (LPI's)

In addition to SLPI's, the Service has an extensive suite of 97 Service Local Performance Indicators (LPI's). LPI's are set by the service and reflect local priorities. Like SPI's, they are a way of monitoring performance against targets, identify opportunity for improvement and making necessary changes, and demonstrating progress against our targets for the year.

HIFRS is currently achieving satisfactory progress in the majority of these indicators. In particular, for LPI-CIT 2 (station communication operational equipment defects cleared within 48 hours of notification) with an annual target of 90%, our actual performance stands at 95.2%.

In addition, for LPI-FS 16 (percentage reduction of deliberate fire alarms) with an annual target of 10%, our actual performance achieved is 15%.

2.4 SERVICE PLAN PROGRESS

We currently have five Service Plan objectives which are Modernisation, Consolidation, Partnership Working, IT & Communications and Improvement Inspections.

To achieve these objectives we have produced 23 detailed action plans, progress against which is reported regularly at Service Support and Service Delivery meetings.

For the period to 30th September the Service is currently on target with the majority of these Service action plans, with progress against all targets broadly in line with year end expectation.

3. OPERATIONAL INCIDENTS

Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service continues to deliver an efficient and effective service to the people of the Highlands and Islands whilst at the same time ensuring that local communities and visitors alike are informed of the dangers of fire and the actions that can be taken to minimise the risk of a fire occurring within their property.

3.1 OPERATIONAL INCIDENT NARRATIVES

A selection of operational incidents for the reporting period 1st July 2006 to 30th September 2006 is detailed below;

North Command

Operational personnel have attended over 450 incidents, of which 65 were primary fires involving property or vehicles and 69 were special service calls in response to calls for assistance to people trapped following Road Traffic Collisions or similar emergencies. One person was rescued from their house by Fire Service crews. The special service calls resulted in 9 casualties injured or trapped in vehicles, 7 of whom were rescued by Fire Service crews using a range of hydraulic rescue equipment, working alongside their colleagues from the Ambulance and Police Services. One of these casualties tragically suffered fatal injuries, illustrating the importance of working with partners to improve road safety. Additionally, crews on Fair Isle assisted with the medical evacuation of one person from this remote community, again working with partners in the medical services.

The incidents described in more detail overleaf illustrate the range of duties carried out by our fire fighters, and prove the effectiveness of Community Safety activities, particularly with regard to the provision of properly installed and maintained smoke alarms, as supplied and fitted where necessary as part of the Home fire safety visits provided free of charge by our local crews.

On the 29 August 2006 at 14.30 hours the service was called to an incident involving an overturned cattle lorry on the A9 at the Cambusavie bends near Golspie. One appliance from Golspie and one appliance from Dornoch were mobilised along with the Emergency Tender from Inverness. On arrival the crews found that the vehicle had left the road and had come to rest on an embankment consisting of a six foot drop. The cab and front section of the lorry were being supported by roadside trees whilst the remainder of the truck was precariously balanced on the edge of the embankment. The driver had escaped uninjured; however there were a number of injured cows trapped within the wreckage.

Initial stabilisation was carried out utilising a system of light tirlfors carried on the front line appliances. On arrival the district officer assumed command and after a risk assessment deemed it unsafe to work underneath the lorry. Crews were withdrawn and entered defensive mode until heavier rescue equipment arrived, including the Urban Search and Rescue equipment from Inverness.

On arrival of the heavier equipment, the lorry was stabilised and work commenced on releasing the trapped cows using cutting equipment and a cable and pulley system utilised from an attending break down truck

The crews were successful in releasing 20 cows, unfortunately a number of cows were so badly injured they had to be destroyed by an attending vet. The A9 was closed for 6 hours during the rescue operation.

South Command

On 4 September 2006, a call was received at 18:51 hours from the manager of Somerfield supermarket Portree, Isle of Skye, stating that there was a fire in the stock room area and smoke was filling the rest of the premises.

Two fire appliances from Portree and Broadford retained stations along with the District Officer were mobilised to the incident, with the initial attendance arriving at 18:55 hours. The Incident Commander on arrival was faced with a large amount of smoke issuing from the roof of the supermarket storage area but with very limited access to the possible seat of fire. It was quickly ascertained that no life risk was present in the premises.

The Police and Ambulance service were already in attendance with the latter dealing with several staff and customers suffering from smoke inhalation.

Four firefighters with breathing apparatus and hosereel jets entered the premises through the main and rear entrances but their progress to find the seat of the fire was hampered by a large amount of stock housed in trolleys.

On arrival of the second fire appliance a further two firefighters with breathing apparatus and a hosereel jet also entered the premises to attack the seat of the fire. A roller shutter door to the storage area was opened once the atmosphere in this area had been cooled sufficiently which allowed the removal of the stock trolleys.

On the exterior of the premises a cordon was put in place around the immediate area of the premises, stopping traffic on several roads. This allowed two covering jets to be put in place to stop any possible fire spread to properties adjoining or in close proximity to the

supermarket. As a direct result of the swift and professional action of all those concerned, the fire was contained to within the storage/stock area, with limited smoke damage to adjacent parts of the premises.

The last appliance left the incident at 02:30 hours on 05/09/06.

13 July 2006

An unusual incident occurred at the Nevis Range Top Station, Aonach Mor, Fort William on 13 July 2006.

At 1518 hours, Fire Service Control received a call for assistance at a cable car collision at the top station of the Nevis Range Gondola. Two appliances from Fort William were mobilised along with the Community Response Unit from Spean Bridge and the Emergency Tender from Inverness.

By 1543 hours Fort William and Spean Bridge appliances were in attendance along with the Duty Officer from Lochaber and they were confronted with a confused scene. From the messages that came from the top station it appeared that nobody was trapped following the incident but that there were five casualties and numerous people stranded because the cable car system was no longer able to run.

The Principal Officers were kept informed of developments throughout the incident and an Area Manager was mobilised to attend who arrived at 1644 hours.

At this time a "stop" message was sent to Fire Control stating that Fire Service personnel were not committed onto the hill but were standing-by as there were reports of a cable car with a buckled door that may have to be forced open. By 1715 hours a helicopter was on scene and the Duty Officer from Lochaber and a Firefighter were airlifted to make a reconnaissance of the incident. The report was that there were four casualties and approximately 50 people requiring transport from the scene.

Lochaber Mountain Rescue attended and rescued a family stranded in a cable car.

Understandably, most of the people stranded at the top station were reluctant to be transported to the base station by gondola and so the helicopter ferried most people down. The Fire Service dampened the landing zone throughout this period to prevent dust from becoming airborne and assisted those being airlifted to be medically checked.

By 2019 hours all Fire Service personnel had left the scene to the Police and HSE to carry out an investigation into an incident that made national news.

4. LETTERS OF APPRECIATION AND COMPLAINT

Letters of Complaint and Appreciation for July – Sept 2006

Appreciation

July 06	12
Aug 06	5
Sept 06	10
Total	27

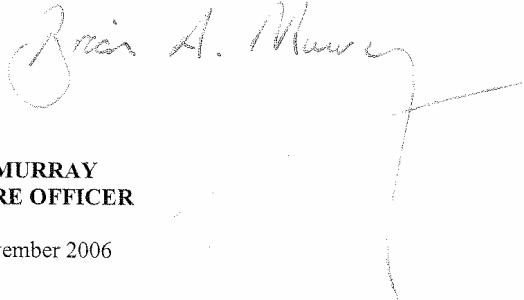
Complaints

July 06	1
Aug 06	2
Sept 06	1
Total	4

The above complaints were all Fire Service related and concluded satisfactorily.

Recommendation

The board note the contents of this report



**BRIAN A MURRAY
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

Date: 9 November 2006