

Agenda Item	4
Report No	SCC/12/25

The Highland Council

Committee: Sutherland County Committee

Date: 13 May 2025

Report Title: Scottish Fire and Rescue Committee Performance Report for Q3 & Q4
1st October 2024 to 31st March 2025

Report By: Local Senior Officer for Highland

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides an update to Sutherland County Committee Members on progress against the priorities outlined in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Committee Plan for Sutherland

Priority areas are identified through a range of Intervention, Prevention and Protection activities which are delivered through partnership to reduce the risk to the communities of Sutherland.

The report also contains previously agreed information and performance data as requested by Area Committees.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to **comment on** and **scrutinise** the attached Sutherland Performance Report.

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** - there are no implications arising from this report

3.2 **Legal** - there are no implications arising from this report

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** - there are no implications arising from this report

3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - there are no implications arising from this report

3.5 **Risk** - there are no implications arising from this report

3.6 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – there are no implications arising from this report

3.7 **Gaelic** - there are no implications arising from this report

4 Sutherland County Committee Report

4.1 The attached performance report provides the current figures for Quarters (Q) 3 and 4, 1st October 2024 to 31st March 2025 from the central Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) performance management database against the key indicators and timelines of previous reports.

4.2 In achieving the priorities within the Local Committee Plan for the Sutherland area in 2024 & 2025, a number of activities continue to form a significant part of our prevention and protection plan with a view to reducing accidental domestic property fires and serious injuries and deaths resulting from accidental property fires. Free Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV's) remain a key part of the prevention work undertaken by personnel across Sutherland, targeting Very High, High and Medium risk households to prioritise those most at risk within our communities, through our Operational on Call Staff and Community Safety Advocates (CSA).

4.3 Operational Incidents

Analysis of the detail behind the performance report for the Sutherland area shows very positive outcomes across the performance indicators during Q 3 and 4, October 2024 to March 2025 when compared with the previous reporting periods. However, it must be emphasised that the baseline figures for some indicators are very low, and this can make meaningful statistical analysis challenging.

- a. The occurrence of five (5) Accidental Dwelling Fires attended by SFRS in Q 3 and 4. The Operational on Call Staff and Community Safety Advocates (CSA's) continue to provide Post Domestic Incident Response (PDIR) in the community to provide reassurance and advice with positive results reflected in only three accidental domestic property fires.
- b. During Q 3 and 4 of 2024 /2025 SFRS attended one (1) Fatal Accidental Dwelling Fires in the Sutherland Area. There was zero (0) Accidental Fire Casualties across Sutherland for Q 3 and 4 of the 2024 / 2025 reporting periods, which again provides pleasing reporting. The service remains committed to supporting communities through the Home Fire Safety programme and continues to work closely with partner agencies to identify those most at risk and provide early preventative support and advice.
- c. A total of twenty-eight (28) occurrences of Unwanted False Alarm Signals (UFAS) were attended by SFRS during Q 3 and 4, 2024 / 2025 in the Sutherland Area. This represents an increase from the same reporting period last year. Crews are continuing to engage with premises to identify causes and reduce occurrences.

SFRS have now implement the new UFAS response policy 1st July 2023 and this is reflected in the reduction in figures year to date.

4.4 Station Crewing & Availability

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has made significant investment in RVDS Recruitment with an RVDS support team now in place and working at a national level. The team has been put together with personnel from all three service delivery areas to support key issues, including staff recruitment and retention

SFRS continues to actively deliver and refine its Retained and Volunteer Duty System (RVDS) recruitment and training processes to meet national and local needs. Key stations and communities are targeted across the Sutherland area. SFRS promotes campaigns within partner agencies, through local media and key community contacts. Continued local area support is requested for recruitment in the following communities:

Recruitment banners and advertising material have been produced for all stations across the Highlands to raise awareness of the RVDS roles within communities.

- Bettyhill
- Bonar Bridge
- Dornoch
- Durness
- Golspie
- Helmsdale
- Kinlochbervie
- Lairg
- Lochinver
- Scourie
- Tongue

4.5 Community Safety / Community Action Team

SFRS Community Action Team (CAT) continues to engage and deliver all aspects of Community Safety and education throughout Sutherland, engaging with schools, community groups and the wider Sutherland Community. Current and ongoing work streams also involves planning for a locally delivered Fire Skills Course in Dornoch, the total numbers on the course will be 12, aimed at third- and fourth-year pupils and delivered over five days, with pupils successfully completing the course receiving an Employability Award.

Designation: Local Senior Officer for Highland

Date: 13 May 2025

Author: Station Commander David Bell

Background Papers: Sutherland County - Performance Report

Appendices:



**Highland
Sutherland County Committee**

**2024-25 Q3 & Q4
Scrutiny Report**



**SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

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Highland Sutherland County Committee

2024-25 Q3 & Q4 Scrutiny Report

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About the statistics within this report

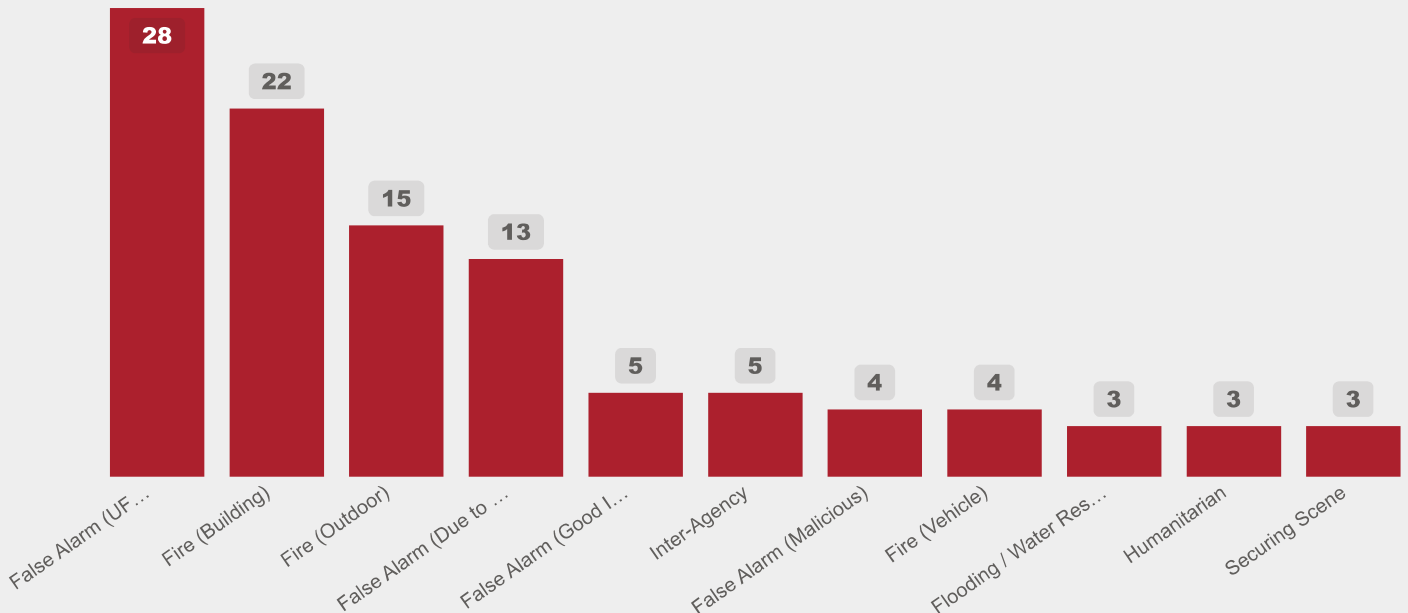
The activity totals and other statistics quoted within this report are published in the interests of transparency and openness. They are provisional in nature and subject to change as a result of ongoing quality assurance and review. Because all statistics quoted are provisional there may be a difference in the period totals quoted in our reports after local publication which result from revisions or additions to the data in our systems. The Scottish Government publishes official statistics each year which allow for comparisons to be made over longer periods of time.

1. Summary

2024-25 Q3 & Q4

 109 Total Incidents (Incl. Incompletes)	 41 Fires	 17 Non-Fire Incidents	 50 False Alarms	 28 UFAS
 2 People Rescued by Firefighters	 0 People Receiving First Aid or Hospital Treatment (Fires)	 1 Fire Fatalities	 2 People Receiving First Aid or Hospital Treatment (Non-Fire)	 0 Non-Fire Fatalities
 30 Home Fire Safety Visits	 15 Fire Safety Audits			

Top 10 Incident Types

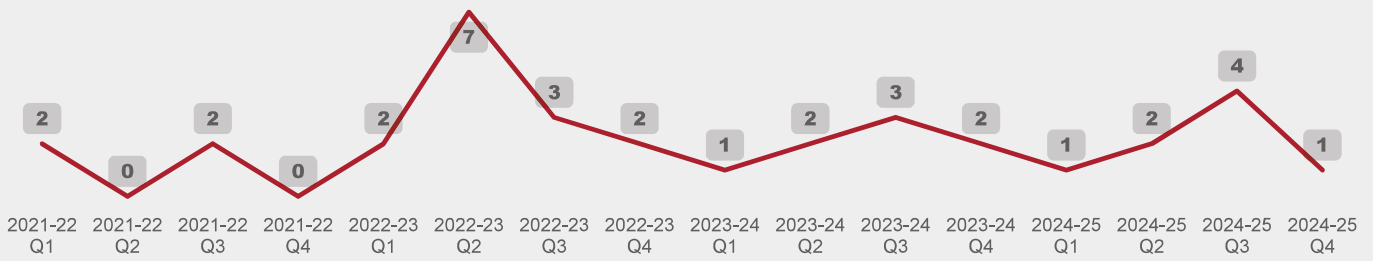


The table above provides a summary of the six months (1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025) activity against headline indicators. It aims to provide - at a glance - our direction of travel during the reporting year.

2. Trends

Previous 16 quarters (4 years)

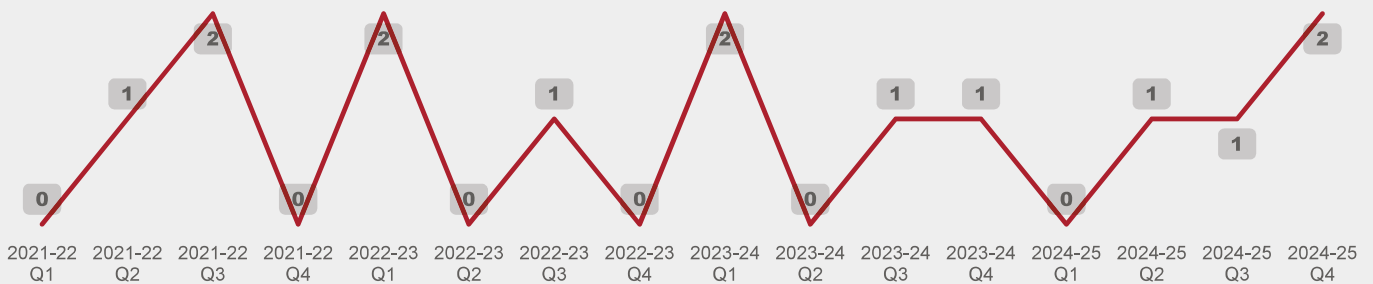
Accidental Dwelling Fires



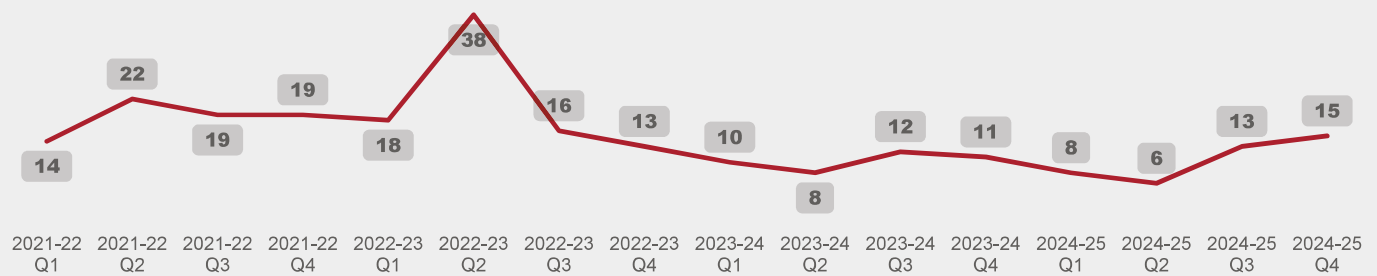
Deliberate Fires



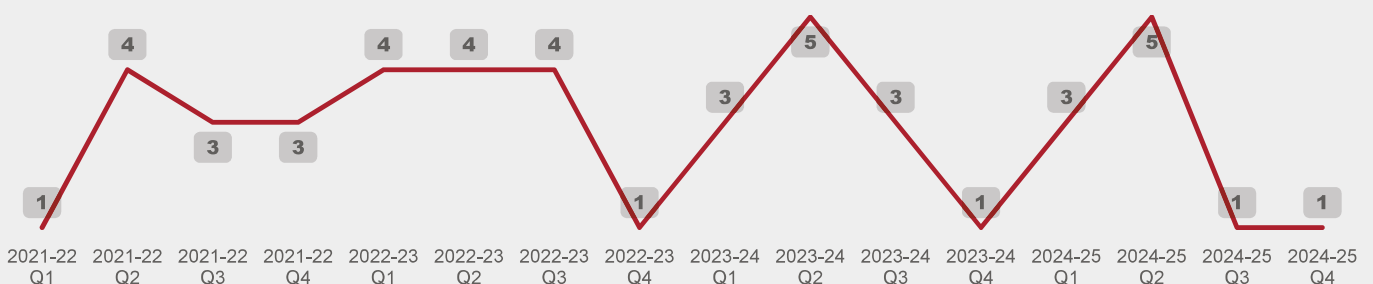
Non-Domestic Fires



Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals



Road Traffic Collisions



3. Accidental Dwelling Fires

2024-25 Q3 & Q4

Trend by Quarter (4 years)



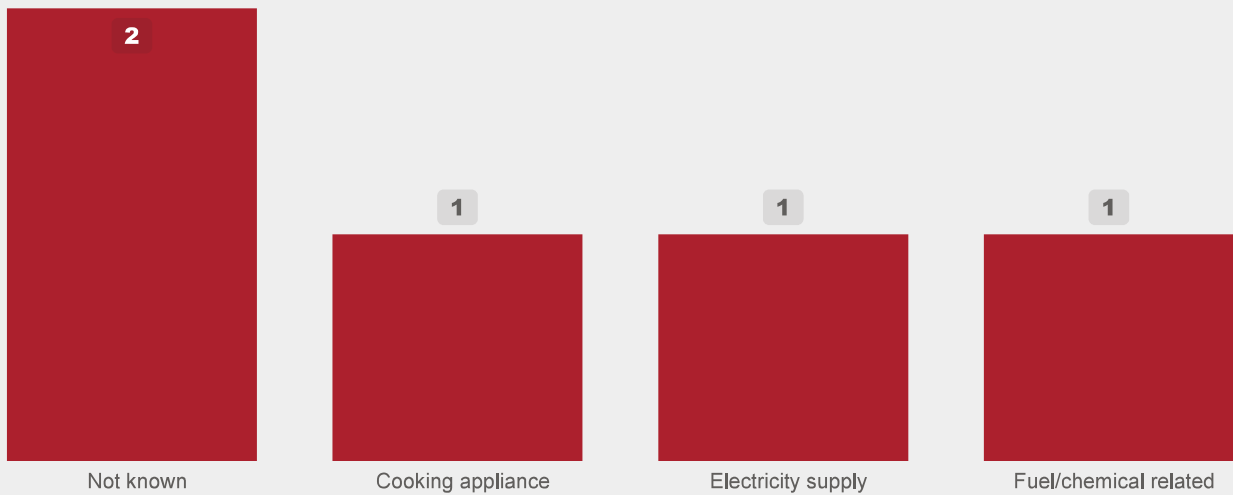
Extent of Damage	Incidents
Limited to item 1st ignited	3
Not applicable	1
Whole building	1

Incidents by Ward

North, West & Central Sutherland



Source of Ignition (Top 10)



5

Accidental Dwelling Fires in this period

There were **5 Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)** which is slightly higher than in previous periods. The majority are classed as low severity, requiring little or no intervention from the Service and minimal fire damage.

4. Accidental Dwelling Fire Casualties

2024-25 Q3 & Q4

Trend by Quarter (4 years)



Nature of Injury/Cause of Death	Casualties
Combination of burns and overcome by gas/smoke	1

Casualties by Ward

North, West & Central Sutherland

1

0

Non-Fatal Casualties

1

Fatal Casualties

0

People Rescued by Firefighters

Extent of Harm (Non-Fatal)



0

First Aid Given at Scene



0

Hospital Slight Injuries



0

Hospital Serious Injuries

Sadly there was **1 ADF Fatality**, and **0 ADF Casualties**. However it should be noted that these figures do not include those who have been recommended to have a precautionary check. All ADFs are offered Home Fire Safety Visits and agency referrals where required.

5. Non-Fire Casualties

2024-25 Q3 & Q4

Trend by Quarter (4 years)



Nature of Injury/Cause of Death	Casualties
Fracture	2

Casualties by Ward

North, West & Central Sutherland

2

2

Non-Fatal
Casualties

0

Fatal
Casualties

2

People
Rescued by
Firefighters

Extent of Harm (Non-Fatal)



0

First Aid Given
at Scene



1

Hospital Slight
Injuries



1

Hospital Serious
Injuries

The two casualties were results of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs).

6. Deliberate Fires

2024-25 Q3 & Q4

Trend by Quarter (4 years)



Incidents by Ward

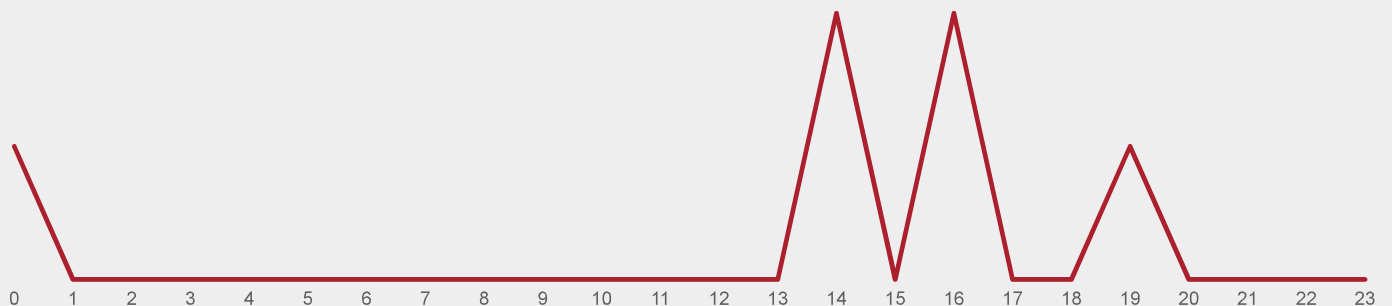


Property Type	Incident
Grassland, woodland and crops	4
Outdoor structures	1
Refuse	1

6

**Deliberate Fires
in this period**

Hour of Day



There were **6 Deliberate Fires**, which is slightly higher than in previous periods. Referrals are made to other agencies for those at work within our communities.

7. Non-Domestic Fires

2024-25 Q3 & Q4

Trend by Quarter (4 years)



Top 15 Property Types

Property Type	Incidents
Food and Drink	1
Other buildings/use not known	1
Residential Home	1

Incidents by Ward



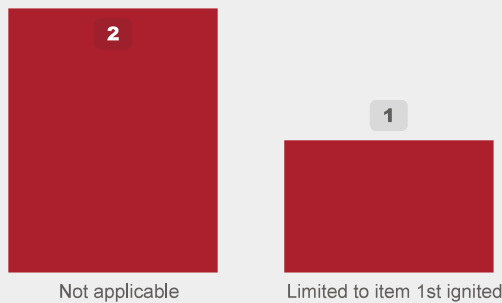
- Accidental
- Deliberate

3 (100.0%)

3

**Non-Domestic
Fires in this
period**

Extent of Damage



Not applicable

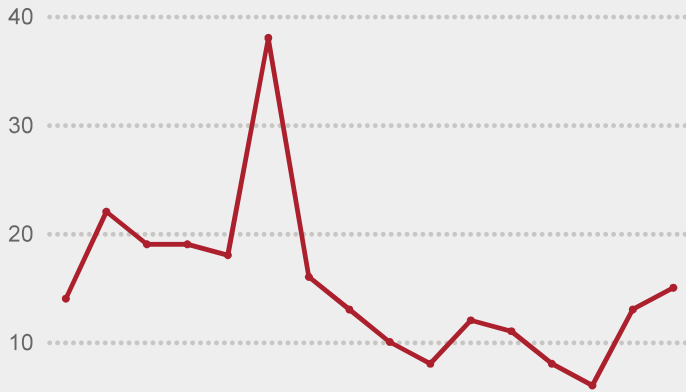
Limited to item 1st ignited

There were 3 Non-Domestic Building Fires which is slightly higher than in previous periods.

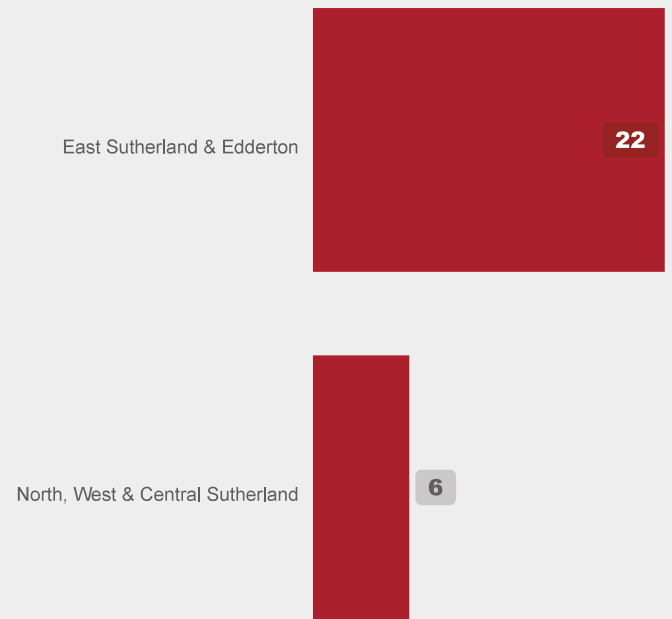
8. Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals

2024-25 Q3 & Q4

Trend by Quarter (4 years)



Incidents by Ward



Top 15 Property Types

Property Type	Incidents
Residential Home	13
Hotel/motel	7
Sheltered Housing - not self contained	4
Hospitals and medical care	1
Public admin, security and safety	1
Retail	1
Student Hall of Residence	1

28

Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals in this period

We attended **28 Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS)** which shows a slight increase, however the figure continues to remain low following the Service's change to attendance at commercial business and workplace premises.

9. Road Traffic Collisions

2024-25 Q3 & Q4

Trend by Quarter (4 years)



2

Road Traffic Collisions in this period

Property Type	Incidents
Van	2

Incident Type	Incidents
Vehicle (Non-fire)	2

Incidents by Ward

North, West & Central Sutherland



2

Non-Fatal Casualties

0

Fatal Casualties

2

People Rescued by Firefighters

Extent of Harm (Non-Fatal)



0

First Aid Given at Scene



1

Hospital Slight Injuries



1

Hospital Serious Injuries

We attended **2 Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs)** which is well below previous reporting periods. Our Prevention teams continue to work with partner agencies through the Highland Road Safety group, older driver Virtual Reality Scheme and Road Safety Scheme of new drivers.

10. Home Fire Safety Visits

2024-25 Q3 & Q4

HFSVs by Ward

30

Home Fire
Safety Visits

23

High Risk
HFSVs

19

Partner Referral
HFSVs

North, West & Central Sutherland

16

East Sutherland & Edderton

14

11. Fire Safety Enforcement

Job Type	Count
Audit	15

Audits by Ward

East Sutherland & Edderton

11

North, West & Central Sutherland

4

Our Community Safety Advocates and Station personnel undertook **30 Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs)**. With the introduction of a new, modernised Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) system that enhances how we identify, assess and support the most at risk from fire, we may see an initial decline in referrals and HFSVs whilst the new systems and referral pathways are embedded.

12. Station Availability and Establishment

2024-25 Q3 & Q4

- 11 x On-Call Retained Duty System appliances across 11 Stations

These Stations serve the Sutherland County population

***Please note the availability figures do not include Joint Mobilising availability.**

Station	Oct 24 – Mar 25 Availability* %	Male	Female	Staff
Bettyhill	34.96%	6	0	6
Bonar Bridge	11.39%	4	0	4
Dornoch	98.00%	10	0	10
Durness	78.91%	6	0	6
Golspie	69.17%	7	0	7
Helmsdale	69.03%	6	0	6
Kinlochbervie	72.71%	6	1	7
Lairg	84.37%	7	2	9
Lochinver	0%	3	0	3
Scourie	0%	1	0	1
Tongue	0%	2	0	2

Wildfire prevention campaign launches



You may have already noticed that we issued our first [Wildfire Danger Assessment on Saturday 1 March](#).

Figures show that 80% of large outdoor fires since 2010 were recorded during March and May.

We will promote key prevention messages across our social media channels which will signpost to relevant website pages where people can learn what causes wildfires, how to prevent them and how to keep themselves safe.

Affiliate social media accounts can support the campaign by sharing safety messages on our corporate channels using the hashtag **#WildfirePrevention**.

A [Wildfire Prevention Campaign communications toolkit](#) has been shared all partner organisations.

HOME FIRE SAFETY VISIT (HFSV)

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has introduced a new, modernised Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) system that enhances how we identify, assess, and support those most at risk from fire. 2025 is a transitional year as we embed these new systems and referral pathways, and as a result, we may initially see a decline in referrals and HFSVs.

However, we are working hard at a local level to ensure we continue reaching the most vulnerable in our communities. We are actively encouraging new and existing partner organisations to sign up to our Data Sharing Framework (DSF), which enables secure, GDPR-compliant referrals and supports timely, person-centred interventions.

Please share this information with your networks, and if interested in establishing a referral pathway, we encourage you to contact the Highland Community Action Team to arrange a local, face-to-face discussion and begin the sign-up process. [Home fire safety visits | Scottish Fire and Rescue Service](#)

WILDFIRE STRATEGY

We are advancing our Wildfire Strategy, aimed at enhancing our capability to manage and mitigate wildfires across Scotland. We are committed to improving wildfire prevention, response, and partnership efforts, ensuring both local communities and natural landscapes are better protected.

Area Commander Michael Humphreys has taken over as the Wildfire Capability Lead and Chair of the Scottish Wildfire Forum (SWF), following the groundwork laid by DACO Bruce Farquharson. Michael Humphreys said:

"I am honoured to step into this role, especially as someone who lives and works in the Highlands. I have witnessed first-hand the devastation wildfires can cause to both nature and communities. I'm committed to building on the excellent work started by Bruce Farquharson and continuing to innovate as we implement our Wildfire Strategy. This includes educating communities and visitors to Scotland on wildfire prevention and improving our response capabilities."

Our Wildfire Strategy focuses on four key pillars: **Partnership Working, Provision of Information, Prevention, and Response.**

Partnership Working and Information Sharing: We work closely with the land management sector and other agencies to ensure a unified approach to wildfire prevention. This includes fostering a shared understanding of **Muirburn** and **prescribed burning** practices, alongside utilising the collective expertise of our partners for prevention education and intervention when needed.

The Scottish Wildfire Forum plays a key role in raising awareness and sharing knowledge. Through the **Wildfire Danger Assessments** provided by the SWF, we inform **Tactical Advisors** and the public about wildfire risks using social media and traditional outlets. More information can be found on the [Scottish Wildfire Forum website](#).

Prevention: In early 2024, we revamped our wildfire prevention materials and expanded the wildfire section on our website from a single page to seven detailed theme pages. This coincided with a **22-week prevention campaign**, which successfully drove significant traffic and interaction with our online wildfire content. Visit our updated website pages at [Wildfires | Scottish Fire and Rescue Service](#).

Response: Our Wildfire Strategy, launched in 2023, is backed by a £1.6 million investment over three years. This includes acquiring all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), trailers, specialist equipment, and four 4x4 support vans, which will be deployed as part of a comprehensive response package.

Despite global challenges impacting supply chains, we continue to progress. Four of the **Tier 2** wildfire stations are set to receive the 4x4 support vans, and **Tier 3** stations will be equipped with ATVs and additional wildfire-specific PPE.

Tiered Approach: All SFRS operational personnel are trained to at least **Tier 1** in wildfire response.

Tier 2 Stations: 24 stations (13 of which within Highland) have received additional training and specialist PPE, with four stations also set to receive the new 4x4 support vans.

Tier 3 Stations: 10 stations (2 of which within Highland) will be equipped with Ford Rangers, trailers, and ATVs.

Flexi Duty Officers: These officers have undergone Wildfire Tactical Advisor training and will support wildfire incidents across the country.

BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS

We can advise, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) continuously engage with the Scottish Government and Building Standards regarding a range of fire safety issues that may impact on the built environment, of which BESS is one of many priorities.

SFRS do not regulate building standards but can, and do, get involved with consultations for new and emerging premises types with regard to fire risk and fire safety. Specifically, for BESS construction, SFRS continue to engage with building standards and local planning teams on this issue to ensure any additional and exceptional risks from these premise types are identified and managed accordingly. Ultimately, it is the remit for building standards to ensure that appropriate legislation and regulation is in place, and the responsibility of Local Authority Building Control to verify construction projects against the requirements.

SFRS are working closely with the Scottish Government to ensure that the processes in place are appropriate review and comment on these types of premises during the planning stages.

Please be assured that the safety of our firefighters and communities is a priority. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service will respond to all reports of fire which are received and have the ability to deploy a range of standard and specialist resources as determined by the needs of the incident. At these incidents, personnel will employ a range of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in order to effectively and safely resolve the incident, alongside working with partner agencies to mitigate the risk and impact to the public and the environment. The SOPs in use by SFRS are informed by the National Operational Guidance (NOG) produced by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and this guidance includes incidents involving rechargeable batteries.

We would advise you to contact the Local Authority Building Control Team with any questions/concerns.

BESS sites do not fall within the building warrant consultation process and we are not made aware of these in the same format as other consultations. That said, we have processes in place to respond to such proposals and make comment where necessary around any concerns or issues we foresee when responding to such incidents and for making effective preparations to deal with any incidents should the need arise.

When considering these proposals, we look at appliance access and water supplies amongst several other things and follow national guidance produced by the National Fire Chief's Council for BESS systems.

OVERNIGHT CARAVAN / MOTORHOME SPACING IN CAR PARKS

Although a car park area used as a motorhome stopover is not typically considered relevant premises, and therefore outwith the scope of the Fire Scotland Act, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service recommends that such sites should be risk assessed for fire safety and that this is reflected within the site fire risk assessment.

The Scottish Government's "Guidance for existing premises with sleeping accommodation. Annex 3: Holiday Camping and Caravan sites" which is the benchmark standard that SFRS audits existing caravan/ holiday parks

Annex 3: Holiday Camping and Caravan Sites

Spacing

1. Subject to the variations listed below, the distance between any two units should generally be not less than 6 m for permanent residential sites and touring sites, and 5 m for holiday caravan sites.
2. The 6 m distance between units may be reduced where caravan construction is inherently fire-resistant. Under such circumstances, the distance may be reduced to 5 m. Where there is a mix of fire-resistant and non fire-resistant construction, the larger separation distances apply.

**Screenshot of Scottish Government guidance:- [Fire safety - existing premises with sleeping accommodation: practical guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultations-petitions/Publications/2022/07/Fire-safety-existing-premises-with-sleeping-accommodation-practical-guidance.pdf)*

If SFRS was auditing premises which deviated significantly from the benchmark standard, we would generally look for additional fire safety measures.

COMMUNITY ASSET REGISTER

- The Community Asset Register is a Scotland wide database of volunteers willing to help during an emergency. The database plots assets on a map so if an emergency incident occurs we can identify those who could help. Assets can be people with either skills or equipment.
- There's no obligation on volunteers to provide support, as we will always respond to deal with emergencies. However, if we believe a volunteer could help, we ask if they're available. If they are, we explain where they should go and what they should do.
- Volunteers acting under our instruction, are insured and can claim certain expenses, such as mileage, however we don't pay hourly rates for their time.

To register: <https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-area/community-asset-register/>

13. Glossary of Terms

Term - What it means

ADF

Accidental Dwelling Fire.

HFSV

Home Fire Safety Visit.

PDIR

Post Domestic Incident Response, a term used to indicate actions taken following attendance at a fire or other incident in the home. PDIRs include amongst things the offer of a free follow up home fire safety visit.

RTC

Road Traffic Collision.

Special Service

Calls to incidents which are not fires or false alarms such as RTCs, rescues, flooding, incidents involving hazardous materials or the provision of assistance to other agencies.

UFAS

Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals. When an automatic fire detection and alarm system is activated as a result of anything other than an actual fire the activation is classed as a false alarm. If an attendance is made to such an event by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, then the event is recorded as an UFAS incident.

UFAS Policy Change

In response to COVID, on the 6th May 2020, the SFRS decided to send 1 pump to UFAS premises that did not have their own Predetermined attendance (PDA).

As of 1st July 2023, the COVID interim 1 pump response was ended and a new UFAS policy was implemented.

The new policy is to call challenge all UFAS incidents with the intention of non-attendance. Hospitals, care homes, and sleeping risk premises are all exempt and receive either 2 pumps or their premise specific PDA.



SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

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BUSINESS
INTELLIGENCE

Design, figures and charts by the Business Intelligence team.