The Highland Council

Agenda Item	**3**
Report No	**SCC/29/26**

Committee: Sutherland County Committee

Date: 30 November 2026

Report Title: Scottish Fire and Rescue Committee Performance Report for Q1 & Q2 1 April 2026 to 30 September 2026

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 1 and 2, 1 April 2026 to 30 September 2026 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 2026 & 2027, 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 and High 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 Q1 and Q2, April 2026 to September 2026 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 two (2) Accidental Dwelling Fires attended by SFRS in Q1 and Q2. 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 Q1 and Q2 of 2026 SFRS attended zero (0) Fatal Accidental Dwelling Fires in the Sutherland Area. There was zero (0) Accidental Fire Casualties across Sutherland for Q1 and Q2 of the 2026 reporting periods. 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-one (21) occurrences of Unwanted False Alarm Signals (UFAS) were attended by SFRS during Q1 and Q2, 2026 in the Sutherland Area. This represents a slight decrease from the previous period. 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 On Call Recruitment with an On Call 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 On Call Duty System (Retained and Volunteer) 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 On Call roles within communities.

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

4.5 Community Safety / Community Action Team

The SFRS Community Action Team (CAT) continues to deliver Community Safety activities and education across Sutherland, engaging with schools, community groups and the wider community. During Q1 and Q2, 2026 the team delivered a range of prevention, education and community-focused activities.

School and student education

- Secondary schools: The Early Driver Intervention Scheme was delivered to pupils in fourth to sixth year, in partnership with Highland Council's Safer Roads department.
- Primary schools: Pupils received Water Safety Awareness education.
- Student accommodation: Talks in Dornoch were delivered to Golf and Hospitality student groups.

Engagement with vulnerable adults remained a core priority. The team generated and carried out Home Fire Safety Visits, alongside partnership working with Planet Youth. These visits reinforced the service's commitment to prevention and community safety.

Designation: Local Senior Officer for Highland

Date: 10 November 2026

Author: Station Commander David Bell

Background Papers: Sutherland County - Performance Report



Highland

Sutherland County Committee

2026-27 Q1 & Q2

Scrutiny Report

SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
Working together for a safer Scotland

Working together for a safer Scotland

Highland

Sutherland County Committee

2026-27 Q1 & Q2

Scrutiny Report

Contents

1	Summary
2	Trends
3	Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)
4	Accidental Dwelling Fire Casualties
5	Non-Fire Casualties
6	Deliberate Fires
7	Non-Domestic Fires
8	Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS)
9	Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs)
10	Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs)
11	Fire Safety Enforcement
12	Station Availability and Establishment
13	Community Safety & Engagement
14	Glossary of Terms

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.

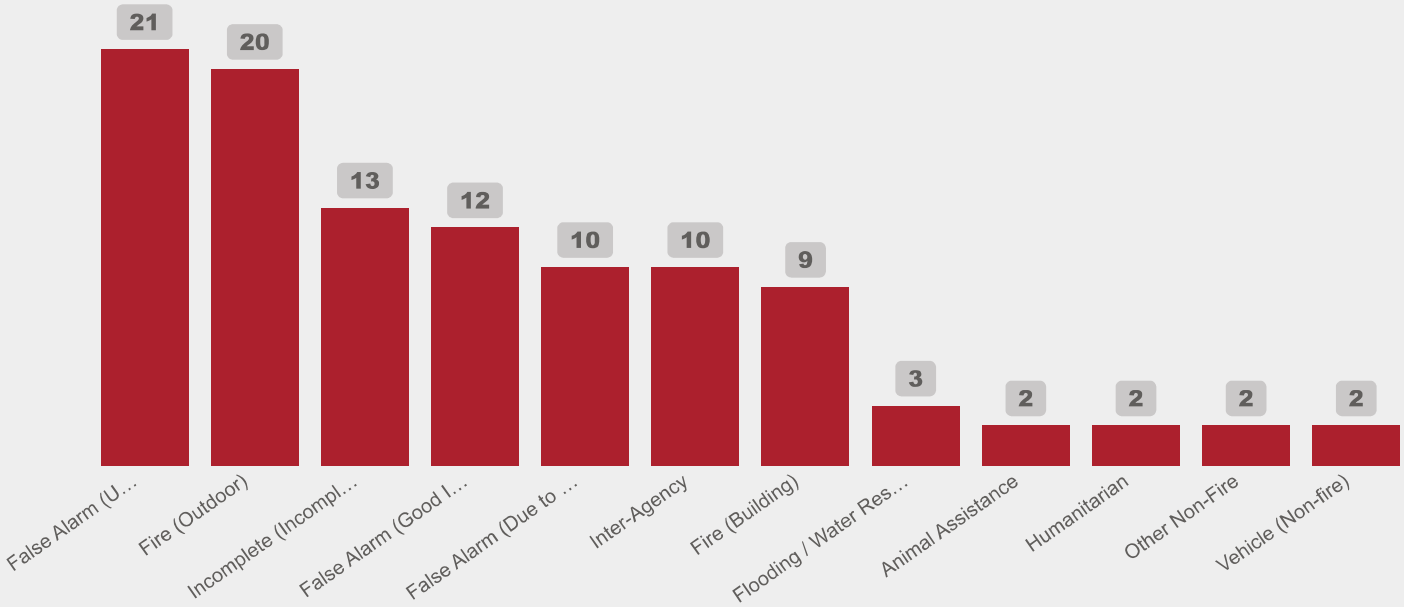
© Scottish Fire & Rescue Service 2026

1. Summary

2026-27 Q1 & Q2

108 Total Incidents (Incl. Incompletes)	**30** Fires	**22** Non-Fire Incidents	**43** False Alarms	**21** UFAS
3 People Rescued by Firefighters	**0** People Receiving First Aid or Hospital Treatment (Fires)	**0** Fire Fatalities	**1** People Receiving First Aid or Hospital Treatment (Non-Fire)	**2** Non-Fire Fatalities
36 Home Fire Safety Visits	**26** Fire Safety Audits			

Top 10 Incident Types



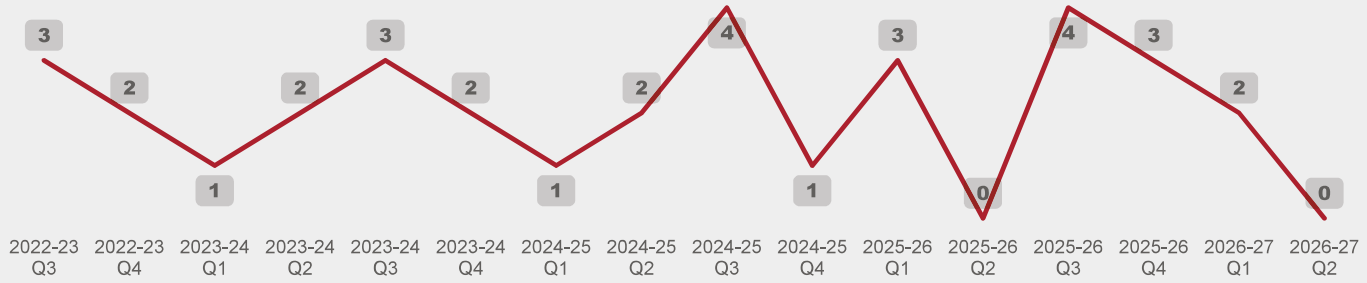
The information above provides a summary of the six-months (1 April - 30 September 2026) activity against headline indicators. It aims to provide - at a glance - our direction of travel during the current reporting period.

© Scottish Fire & Rescue Service 2026

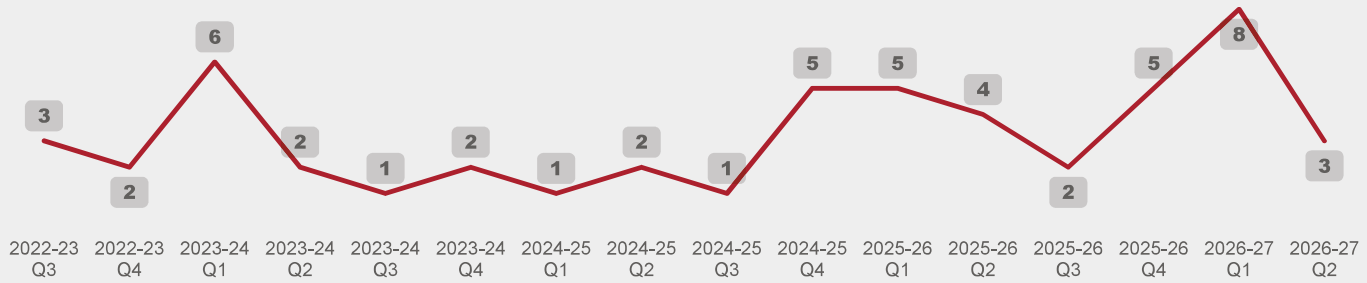
2. Trends

Previous 16 quarters (4 years)

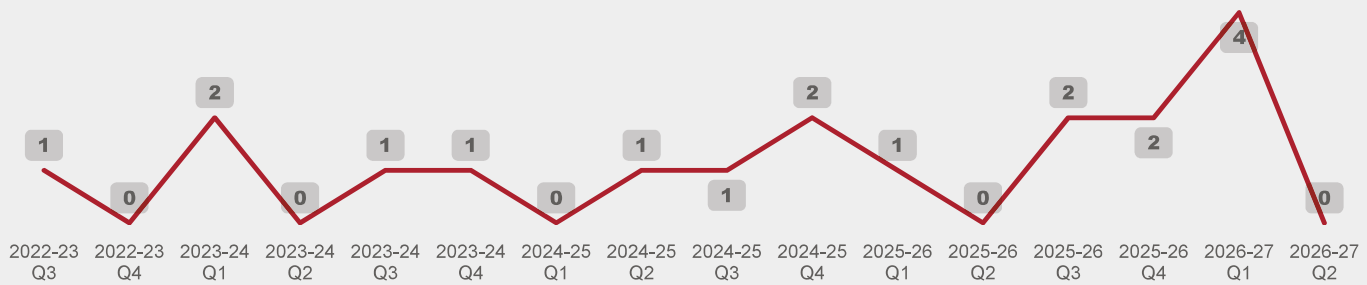
Accidental Dwelling Fires



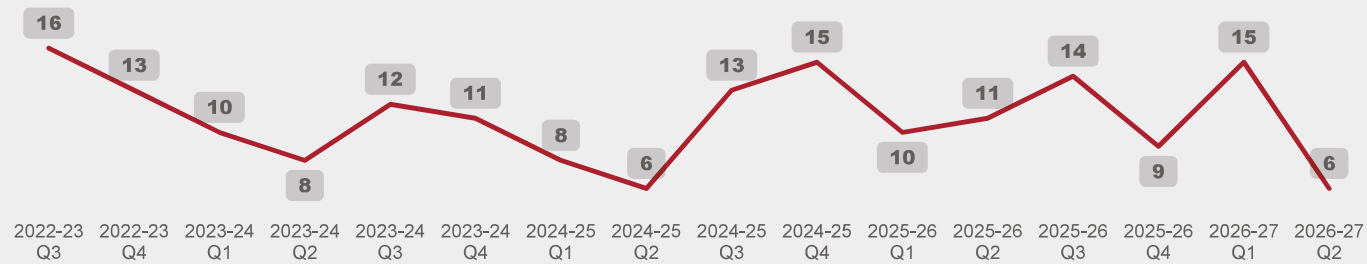
Deliberate Fires



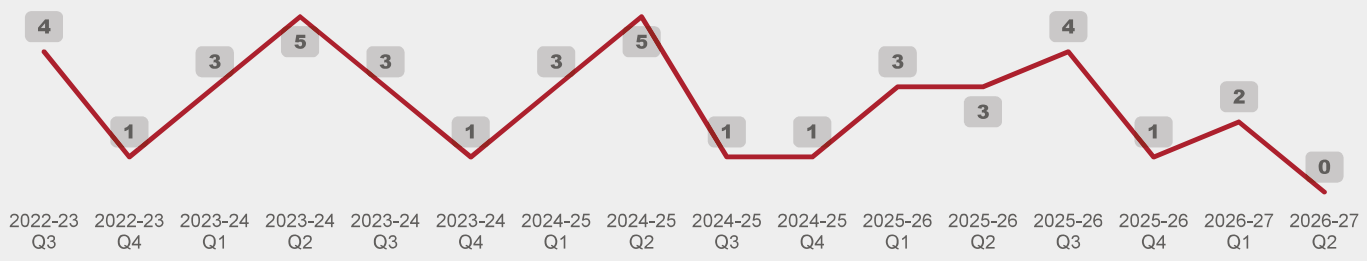
Non-Domestic Fires



Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals



Road Traffic Collisions

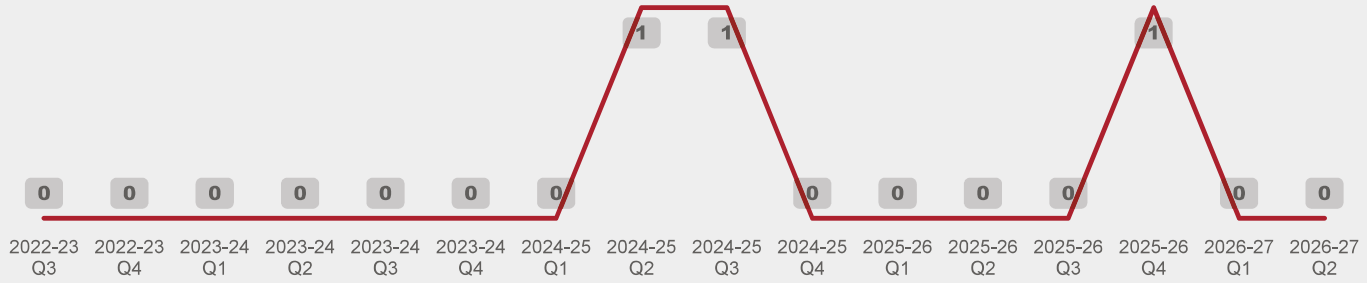


© Scottish Fire & Rescue Service 2026

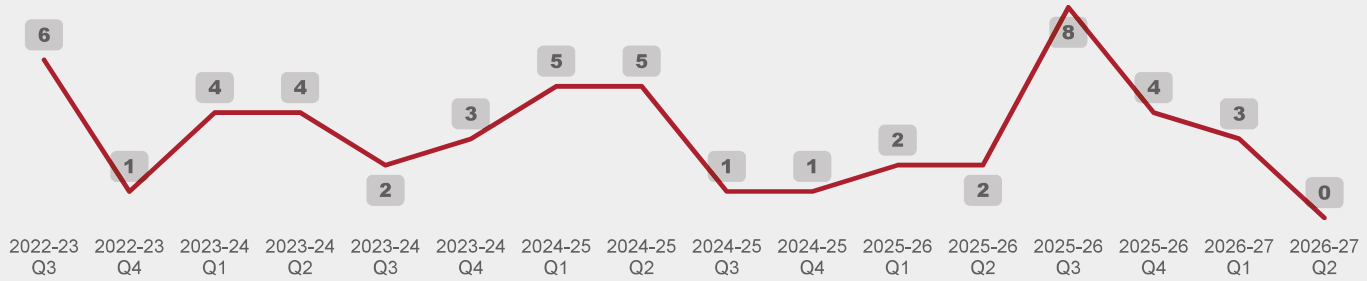
2. Trends

Previous 16 quarters (4 years)

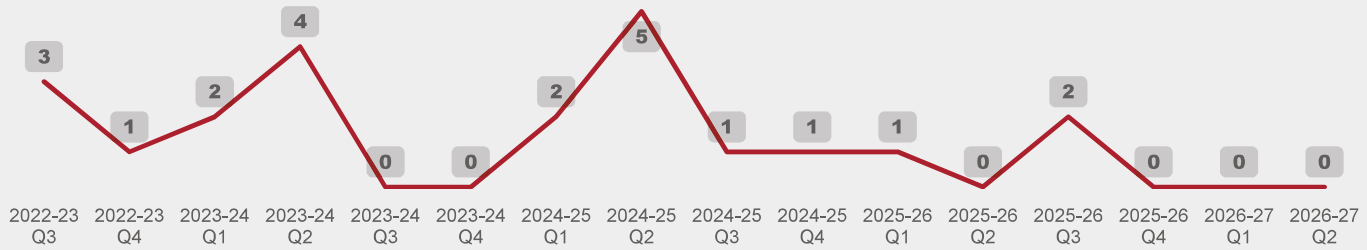
Accidental Dwelling Fire Casualties



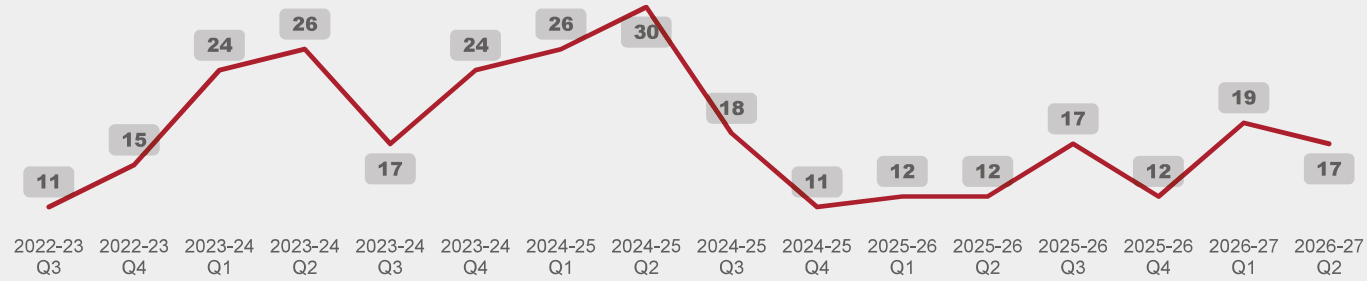
Non-Fire Casualties



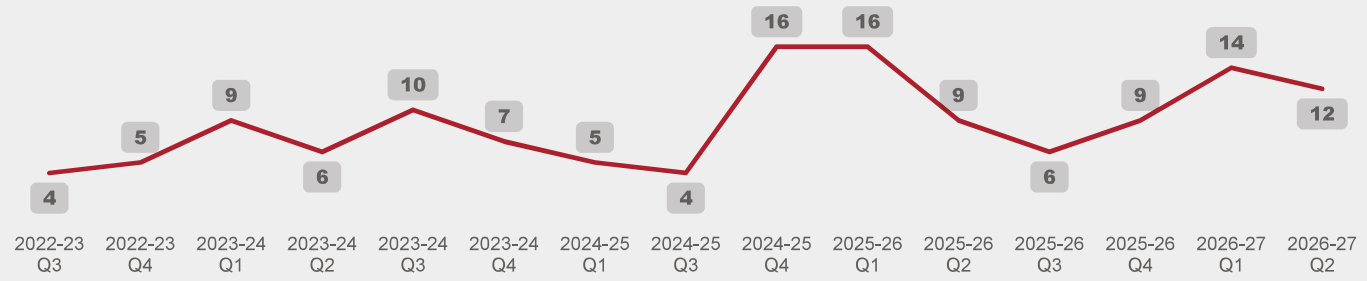
Road Traffic Collision Casualties



Home Fire Safety Visits



Fire Safety Audits



© Scottish Fire & Rescue Service 2026

3. Accidental Dwelling Fires

2026-27 Q1 & Q2

Trend by Quarter (4 years)



Incidents by Ward



Extent of Damage	Incidents
Not applicable	1
Roof space and other floors(s)	1

2

Accidental Dwelling Fires in this period

Source of Ignition (Top 10)



There were **2 Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)** within this reporting period, which is an decrease when compared with the previous reporting period. The majority are classed as low severity, requiring little or no intervention from the Service and minimal fire damage.

All ADFs are offered Home Fire Safety Visits and agency referrals where required.

© Scottish Fire & Rescue Service 2026

4. Accidental Dwelling Fire Casualties

2026-27 Q1 & Q2

Trend by Quarter (4 years)



Casualties by Ward

Nature of Injury/Cause of Death	Casualties

0	0	0
Non-Fatal Casualties	Fatal Casualties	People Rescued by Firefighters

Extent of Harm (Non-Fatal)

0	0	0
First Aid Given at Scene	Hospital Slight Injuries	Hospital Serious Injuries

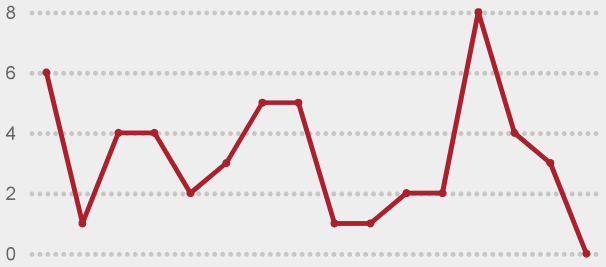
There were **0 ADF Casualties** within this reporting period. It should be noted that these figures do not include those who have been recommended to have a precautionary check up.

© Scottish Fire & Rescue Service 2026

5. Non-Fire Casualties

2026-27 Q1 & Q2

Trend by Quarter (4 years)



Casualties by Ward



Nature of Injury/Cause of Death	Casualties
Collapse	1
Drowning	1
Not known	1

1
Non-Fatal Casualties

2
Fatal Casualties

3
People Rescued by Firefighters

Extent of Harm (Non-Fatal)

0
First Aid Given at Scene

1
Hospital Slight Injuries

0
Hospital Serious Injuries

There were **2 Fatal Casualties** and **1 Non-Fatal Casualties** during this reporting period, which is an decrease when compared to the previous reporting period.

© Scottish Fire & Rescue Service 2026

6. Deliberate Fires

2026-27 Q1 & Q2

Trend by Quarter (4 years)



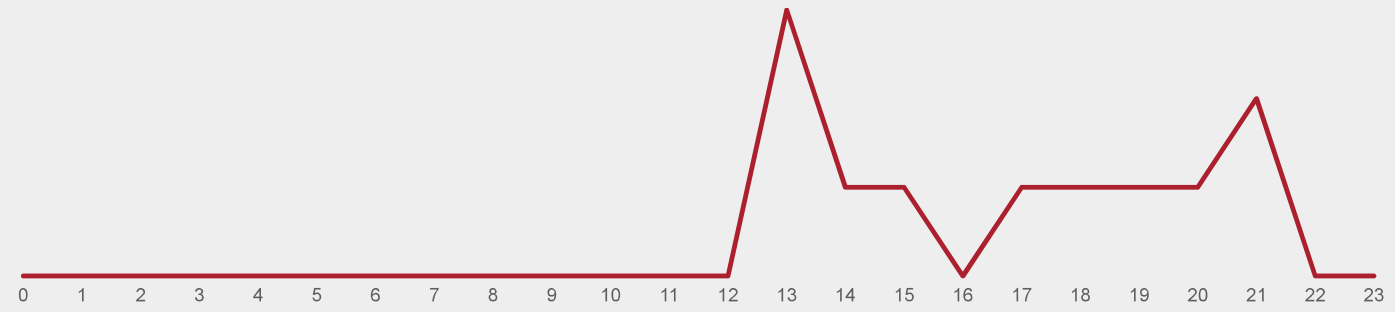
Property Type	Incident
Grassland, woodland and crops	7
Refuse	3
Outdoor structures	1

Incidents by Ward



11 **Deliberate Fires in this period**

Hour of Day



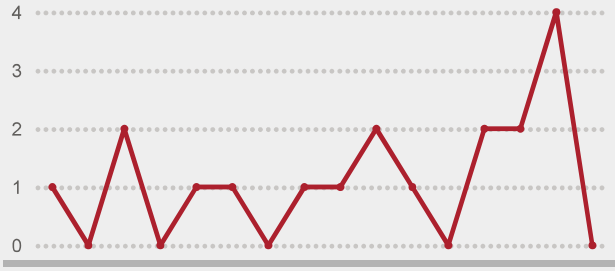
During this reporting period we attended **11 Deliberate Fires**, which is a slight increase when compared to the previous reporting period. Referrals are made to other agencies for those at work within our communities.

© Scottish Fire & Rescue Service 2026

7. Non-Domestic Fires

2026-27 Q1 & Q2

Trend by Quarter (4 years)

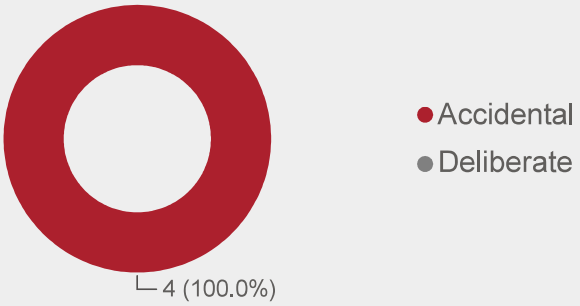


Incidents by Ward



Top 15 Property Types

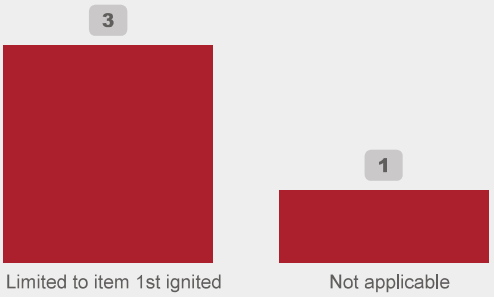
Property Type	Incidents
Entertainment and culture	1
Hospitals and medical care	1
Other holiday residence (cottage, flat, chalet)	1
Permanent Agricultural	1



4

Non-Domestic Fires in this period

Extent of Damage



There were **4 Non-Domestic Fires** during this reporting period, which is a comparable when compared to the previous reporting period.

© Scottish Fire & Rescue Service 2026

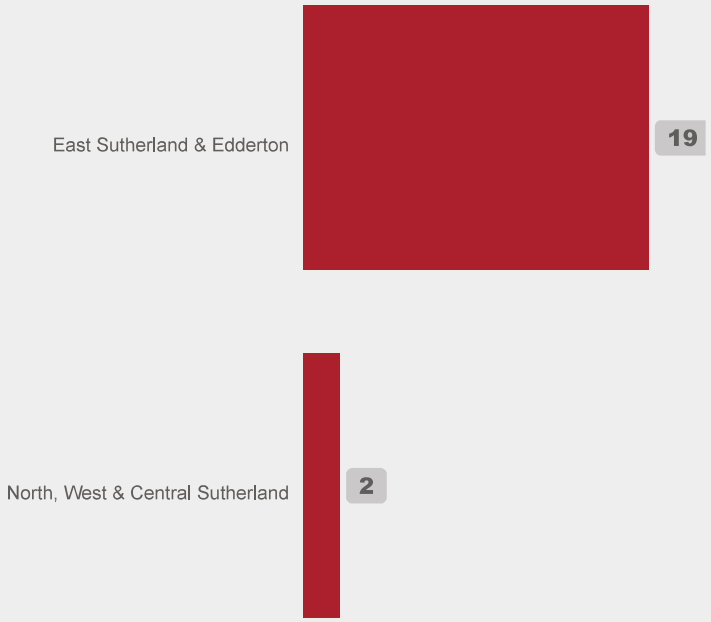
8. Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals

2026-27 Q1 & Q2

Trend by Quarter (4 years)



Incidents by Ward



Top 15 Property Types

Property Type	Incidents
Residential Home	13
Hotel/motel	7
Hospitals and medical care	1

21

Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals in this period

Within this reporting period we attended **21 Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS)**, this is a slight decrease when compared to the previous period. The figures continue to remain low following the Service's change to attend at commercial business and workplace premises.

© Scottish Fire & Rescue Service 2026

9. Road Traffic Collisions

2026-27 Q1 & Q2

Trend by Quarter (4 years)



Incidents by Ward



2 Road Traffic Collisions in this period

Property Type	Incidents
Car	2

Incident Type	Incidents
Vehicle (Non-fire)	2

0 Non-Fatal Casualties

0 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

During the reporting period we attended **2 Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs)** which is a decrease compared to the previous period.

There were **0 Casualties** within this reporting period.

Our Prevention teams continue to work with partner agencies though the Highland Road Safety group, older driver Virtual Reality Scheme and Road Safety Scheme of new drivers.

© Scottish Fire & Rescue Service 2026

10. Home Fire Safety Visits

2026-27 Q1 & Q2

36

Home Fire Safety Visits

HFSVs by Ward



11. Fire Safety Enforcement

Job Type	Count
Audit	26
Consultation	1

Audits by Ward



We undertook **36 Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs)** within this reporting period. With the introduction of the new, modernised Home Fire Safety Visits 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 system and referral pathways are embedded in.

Our Fire Safety Enforcement Officers and Auditing Officers have conducted **26 Audits** and **1 Consultation** within this period.

© Scottish Fire & Rescue Service 2026

- 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	Apr – Sept 26 Availability* %	Staff 30/09/26
Bettyhill	45.52%	8
Bonar Bridge	1.78%	3
Dornoch	92.24%	13
Durness	47.94%	4
Golspie	65.09%	9
Helmsdale	73.00%	6
Kinlochbervie	68.19%	6
Lairg	91.39%	10
Lochinver	0%	3
Scourie	0%	1
Tongue	0%	3

© Scottish Fire & Rescue Service 2026

Wellbeing Event



A few of the Lairg Fire Station crew attended a SFRS Wellbeing event at Invergordon Fire Station.

The event included health checks, the change to speak with wellbeing partners and taking on a challenge set by representatives of the Scottish Firefighters Challenge, putting their fitness to the test.

Events like these are a great way to look after our crews health while having a bit of friendly competition.

Community Safety/Community Action Team

The SFRS Community Action Team (CAT) continues to deliver community safety activities and education across Sutherland, engaging with schools, community groups and the wider community. During Q1 and Q2, the team delivered a range of prevention, education and community-focused activities.

School and student education

- Secondary schools: The Early Driver Intervention Scheme was delivered to pupils in fourth to sixth year, in partnership with Highland Council's Safer Roads department.
- Primary schools: Pupils received Water Safety Awareness education.
- Student accommodation: Talks in Dornoch were delivered to Golf and Hospitality student groups.

Support for vulnerable adults

Engagement with vulnerable adults remained a core priority. The team generated and carried out Home Fire Safety Visits, alongside partnership working with Planet Youth. These visits reinforced the service's commitment to prevention and community safety.

Lairg Crofters Show



The appliance from Lairg attended the 115th Lairg Crofters Show in September, giving those attending the Show an opportunity to have a chat with our crew to find out more about the role of a firefighter, to have a look at the equipment that our personnel use when attending incidents and get advice on fire safety.

Lairg Nursery Visit



The appliance and crew from Lairg visited Lairg Nursery in June. It was a great opportunity to introduce children to fire safety in a fun and engaging way. The children also had a chance to take a look around the fire appliance and see how the hoses worked.



© Scottish Fire & Rescue Service 2026

Wildfire Support Unit for Dornoch

Dornoch Community Fire Station received an Iveco 4 × 4 Wildfire Support Unit in June 2026, bringing additional equipment and tools to help crews tackle wildfires. The vehicle arrived as part of the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) programme to roll out additional support vehicles and equipment for wildfire incidents.

The unit carries leaf blowers, now vital tools for tackling wildfires, alongside brush cutters, knapsacks, portable Dams, hose and a range of hand tools.

Balintore Community Response Unit was identified as a support station for the new vehicle. Its additional trained personnel will help keep the unit available for operational use and strengthen resilience.

Ahead of the unit's go-live date on 12th of June 2026, Emergency Response Drivers from Dornoch and Balintore attended additional off-road driving and vehicle familiarisation courses delivered by the SFRS Driver Training Department. Crews from both stations have also undertaken additional training to ensure they can use the new equipment competently and remain ready to respond.



© Scottish Fire & Rescue Service 2026

Strengthening Scotland's preparedness for wildfire



A statement from Stuart Stevens KFSM, Chief Officer of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Recent wildfires across the UK and around the world have once again demonstrated the unprecedented scale, complexity and danger that these events present.

Within Scotland the recent wildfires, including the significant incident in the Cairngorms, has demonstrated something else: the strength and bravery of Scotland's communities, the professionalism of our emergency services, and the value of partnership working when the country faces serious risks.

I want to place on record my sincere thanks to the communities in and around Aviemore, and to those from further afield, who provided such generous support to our crews and partners during the recent incident. The kindness shown to responders, particularly in relation to their welfare, is deeply appreciated, and I am eternally grateful for your support.

Without question the impact of this fire has been significant on the local community, economy and environment. However, the bravery and effort of all who responded prevented the loss of life, homes or infrastructure.

I want to recognise the exceptional commitment of SFRS Firefighters, Officers, Operations Control staff and Support staff who responded from across Scotland in demanding and arduous conditions. Tackling the Cairngorms wildfire required a significant partnership response involving public, private and third sector organisations, land managers, local communities and national agencies. I want to pay tribute to all those who supported this response and sincerely thank you all. That collective effort demonstrated the very best of Scotland's resilience arrangements. It also reinforced why effective command, coordination and safety structures are essential at incidents of this scale.

Many of those involved came from our On-Call stations. These colleagues often balance their SFRS role with other employment, family responsibilities and community commitments. Their contribution to Scotland is vital, the role they play in their local communities is invaluable, and I do not underestimate the personal sacrifices they made in responding to this incident, and I am indebted to them.

It is evident to me that there is much to learn from the Cairngorms incident, and to ensure we truly capture this learning we must approach this in an open, inclusive and transparent manner. To this end I have commissioned a number of formal debrief processes, including an independently facilitated process, to ensure that all partners, agencies and community representatives can have their voices heard.

Wildfires are dynamic, weather driven, unpredictable and dangerous. Conditions can change rapidly. Fire can spread across large areas of land, affect communities, threaten infrastructure, damage wildlife and natural habitats, and place considerable demand on emergency services and local partners.

As a national fire and rescue service, SFRS is proud of the role it plays in protecting communities across Scotland. During recent incidents, our national model allowed us to deploy personnel, specialist resources and operational support from across the country while continuing to respond to other significant emergencies.

That ability to provide equitable access to capability, wherever risk emerges, is one of the great strengths of a national Service.

But pride in the response must not prevent us from recognising the scale of the challenge ahead.

Wildfire is an increasing and changing risk. The pattern, duration and intensity of these incidents is evolving. It is no longer enough to view wildfire primarily as an incident to be managed once it has started. We must increasingly view it as a national resilience issue requiring prevention, preparedness, investment and shared responsibility.

SFRS is already strengthening its own wildfire capability. Through our Wildfire Strategy and wider Service Delivery Review, we are continuing to develop the skills, equipment, specialist advice and operational arrangements required to respond safely and effectively. This includes strategically located wildfire resources, specialist equipment, tactical advisers and enhanced support for crews operating in rural and remote environments. But more needs to be done. Alongside strategic change the Service requires sustained investment to ensure we are ready to meet this ever-increasing threat.

However, response alone cannot be the answer.

If Scotland is serious about reducing the risk and impact of wildfire, prevention must sit at the heart of our national approach. That means reducing the likelihood of fires starting. It means limiting the conditions that allow fires to spread quickly. It means improving access, water supplies, early identification, public awareness, land management plans, local preparedness and the ability of communities and partners to act before conditions become critical.

It also means recognising that wildfire prevention cannot rest with one organisation alone.

Through the Scottish Wildfire Forum SFRS will continue to work with the Scottish Government, local authorities, land managers, public bodies, businesses, communities and resilience partners to consider what more can be done now. But we need a broader national conversation about how Scotland manages this risk in the years ahead.

Given the risk to life, property, infrastructure and the natural environment, I believe Scotland should now consider a more formal and proportionate fire safety regime for wildfire prevention and preparedness — one that reflects the seriousness of the risk we collectively face. The built environment has long been subject to clear expectations around fire safety. As wildfire risk grows, we must ask whether our approach to the natural and rural environment is sufficiently clear, consistent and preventative.

That does not mean creating unnecessary burden or division. It means setting clear expectations, improving planning, supporting land managers and communities, and ensuring that prevention is treated as a shared priority.

Preparedness is not about alarm. It is about responsibility.

It is about recognising that the climate, landscape and risk environment are changing. It is about learning from recent incidents. It is about investing before the emergency rather than counting the cost afterwards. And it is about ensuring that Scotland's emergency services, communities and partners are supported to meet the risks we can reasonably foresee.

The recent wildfire response should give Scotland confidence. It demonstrated courage, professionalism, partnership and public spirit. But it should also prompt action.

We now have an opportunity to further strengthen how Scotland prevents, prepares for and responds to wildfire. That opportunity must not be missed.

The time to fight the risk of wildfire is before the smoke is in the air. The decisions we take today will determine how well-prepared Scotland is tomorrow.

SFRS will continue to play its full part. We will continue to strengthen our capability, work alongside partners and support communities across the country. However, reducing the impact of wildfire in Scotland cannot be achieved by the fire and rescue service alone.

It will require a shared national commitment from government, public services, land managers, businesses, communities and individuals alike. If we are serious about protecting lives, livelihoods, infrastructure, our natural environment and the resilience of our nation, we must act now — together, with purpose, and with a long-term commitment to prevention, as well as response.



Stuart Stevens KFSM
Chief Officer of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

24 August 2026

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 & Rescue Service 2026

SCOTTISH

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland

BUSINESS

INTELLIGENCE

Design, figures and charts by the Business Intelligence team.