

Essex Fire Authority

Report to the Constituent Authorities

18 Apr 2012

AUDIT REPORT ON BUDGETARY CONTROL

An audit of Budgetary Control and Financial Reporting was undertaken as part of the approved internal audit periodic plan for 2011/12. The review found that the arrangements for the monitoring and review of budgets provide substantial assurance to our communities.

OPERATIONAL INCIDENTS REPORT

Commentary

Full details of the operational incidents that ECFRS has attended for the period 1 April 2011 to 29 February 2012 can be found in table one. The Service has attended 15,038 incidents compared with 17,513 for the same period last year, an overall reduction of 2,475. Incidents involving fires have been slightly reduced from 5,519 to 5,498 with the number primary fires having been reduced from 1,086 to 1,051. However, the number of secondary fires has increased to 2,739; up 181 compared to 2,558 the previous year.

The highest number of secondary fires for the 2011-12 period was recorded at Grays fire station ground with 284 secondary fires, a reduction of 15 from 299 the previous year. The Service continues to target this area through school visits and FiReBreak to continue the downward trend. The number of chimney fires has reduced from 141 to 120 - which is probably due to the mild winter.

**Table One - Summary of Incident attended by ECFRS –
2011/12 compared to 2010/11**

Incident Type	2010/11	2011/12
Fires	5519	5498
Special Services	3611	3445
False Alarms	8383	6095
Total	17513	15038
<u>Fires</u>		
Primary Fires		
Dwelling	1086	1051
Other building	551	605
Vehicle	849	759
Other	334	224
Secondary Fires	2558	2739
Chimney Fires	141	120
Total	5519	5498
<u>Special Services</u>		
Road Traffic Collision	1099	1128
Gaining entry/exit	468	390
Lift release	390	303
Flooding	378	402
Other rescue/release of persons	224	207
Animal assistance incidents	202	188
Spills and Leaks (not RTC)	185	154
Removal of objects from people	129	124
No action (not false alarm)/Service not required	99	129
Assist other agencies	78	80
Making safe (not RTC)	76	84
Medical Incident - Co-responder/First responder	54	50
Other transport incident	53	37
Hazardous Materials incident	48	51
Suicide	32	22
Rescue or evacuation from water	32	30
Advice only	23	14
Evacuation (no fire)	21	36
Stand By	12	12
Water provision	8	4
Total	3611	3445
<u>False Alarms</u>		
False alarm due to apparatus	4482	2596
False alarm good intent	3456	3206
Malicious false alarm	445	293
Total	8383	6095

Commentary (cont'd)

Predictably, since the change to the Service's mobilising policy, the number of calls to False Alarms Due to Apparatus (FADA - fire alarms actuating due to system faults) has reduced significantly; a total number of 2596 FADA incidents were recorded for April 2011 to February 2012, compared to 4,482 incidents for the same period the previous year, representing a 40% reduction.

Positively the number of hoax calls attended has again significantly reduced from 445 to 293. Southend fire station has the highest number of hoax calls for 2011-12, however this has also been reduced from 56 to 45. Basildon fire station previously had the highest return in 2010-11 with 67 incidents and it is pleasing to note that they have managed to reduce their hoax calls to 43 for the 2011-12 period. The Service continues to identify target areas, via the performance management tool 'Actuate', and re-divert appropriate resources under the new functional command structure.

The table below provides a breakdown of the number and type of incidents at which the Service has had to deal with fatalities, injuries or rescues for the period 1 April 2011 to 29 February 2012.

Table Two – Fatalities, injuries and Rescues

April 11 – February 2012				
Incident Type	Fatalities	Injuries	Rescues	Persons Involved (Total)
False Alarm	0	0	0	0
Fire	8	167	35	210
*Special Service	49	864	797	1710

** The majority of the figures within Special Service incidents are from Road Traffic Collisions.*

Definition of "Primary Fire":

This group of fires includes those occurring in buildings fit for occupation; caravans; non-derelect vehicles; outdoor storage, plant and machinery; agricultural and forestry premises and property; outdoor structures such as post-boxes, tunnels, bridges etc. If a fire would normally be defined as a secondary fire and also involves casualties, rescues or escapes; spread from one secondary fire location to another; or are attended by five or more appliances where either the firefighters, appliances or equipment were employed in fighting the fire, the definition changes to a primary fire.

Definition of "Secondary Fire":

A fire confined to single derelict buildings, single trees, refuse containers, attended by four or fewer appliances and which did not involve casualties, rescues or escapes.

Definition of "Emergency Special Service":

Incidents including RTCs, extrications, lift rescues, lock ins/outs, hazardous materials or chemicals (Hazchem), ladder/ALP rescues, water rescues and any other incident not falling into the previous categories with confirmed fatalities, casualties or rescues or first aid rendered by ECFRS personnel.

Recent incidents of notable interest

Incident No: 24747

Date: 07-12-2011

Time: 11:16

Details: Five houses involved in blaze

Address: West Street, Harwich

Attendance: Dovercourt, 2 x Manningtree, Weeley, 2 x Colchester (including Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP)), 2 x Frinton, Clacton (Incident Command Unit), Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe

ECFRS was called in the late morning to a roof on fire, the pre-determined attendance of two appliances were confronted by smoke issuing from a number of roof spaces in a row of five Victorian terraced properties. Firefighters wearing breathing apparatus swiftly gained entry into the burning buildings to ensure that no persons were trapped within.

Within 2 minutes of arrival, the Officer in Charge (OiC) requested an additional two appliances, along with an Aerial Ladder Platform, as access to the very confined loft space proved to be difficult. In accordance with Service policy (incidents comprising of four or more pumps), the Command Support Vehicle (CSV) was also mobilised.

The informative message from the OiC, sent within 10 minutes of responding to the incident, provides a good understanding of the severity of the fire that crews were confronted with: -

'It is a fire in a roof void, roof well alight, affecting 5 properties, 1 hosereel jet, 2 CABA, 1 main jet tactical mode offensive'.

The size of the incident was such that it required ten pumps. Crews remained on site throughout the night, using an Aerial ladder Platform monitor and one hose reel jet to extinguish hot-spots and small pockets of fire.



Incident No: 2904

Date: 13-02-2012
Time: 19:04
Details: Car repair yard on fire (60 people evacuated)
Address: Hume Avenue, Tilbury
Attendance: 3 x Grays, 2 x Orsett, 2 x Corringham, Southend (ALP)
Incident Command Unit - Wickford, Basildon, 2 x Rayleigh Weir (Hose Layer) Maldon (Foam), Billericay, Canvey Island

Around 60 people were evacuated from their homes when a fire broke out in a scrap yard in the early evening of 13 February. Located at Hume Avenue, Tilbury just 50m from a rail track, the fire spread across an area measuring 50m by 50m, involving scrap cars and a number of out buildings. Trains had to be stopped for just over an hour and a half.

An evacuation was ordered after crews discovered that the fire involved acetylene cylinders. Remote controlled vehicles were provided by Quinetiq in response to a request by the OiC. These units were able to greatly reduce the time the 200m exclusion zone had to be in place. Residents were allowed to return home less than 12 hours later at 6am the following morning.

Incident Commander, Divisional Officer Gary Jeffery stated: -

'Firefighters have done an excellent job in preventing the fire from spreading to surrounding commercial and residential properties'

The fire was fully extinguished by 02:13hrs, the cause remains undetermined.



Incident No: 3749
Date: 27-02-2012

Time: Power Station Alight
Address: Tilbury Power Station, Tilbury
Attendance: 2 x Grays, 2 x Brentwood, 2 x Basildon, 2 x Rayleigh Weir, Leigh, South Woodham Ferrers, Canvey Island, Orsett, Corringham, Billericay, Southend ALP, Chelmsford ALP, Grays ALP

At its height 25 appliances and more than 120 firefighters attended a serious fire at Tilbury Power Station which had developed within fuel pellet storage hoppers (containing 6000 tonnes of wood pellets). These pellets are the biomass fuel used by the power station as part of its power generation process. The first crew called for fifteen pumps when they saw the huge plume of smoke rising from the power station as they were proceeding to the incident.

The main seat of the fire was difficult to access as it was located at the top of the building in a room containing many thousands of tonnes of fuel. The application of water had to be limited to surrounding risks due to concerns that the building's structure would collapse under the weight. In order to address this high expansion foam was used to extinguish the flames and bring the fire under control. Once this had happened, which took approximately six hours, the crews then embarked on a more protracted operation of emptying the affected hoppers and removal of the fuel by truck. Throughout this operation a foam blanket was maintained on the affected hoppers to prevent the fire from reigniting.

The operation to remove the fuel continued for five days with the site being handed back to the owners on Saturday 3 March.

In order to manage the significant media interest a media centre was established by ECFRS' Media team at the nearby World's End public house. This provided a good vantage point for camera crews and photographers whilst regular updates were given and interviews with the CFO and other senior officers were managed. The Service's website received more than 11,000 hits, 3,000 of which were through mobile phones, and through Facebook and Twitter. Live updates were tweeted every 20 minutes or so, with ECFRS Twitter followers increasing by more than 300 by the end of the day. CFO David Johnson said: -

"Crews did an excellent job working in punishing conditions at an extremely technically difficult incident. Both firefighters and Control operators pulled out all the stops and it meant that we were able to deal efficiently with the largest fire we have had in Essex in many years while maintaining normal service across the rest of the County."

"The fact that this major fire was brought under control safely and relatively quickly is testament to the professionalism of our officers and crews."

Crews also won public praise from Thurrock MP Jackie Price Doyle and Thurrock Council Leader John Kent. In addition to this NPower pledged to sponsor a FiReBreak course after being so impressed with the dedication and professionalism shown by the crews during the week they were at Tilbury Power Station.

It should be noted that despite such a resource intensive incident, the Service maintained its fire cover throughout, and the resilience of the Service was demonstrated as, although it had 3 ALPs deployed at this incident, the Service was still able to offer ALP support to Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service at a serious fire in Haverhill in the same day. In addition to this the Service had other serious incidents within its borders to deal with on the same day. All of which were effectively dealt with which provides Members with clear evidence that ECFRS has an effective and resilient operational capability to be proud of.



Incident No: 4790
Date: 14-03-2012
Time: 08:11
Details: Fatal fire
Address: Ormonde Gardens, Leigh-on-Sea
Attendance: Leigh, 2 x Rayleigh Weir

Crews were called to a fire in a bungalow in Leigh in which an elderly man died. The Service was alerted by a neighbour just after 20:00 hours on 14 March to smoke issuing from a bungalow, with the neighbour also informing Fire Control that in likelihood it was 'persons reported' as the occupant rarely left the residence.

The normal two pump attendance was supplemented by a third appliance when the potential for 'person reported' came to light. On arrival crews found that the semi-detached bungalow was heavily smoke logged. Firefighters wearing breathing apparatus entered the building and conducted a search; unfortunately they found an elderly man fatally injured.

Firefighters were able to extinguish the fire quickly and prevent the fire from spreading to the adjoining bungalow.

An after incident response was conducted on 16 and 17 March. The outcome of the After Incident Response, which was initially carried out by Blue watch Rayleigh, members of the volunteers' project (currently being piloted in the Southend area in partnership with Southend Association of Voluntary Service), a Service Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) Technician and the local Community Liaison Officer, was:

- 5 smoke alarms fitted
- 1 smoke alarm supplied to householder
- 3 HFSV requested
- 1 sensory alarm to be fitted
- leaflet drop in addresses that did not respond to a knock

The second stage, carried out on 17 March, involved white watch Leigh, and involved additional advice given out and two further requests for HFSVs.

Community Safety Campaign – Kitchen Fires

Throughout the month of February a concerted media campaign took place to highlight the dangers presented by kitchen fires. A press release was issued to local media detailing the numbers of fires ECFRS attend which start in the kitchens, and statistics relating to the injuries caused by these fires.

A message was created to be added to any incident involving a fire in a kitchen and watch managers and Control was informed of the scheme and given details of how to contact the press office out of hour's service to let the on duty press office know of any kitchen fire incidents.

Over the course of the month there were 23 kitchen fire incidents each of which contained a full safety message, including quotes, which ran in newspapers across the County. During the course of the month the media team were paged for a great many more kitchen fires than normal and crews called and emailed with details of fires used. The Service generated column inches in papers throughout the County with many articles using the quotes and details of kitchen fire safety as part of the report.

Councillor Anthony Hedley
Chairman