

Essex Fire Authority

Report to the Constituent Authorities

7 September 2011

OPERATIONAL INCIDENTS REPORT AND INCIDENTS OF NOTABLE INTEREST APRIL – JUNE 2011

For the period April to June 2011 the Service attended 4548 incidents compared with 4780 for the same period last year. Incidents of fire have seen an overall increase from 1722 to 1893. Whilst primary¹ fires have been reduced from 815 to 804, the number of secondary² fires has increased to 1071; this is compared to 882 the previous year. Positively the number of secondary fires recorded for June 2011 was the lowest monthly out-turn this so far this year and an improvement on June 2010. The number of chimney fires has reduced from 25 to 18.

Since the change in the Service's mobilising policy the number of False Alarms Due to Apparatus (FADA) has been reduced by almost half of the number attended in the previous year. A total number of 455 incidents were recorded for April, May & June 2011, compared to 833 for the same period last year.

The number of hoax calls attended has significantly reduced from 113 to 85.

The table on page 2 highlights the number and incident types at which the Service has encountered fatalities, injuries or has effected rescues for the period 1 April to 30 June 2011.

April – June 2011				
Incident Type	Fatalities	Injuries	Rescues	Persons Involved (Total)
False Alarm	0	0	0	0
Fire	5	51	11	67
Special Service* ³	17	221	250	488

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

¹Definition 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.

²Definition 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.

³Definition 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: 12247
Date: 21-06-2011
Time: 22:32
Details: Fire in seventh floor flat
Address: Longbow Flats, Sherwood Way, Southend
Attendance: 2 x Southend, Rochford, Leigh, Basildon, 2 x Rayleigh Weir, Shoeburyness and Hawkwell

Firefighters tackled a fire on the seventh floor flat of a 13 storey block using one main jet and wearing four sets of breathing apparatus. Crews quickly gained entry and had extinguished the fire by 23:00hrs.

The seventh floor of the building was heavily smoke logged, and the floors above were affected by smoke. Fire crews went door to door to flats on the affected floors evacuating residents to a safe place and to reassure other inhabitants. Divisional Officer Bob Wahl said:

'Crews did an excellent job at this incident. They quickly got on top of the fire and thanks to their hard work and professionalism the fire was contained to the flat of origin and swiftly extinguished. Extra crews were called to assist in evacuating the flats taking residents affected, and any concerned by the fire, to a place of safety. As of 23:30hrs the smoke has cleared and residents are now returning to their homes.'

Crews worked with residents to make sure the occupants of all flats were accounted for, rescuing people from the smoke filled floors above the flat fire including a large number of elderly people, children and animals, leading all of them safely outside and away from the smoke.

Since the incident, which is one of a number of arson attacks that have been carried out recently at Longbow Flats, firefighters have been involved in giving out safety advice to the residents. Ten firefighters spent an afternoon engaging with residents to explain how they could help to deter the arsonists. This was done in partnership with representatives from South Essex Homes, which manages the high-rise block. In addition to this, a Community Circle meeting was organised for 27 July 2011 in order for residents to discuss any issues they had with officers from South Essex Homes, Essex Police, Essex Fire & Rescue Service and the dedicated anti-social behaviour team (SMAART).



Incident No: 13112
Date: 02-07-2011
Time: 11:08
Details: Thatch Cottage alight
Address: High Street, Henham
Attendance: Stansted, Newport, Thaxted, 2 x Saffron Walden, Leaden Roding and Bishop Stortford (Hertfordshire)

Firefighters were mobilised to a fire in the roof of a two storey thatched cottage which measured about 20 by 20 metres. On arrival the Officer in Charge reported that 20% of the roof was well alight, which had spread to 40% within an hour. At the height of the fire, crews used two main jets and four hose reel jets to tackle the fire, then cutting a fire-break in the roof. The fire was brought under control two hours later. Divisional Officer Ray Skinner said:

"Crews did an excellent job at this fire. Thatch fire present firefighters with a great many problems but the crews here worked extremely hard and thanks to them the fire was confined to the roof with only water and smoke damage to the remainder of the property. Fighting thatch fire is very labour intensive and crews quickly got to work stripping the thatched roof away to get to the seat of the fire and it is thanks to them that this cottage was not completely destroyed by fire."

Since the fire, local crews carried out a leaflet drop - "Thatch Property Safety Guide" to all thatch properties in the surrounding area as part of the After Incident Response, as well as part of an ongoing campaign to reduce thatch fires. This guide details the normal causes of fire, precautions to take, safety devices available, advice and information as well as a check list and a list of useful contacts.

Incident No: 13334
Date: 05-07-2011
Time: 04:14
Details: Tens of thousands of tonnes of recycled wood alight – five pump fire
Address: Rio Recycling, Stanford Road, Orsett
Initial Attendance: 2 x Orsett, 2 x Corringham, 2 x Rayleigh Weir (including hose layer), Grays, 2 x Basildon and Billericay
Special Appliances Welfare Unit and Incident Command Unit

Crews were called to the fire at a recycling company in Stamford Road, Orsett. The incident involved 40,000 tonnes of waste wood which was being stored at the disused quarry site and is 80ft deep and 600ft wide managed by Rio Recycling.

At 10:05 hours, the incident was made a five pump incident for additional manpower. The hose layer was sent to the scene from Rayleigh Weir, along with the Incident Control Unit from Basildon. Firefighters used two hose reels and a water shuttle was established. At the height of firefighting operations the A1013 was closed in both directions.

The Environment Agency and Environmental Health were asked to attend and the tactical option of a controlled burn was discussed, and agreed with them due to the large quantities

of water which was required to extinguish the fire. The Environmental Agency stipulated that fire crews could use up to 15000ltrs of water as any more might contaminate a borehole at Linford. Other factors which contributed to this decision were the fact that the fire could not be tackled directly, due to access and safety issues.

While this was ongoing surrounding risks were identified, some houses including a thatch and a standing corn field to the south. Measures were put in place to protect these.

The main issues for firefighting were the water supplies, the Hose Layer was used and Stanford Road was closed for several hours until the water officer identified a more appropriate hydrant. Other issues involved sightseers visiting the site; messages were sent out via media department to local press and schools to prevent this. By 6 July four fire engines remained at the scene as the Service, following liaison and advice from the Environment Agency implemented a defensive controlled burn tactic.

It became obvious that the Service would need to attend the incident for a prolonged period, so the Service established a Critical Incident Team at Service Headquarters. This helped support the incident commander to monitor aspects such as weather conditions, via the Met Office, for information relating to wind speed and direction so that appliances at the scene could be repositioned. It also helped establish a procedure for relief crews, and co-ordinate officer attendance to ensure that there was continuous liaison with managers of the site.

This incident involved a great deal of partnership working in order to resolve not only the incident but also many other issues which had affected the local community.

The Service had previously been made aware of Rio through anonymous letters sent to Thurrock and Brentwood Community Command raising concerns. Fire Officers had visited the site and liaised with the operators. As the site was licensed and operating within the Environmental Agency conditions, there were no apparent breaches of fire safety regulations and as such the Service had done everything in order to make sure that all responsible agencies were aware of the issues.

ECFRS finally closed the incident at 13:30 on 6 August.

Councillor Anthony Hedley
Chairman