Welcome to the quarterly newsletter for quarter 2 of the financial year 2019 / 20. This newsletter will give insight into our performance as a command for the year so far up to and including September 30th 2019.

The teams across Coventry and Solihull have been really busy during this period attending incidents, exercises and working closely with partners on a range of issues in prevention, protection and response. Close working relationships have included West Midlands Police and Coventry and Solihull Age UK to name a few.

Whilst it’s been a busy time dealing with a number of incidents, we have still been able to achieve 1568 safe and well checks, along with school visits across all key stages, road safety prevention work and fire safety protection delivery.
West Midlands Fire Service is committed to an average risk-based attendance time of 5 minutes. We know through academic studies on survivability that if we can get to someone within 5 minutes the chances of them surviving a significant incident increase.

Throughout July to September we have consistently over performed against our average risk-based attendance time, with the brigade average being 4 minutes and 41 seconds; which is really great news.

Our response priorities focus on dealing excellently with emergency incidents:

- through risk management, the most serious emergency incidents in high-risk areas will be attended within five minutes, to save life, protect homes and businesses, and keep our transport networks moving
- risk to life and property will be reduced through our commitment to operational excellence, enabling an assertive, effective and safe emergency response to all incidents whilst supporting firefighter safety
- at all incidents attended, rescue operations will be led and coordinated by WMFS whilst working collaboratively with other agencies to deliver an excellent response and meet public expectations
- National Resilience will be enhanced through delivery of a local, national and international response to major incidents, new risks and humanitarian situations through our specialist response teams.

Fire Control are the resources managers for both Staffordshire and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service and receive all the emergency 999 calls for both services.

Between April and September Fire Control received a total of 37,175 calls; 71% of these calls were attributed to West Midlands Fire Service and 29% to Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

A key performance measure within Fire Control is the speed in which they mobilise a fire engine to a serious incident e.g. a house fire; impressively throughout April to September Fire Controls average time to mobilise to a house fire was 58 seconds.

999Eye is a tool which we use to get ‘eyes on’ to an incident though the mobile phone of those who are reporting the incident; 999Eye a critical asset in how we use intelligence, such as mobile phone footage, to ensure we mobilise the right resources. 999Eye was used an impressive 3000 times since April 2019.
COVENTRY AND SOLIHULL RESPONSE

As with previous briefings, we monitor our reaction times and attendance times closely as we strive to meet our risk-based 5-minute attendance standard whenever possible. In quarter 2 we averaged:

Reaction time – 51 seconds
Attendance time – 302 seconds – although 2 seconds over our target – this is particularly impressive over a 3 month period with 2 stations in the command namely Solihull and Canley with very large station areas as well as our Technical Rescue teams at Bickenhill Station.

Teams from the command have attended a wide variety of incidents. With multiple rescues in that time from fire and RTC’s. Excellent standards have been shown at some difficult incidents.

In terms of the performance indicators we monitor to measure how as a service we are performing, we remain in exception in this command for:

• Accidental dwelling fires
• Deliberate dwelling fires
• Deliberate rubbish fires
• Injuries in accidental dwelling fires

The last 2-3 months has seen trends of a range of deliberate fires in the Coventry area. Using our incident data an increase in deliberate rubbish fires in and around Coventry City centre, particularly in St Michaels’ ward was identified. This is a contributing factor to the above bullet points. There has been some intense work with WMFS, WMP and the local authority through the City Tasking Group in this time to help prevent these incidents by identifying the perpetrators. This has led to several arrests in this time of police intelligence led ‘known arsonists’. With these arrests there has been a reduction in the number of deliberate fires we have attended this year. This has been due to some excellent collaborative approach working with partners.

INCIDENT

A challenging RTC attended by crews from Foleshill. One casualty rescued where damage to the vehicle made for a challenging incident. The casualty was rescued in a swift and professional way working very closely with our colleagues from the Ambulance Service.

DERELICT CHURCH FIRE

A derelict church fire in the early hours of the morning attended by crews from Foleshill, Binley and Coventry where attendance was achieved in 5 minutes and a witness testimony account of “excellent” service as well as how fast crews arrived, can be viewed in a video snippet from WMFS main twitter page: https://twitter.com/WestMidsFire/status/1174407054020268037
This exercise aimed to replicate an aircraft coming down on a public road after suffering a bird strike.

It involved West Midlands Fire Service, Coventry Airport, West Midlands Ambulance Service, the Air Accidents Investigation Branch, West Midlands Ambulance Service Hazardous Areas Response Team (HART) and Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire emergency planning officers. The event also saw scores of casualty volunteers - most of whom work for local councils - help make the event as realistic as possible.

Crews from all Coventry's fire stations - Coventry, Binley, Foleshill and Canley - all took part.

One of the those coordinating the event was Watch Commander Brin Mills from Binley fire station.

He said: "As an organisation we have to do so many training situations a year that involve responding to a large-scale incident. We try and make the exercises as realistic as possible, using different venues and different themes.

“This involved a business class aircraft that had a bird strike and came down on a public road and collided with vehicles. The volunteers were very good indeed and helped to make the exercise very realistic, particularly for the initial crews which attended. “

"It went really well indeed and there were lots of areas of development and learning particularly for the fire service and aircraft. As far as exercises go this is one we don’t get to do very often, so the opportunity to use an airport was particularly useful.”
Our prevention priorities focus on making safer, healthier communities:

- the number of people killed or seriously injured by fire related incidents will reduce as we focus, with our partners, on reducing the risks faced by the most vulnerable people in our communities
- the safety, health and well-being of the most vulnerable people in our communities will improve by targeting ‘radical prevention’ interventions that are directly linked to vulnerability from fire
- arson-related incidents will fall, supporting safer and stronger communities, as a result of our partnership working
- fewer people will be killed or seriously injured on West Midlands roads and we will keep our transport networks moving, as we work with the West Midlands Combined Authority and other organisations to develop and deliver interventions that support the West Midlands Regional Road Safety Strategy.

Our prevention work focuses on reducing people’s vulnerability to the type of emergencies to which we respond.

Our firefighters carry out thousands of ‘Safe and Well’ visits every year, and our crews give advice on health and wellbeing where it will reduce the risk of a fire. This means vulnerable people are safer in their own homes and we can get them extra help if they need it.

We also provide fire safety education in hundreds of schools and colleges and at our interactive ‘Safeside’ learning centres in Handsworth and Eastside, as well as at public events and through our popular Fire Cadets programme.
One of our main aims of our prevention strategy is to reduce the vulnerability of fire in the home. Along with the previously mentioned 1568 safe and well checks completed in this quarter are:

- 7.7 average risk score
- 37% partner referral rate year to date

We are always working to improve the above points, as our evidence suggests the partners we do have with an active, productive partnership are where we see WMFS delivering SAW's to the most vulnerable risk groups. Some of these current partners include:

- Coventry Mental health teams
- Age UK Coventry
- Age UK Solihull
- SIAS drug and alcohol treatment service

The above are just some of the excellent partnerships working well in the command, with Age UK in particular referring 130 vulnerable people to WMFS in quarter 2.

When the fire risk is very high in a property we utilise specialist complex needs officers. This is a voluntarily role which will have an operational Fire Fighter, for example, receive extra training to be able to reduce fire risk in a range of complexities including hoarding, drug and alcohol use whilst smoking in bed. The command has welcomed another 2 of these officers to the team in quarter 2 who are currently in training and moving forward through the year will make significant impacts in our communities to reduce risk of fire.

Engaging with our communities can assist with prevention in all areas. In Solihull crews have been working over the summer months to attend multiple local authority events in a multi-agency approach to prevent anti-social behaviour. Teams have delivered a road safety message using virtual reality headsets to engage with younger drivers or potential young drivers. This engagement has also led to a reduction in secondary fires in some wards in the Solihull area, with secondary fires sometimes an ASB – this is excellent for performance and our local communities.
Our protection work focuses on helping businesses to thrive, making the West Midlands stronger.

We assess high-risk buildings including residential high-rises to ensure public safety and provide reassurance about the risks of fire.

We also advise companies how best to comply with fire safety legislation, to keep staff and customers safe.

If fire does strike, we help them to get back up and running as soon as possible. As a large organisation ourselves, we know the importance of business continuity.

Our protection priorities focus on protecting life and property to make businesses stronger and communities safer:

- life and property will be protected by targeting high-risk buildings and vulnerable businesses, including residential high-rises, to ensure compliance and enforcement of fire safety legislation
- improved community safety through implementing outcomes of the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety
- improved community safety through innovative and contemporary approaches to the delivery of protection activities and working cohesively with partners at local, regional and national levels to influence the development of new and enabling legislation
- prosperity and economic growth are enhanced by educating and supporting businesses, including collaboration with other regulators and partner agencies
- disruption to businesses, communities and West Midlands Fire Service caused by unwanted fire signals from fire alarms will be reduced.

We continue with our SSRI site risk survey assessments at multiple large commercial premises. Quarter 2 of this year has seen the majority of these completed by all stations at previously unidentified sites. This equates to vital intelligence at a number of large or complex sites to aid firefighter safety through the development of tactical plans in the event of an incident. This will increase the safety of firefighters for any potential attended incident attended as well as firefighting actions to save life and property.

Teams are currently working to great effect in reducing false alarms in properties. Working alongside dedicated business support officers (BSO) and fire safety officers (FSO), operational crews share intelligence on any repeat false alarm offender. A BSO can then follow this up using fire safety legislation to reduce these false alarms.
OTHER ACTIVITIES

Over the last 3 months we have carried out multiple charity car washes, seeing contributions to great causes such as The Firefighters charity, Marie Curie and As-Siraat.

Foleshill’s Fire Cadet branch runs for children with special needs. All our branches are voluntary services and Foleshill in particular was recently awarded at the Queens awards for voluntary service. This is the equivalent award to an MBE for volunteer groups, a fantastic achievement and we are very proud of all our cadet branches.

PEOPLE

Achieving a diverse workforce which is representative of the Communities we serve is a key objective across the Service. We are currently working with our teams across Coventry & Solihull to contribute towards this objective. To date, all teams have received input from the Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality team with regards to positive action and the WMFS approach to recruitment. Over Quarter 3 we will be seeking out opportunities to attract new people to the Service from across Coventry & Solihull and hope this will help support the Service’s aspirations over the coming years.

LOOK FORWARD

Although extremely pleased with current performance in our command there will be some areas of focus moving into Quarter 3. With earlier mention of accidental dwelling fires and subsequent injuries in exception plans are already in place to try to prevent this further. A recent command report has identified approximately 50% of these fires are due to unattended cooking fires and resulting injuries in the main from the individuals attempting to fight the fire. This is a message we will reiterate through Q3 and beyond – get out, stay out call 999. We are also using a targeted approach in the wards identified in this report to deliver specific activities around the subject of cooking and use social media to promote this further. An example of this being Olton ward in Solihull where such activities have already been delivered.

We will continue to review and monitor performance in all areas of prevention, protection, response so we can improve and make our communities safer stronger and healthier.