Our quarterly Fire Authority Briefing Notes give us the opportunity to look back over the last three months and celebrate the hard work of our command area. It covers our priorities of response, prevention and protection focussing on how we help people have safer, healthier lives and how we tackle emergencies assertively, effectively and safely.

Black Country North has continued to build on the prevention and protection work of previous quarters, our focus for the forthcoming quarter will be on preventing Accidental Dwelling Fires as we know that these types of incident can increase during the winter months and on identifying derelict buildings that may pose a potential fire risk. Utilising our Deliberate Derelict Fire Strategy, we will work with partners including Police and Local Authority to remove any risk either to ourselves or to the public. I hope you enjoy reading about what BCN teams have been up to over the last quarter, raising awareness and helping to keep the community of Black Country North safer and healthier and the businesses that trade in BCN stronger.

JULIET MALONE
Black Country North (BCN) Operations Commander
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 increases.

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.

West Midlands Fire Service is the only Fire & Rescue Service inspected to-date by HMICFRS to receive outstanding for the response element of the service.

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 has been used an impressive 3000 times since April 2019.
**10 PUMP HOTEL FIRE**

This incident occurred on Friday 2nd August 2019 at 15:55. This initial call was received through Fire Control stating an electrical fire within the sauna. This was an extremely challenging incident for all attending crews that required the use of 10 Appliances, 2 Hydraulic Platforms, Technical Rescue Unit, Incident Command Unit, Hazardous Materials Officers and several senior Fire Officers. The smoke plume was visible for miles and affected the M6 Motorway.

The cause was accidental due to clothing being placed onto Sauna heating unit. Fire Safety Investigations are ongoing.

**FATAL HOUSE FIRE**

A call was received by Staffordshire and West Midlands Fire Control (S&WMFC) at 15:09 hours on 11th September 2019 through a Telecare system that was installed within the property.

Appliances from Tettenhall, Wolverhampton and Fallings Park attended the incident. Sadly an elderly gentleman was found in the living room by Breathing Apparatus wearers.

Following a thorough investigation jointly carried out by Fire Crews and the Fire Investigation and Prevention Section the current evidence suggests the cause was through carless handling of smoking materials. The occupant also required the use of an oxygen fed nebulizer which was also involved in the fire.

A Fatal Fire Briefing Note has been completed and a Serious Incident Review to ensure learning takes place from all relevant public sector bodies, a review of any support mechanisms that were in place prior to the fire will enable us to identify any further recommendations that could reduce the likelihood of this happening again.

**PREPAREDNESS**

West Midlands Fire Service are committed to undertaking 104 large exercises every year, these exercises test our response and procedures to a variety of complex incidents in some of our high risk premises.
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.

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.

BCN Partnerships Team recently facilitated an e-Learn Launch Event across Wolverhampton and Walsall. The purpose of this event was to provide learning from fatal fires to a diverse range of partners, ranging from Statutory Partners to the Voluntary Sector. There were representatives from a range of roles including front line staff, team leaders and managers.

The event hosted by The Way, Wolverhampton on 16th September 2019 was attended by 82 people from 28 different organisations.

The event hosted by Walsall Fire Station on 18th September was attended by 53 people from 18 different organisations.
BILSTON BREAKFAST CLUB

Bilston have again taken an active role in community events working with our vulnerable members of the community. We have attended the Bilston breakfast which is a monthly networking meeting that informs us of local community events. This then enables the team to plan in and support our community.

The breakfast is attended by approx. 30 people from community groups such as school heads, Police community support officers, local council representatives, the town centre manager & of course, the fire service. The breakfast is run at various locations including the fire station, local churches & schools. It has enabled us to work closely with our community in helping to reduce vulnerability in the local area.

We have visited local groups such as the Bilston cinema club delivering our safety messages & encouraging the members to sign up for a safe & well visit. At the last meeting, we gained over 30 referrals from people who were over 60 years of age. This along with other visits to local groups has helped to reduce the number of accidental dwelling fires on the previous quarter.

BCN PARTNERSHIPS

Stations within Black Country North Command have taken a proactive approach to ensure the safety message is communicated in preparation for social events that are fast approaching.

Partnership events will be attended by us to keep the local communities safe on the run up to Halloween, Bonfire Night, Diwali and Christmas. Crews will be providing fire safety advice and supporting visitors, shoppers and residents at the Saddler’s Centre in Walsall on the 28th October 2019. These events also contribute to maintaining good working relationships with external partners and support a joint approach to making our communities safer.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

WMFS celebrated Black History Month this October through attending several events and sharing culture through food and experiences. This is a fantastic opportunity for WMFS to engage with those from Black and Caribbean backgrounds to share our fire safety messages.

WMFS Inspire forum also participated in a video for circulation internally and externally celebrating the contributions of those from diverse backgrounds.

FIRE INVESTIGATION AND PREVENTION OFFICER

BCN Command welcome our dedicated Fire Investigation & Prevention Officer, Jacob Tinsley. Jacob will be attending our regular command meetings to support joint working and provide updates regarding Fire Investigation and the work that is carried out by the Fire Investigation and Prevention Section.
Fallings Park Community Fire Station were presented with the Firefighters Charity Car Wash Award for 2018/19, which was presented by ACFO Sarah Warnes and Firefighters Charity Representative Debbie Rushbrooke.

Fallings Park Fire Station has raised the most money by Car Washes for this period, and we congratulate all watches, Fire Cadets and supporters who have visited Car Washes over this period. Thank you.

**B.A. AND TRAUMA CHALLENGES**

Aldridge Green Watch entered the WMFS Breathing Apparatus Challenge and performed to a high standard which saw them progress to the NBAC UK Breathing Apparatus Finals held at Fire Service College, Moreton-in-Marsh. This was a great opportunity to test their skills as a team during some complex, challenging scenarios, assessed by National BA Assessors and a fantastic first attempt at National level.

Aldridge Blue Watch also took part in the recent Trauma Challenge held at the Emergency Services Show, this was a great example of teams striving for excellence and pushing their skills to the limits, great to see this team including a new trainee firefighter, well done Aldridge.

**FIRE CADETS**

Following the Fire Cadets Pass-Out Parade that took place in June 2019, a further cohort of 20 Cadets commenced with course 19/2019 on Thursday 12th September. The 20 individuals that were selected came from school referrals, community engagement, social services the Police and WMFS online applications.

The Cadet scheme that operates at Aldridge Community Fire Station is a perpetual system, this is the only one of its kind within WMFS that offers short-term courses, allowing us to reach out and engage with more young people on a continuous basis, this contributes to safer communities for the young people within BCN.

The Pass-Out Parade for the current course is planned for Saturday 25th April 2020, invites will be sent to the Mayor of Walsall, Senior Officers, Youth Services, Parents and Friends to watch a display of the Cadets’ new found skills and an awards presentation.

**Did you know!?**

In the last two years we have had 3 former cadets and instructors becoming firefighters! Mitch Cartner (RAF Fire Service) Lucy Purchase and Adam Moss (WMFS).

In the last year we have had 3 cadets and instructors becoming Police Officers! Ben Kirk, Alex Owen and Dan Walton (PCSO).

**UK ISAR SELECTION**

Watch Commander Paul Evans, Aldridge Green Watch has also been selected for UK International Search and Rescue (ISAR) team.

Paul successfully completed a challenging process which culminated in a four-day outdoor assessment followed by professional discussions.

UK ISAR’s volunteer members – drawn from 15 Fire and Rescue Services that respond on behalf of HM Government to overseas emergencies, usually involving search and rescue from collapsed structures.

West Midlands Fire Service provides the Command Support and Communications functions on all deployments, co-ordinated via the HQ incident room.

They will be ready and packed to leave the West Midlands within two hours from an initial call and arrive in the affected country within 24 hours of the disaster occurring. The team is fully self-sufficient for periods of up to 14 days.
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.
COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

An excellent example of joint working from Fallings Park crews and Fire Safety teams following a Safe and Strong visit to Crispy Duck Express Chinese Takeaway, Wolverhampton. Crews had highlighted several serious breaches of the Fire Safety (Regulatory Reform) Order during the visit, this was referred to our specialist Fire Safety team from Wolverhampton. Due to a significant language barrier and the importance of highlighting these issues to the Responsible Person officers requested an English/Chinese language translator to attend the incident. The issues that had been identified included, no fire alarms, blocked escape routes, inadequate horizontal fire protection, no risk assessment or staff training. Utilising the translator enabled these breaches to be rectified immediately, emphasising the importance of appropriate fire safety measures within this type of premises.

The owner of the Chinese restaurant was extremely grateful for the support and guidance provided by our professional officers and has enabled the owner to engage with other local Chinese Takeaways to avoid unnecessary enforcement through the ethos of Better Business Regulation.

A really great example of joint working to avoid a prohibition, allowing residents to remain in their living accommodation and supporting a local business, again contributing to a safer, stronger and healthier community.

PROTECTION UPDATE

Black Country North Command now have a Fire Safety Officer on every station within the command which will support continuity between Response and Protection.

Firefighters also have the opportunity to shadow a Business Support Officer for 8-weeks which offers an insight into the role developing knowledge and understanding of the work carried out by Fire Safety Inspecting Officers and Business Support Officers.

Fire Safety teams within BCN are continuing to work closely with all our stations and re-emphasise the importance of the correct recording of incident workbooks, and interrogating the data regularly through the use of Inphase and Raw Data analysis to identify their problematic areas, any necessary intervention is listed within a dedicated O365 Teams site.

Crews continue to carry out FF8 refresher training through MR-T sessions and also increase our number of proactive Safe and Strong visits making the communities within BCN Safer, Stronger and Healthier.