Welcome to the third quarterly newsletter (Oct-Dec) for Birmingham North and South Commands. Our teams have been extremely busy during this quarter, not only in attending and training for operational incidents; but also getting into the festive spirit of giving and goodwill by going that extra mile with a number of initiatives aimed at those members of our communities who need extra support.

We have continued to deliver a significant number of Safe and Well home visits to ensure vulnerable members of our community are safe in their home from fire; we have also continued with our regular schools programme to key stage 2, 3 & 4 and also placed a significant emphasis on road & driving safety – working closely with combined authority and local partners.

Due to the emphasis that we place on getting to you in an emergency; we are proud to announce that Birmingham has an average response time to serious incidents (property fire or road traffic collision) of 4 minutes 37 seconds.
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 October to December we have consistently over performed against our average risk-based attendance time, with the brigade average being 4 minutes and 46 seconds; which is really great news.

West Midlands Fire Service is the only Fire & Rescue Service out of all Fire and Rescue Services inspected 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 resource managers for both Staffordshire and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service and receive all the emergency 999 calls for both services.

Between October and December 2019, Fire Control received a total of 15,336 emergency 999 calls; 69% of these calls were attributed to West Midlands Fire Service and 31% attributed to Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service. Fire Control mobilised to 51% of these incidents with the other 49% being challenged as not requiring a resource or deemed a non-emergency.

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 October to December 2019, Fire Controls average time to mobilise to a house fire was 54 seconds.

Fire Control apply dynamic intelligence led mobilisation which provides the control operators the autonomy to mobilise the appropriate number and type of resources to the incident based on the intelligence they receive from members of the public at the point of call. During this quarter, Fire Control have either increased or decreased mobilisations on approximately 600 occasions.
**YORKSHIRE FLOODING**

Sheldon Fire Station houses the High Volume Pumping Unit, which is a National Resilience Asset designed to move large quantities of water.

November saw Yorkshire and the surrounding regions hit by severe flooding following heavy rain. The flooding brought large scale disruption to the area and so we saw officers and crews from Sheldon deployed to the scene for several days with our specialist equipment assisting with the relief and salvage effort. Crews from across all watches at Sheldon deployed and worked continuously whilst in Yorkshire receiving widespread thanks and praise for their efforts.

Weather conditions & climate change are currently dictating that these occurrences are becoming more regular and as such staff at Sheldon are working tirelessly to gain and maintain the competencies to enable them to deploy at short notice to assist anywhere within the country.

**BOURNBROOK CAT RESCUE**

Bournbrook and other local crews attended an incident involving the rescue of cats from a property fire; fire crews successfully used the pet oxygen masks carried on all frontline fire engines. The effective and assertive response certainly saved these kittens from a Fur-ever Cat-astrophe, Fur-real!

**DOMESTIC GARAGE FIRE**

Crews from across Birmingham attended a significant domestic garage fire which involved sodium metal which is highly reactive to water and believed to have been stored for approx. 10 years. The material reacted during heavy rain, resulting in a large number of explosions.

Crews worked extremely hard under difficult conditions remaining assertive in their firefighting actions protecting neighbouring and surrounding properties, ensuring no members of the public were injured during this dynamic incident.

**ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISIONS**

Crews from across Birmingham have attended a number of incidents involving accidents on the road throughout October to December highlighting the need for continued focus on our preventative work around reducing the numbers of people killed and seriously injured on our Birmingham roads.
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. Operational staff are required to maintain their competencies across a range of skills. One of these is wearing breathing apparatus in hot fire conditions. Red Watch have successfully completed their fire behaviour and tactical ventilation assessments ensuring they have the skills and practical application.

PRYZM NIGHTCLUB

Following a number of small incidents; Ladywood Fire Station have organised a large scale exercise at Pryzm nightclub, which is Birmingham’s largest nightclub venue with a capacity of up to 2500 people, located on the main street through the city centre.

Exercising at this venue will give crews an increased understanding of the risk at different times, and allow fire control to mobilise the correct number of personnel accordingly.

MG ROVER, LONGBRIDGE

On the 4th November 2019, crews from across Birmingham took part in an exercise that took place at the MG rover works in Longbridge.

The venue was a very large disused office/engineering space with various offices on the periphery of the main room.

The scenario was a large amount of staff who were unable to leave their offices due to a fire; added to the complexity of the exercise was a lab where non destructive testing of car parts takes place. In this lab a worker suffered a heart attack and a radioactive source was left un contained.

Crews worked very hard to search the building, finding many casualties who were played by trainee Paramedics provided by the Ambulance service; once the radiation source had been located, teams were still sent in with specialist monitoring equipment to deal with the situation.
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.

A fantastic RTC intervention day was organised at Billesley Fire Station working in conjunction with our local neighbourhood police team and the central motorway traffic police. The aim of the day was to highlight road safety awareness to drivers who were escorted on to the station by traffic police after being identified for road traffic legislation failures such as defective cars or lack of correct child safety systems.

This intervention took place on Friday 25th October 2019. Demos were set up to highlight the dangers of using mobile phones whilst driving, and cars were impounded if deemed not roadworthy.

This was a great success and will be repeated in March 2020.
HIGHGATE MULTI-AGENCY EVENT

Highgate Fire Station saw a multi-agency approach, providing education to vulnerable young people from across Birmingham. Some of the group were identified as at risk of gang related activity including knife crime.

In partnership with West Midlands Police Fire Arms and local officers we provided a meeting space for the young people to hear from their emergency services and the cautionary tales from their perspectives. Utilising virtual reality goggles we provided road safety education and talked of recent high profile incidents. The feedback from both the young people, community group leaders and mosque leaders was really positive.

LADYWOOD IN THE COMMUNITY

For its third year running, Ladywood supported by a local church group, opened the station doors to provide a free Christmas meal, clothing and welfare packs to members of the local community.

Christmas dinner is the one meal every year that most of us look forward to more than most, but it’s often not so simple for those less fortunate or those who are vulnerable and at risk. This year was our biggest yet with 60 people joining us on the day, allowing us to provide valuable safety information as well as spreading some Christmas cheer to those who need it most. An enjoyable day for all, in which a number of Safe & Well referrals were generated and we look forward to the event again in 2020.

Throughout December Ladywood also organised the much needed Coat Appeal in which they were able to provide approx. 50 vulnerable members of the community with warm clothing for the winter period which also in turn generated a number of Safe & Well referrals.

ERDINGTON FOOD BANK

Crews from Erdington have been working hard to realise a good working partnership with a local food bank. They have been out collecting food that has been donated by members of the public. These donations are essential to ensure members of our community have the piece of mind that they have food available on a weekly basis. In return, we are also able to provide safety education ensure they have working smoke alarms in their properties.
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.

During a routine Fire Safety inspection, it was found that there was a defective wet riser in Beetham Tower in Birmingham which is a 39 storey building which also houses the Radisson hotel.

The defect in the wet riser could result in additional challenges in providing water to upper floors of the building in a fire situation and therefore immediate action was necessary.

Fire safety officers along with Birmingham crews worked with site managers to arrange additional security and additional fire extinguishers on each of the floors. Teams worked together to implement and create temporary tactical plans, a fire evacuation strategy until the required repairs were complete.

A great example of how different teams from across Birmingham worked together for the residents, visitors and business owner across the city.
Teams from Northfield Fire Station have been working with Fortem, Birmingham City Council (BCC) Neighbourhood Office and residents groups to support the implementation and installation of Sprinklers in Northfield.

BCC have focused on the most vulnerable blocks in Northfield and to date are near to completion on 2 blocks, Shelley and Browning Tower and have just started work at Tennyson House.

Crews also supported partner agencies at resident engagement events to talk about the benefits of sprinklers and general fire safety within the building. During these events crews engaged with residents to generate Safe and Wells and also distributed leaflets about sprinkler and home safety.

**LOOK FORWARD**

We are extremely pleased with this quarters performance, it is clear that our prevention strategy is working and the hard work of the teams from across Birmingham is paying off as we are only in exception for one performance indicator, which is deliberate derelict building fires.

Working alongside our partners within Birmingham City Council and in conjunction with our own Fire Investigation & Prevention section we will continue to focus on highlighting derelict buildings which have the potential to become targets for deliberate fires with a view to ensuring that building owners are taking all necessary steps to securing their property to prevent unwanted deliberate fires.

Our teams will be focussing on creating new partnerships with agencies that work with the most vulnerable people across Birmingham, this is so new referral pathways can be created to our vital Safe and Well service, keeping our communities safer and making every contact count.