



**Health, Safety and Wellbeing
Annual Report
2014/15**

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H&S Annual Report 2014 – 2015

Summary

Health and Safety (H&S) is an important, integral element of everything that Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service does, it is a fundamental aspect of the management of all of its activities. This applies equally to its responsibilities as a frontline emergency service in protecting local communities as well in its role as a key local employer.

This annual report highlights the improvements over the last 12 months in H&S when measured by the number and severity of accidents reported, time lost as a result of injury accidents and proactive measures taken to improve our H&S performance.

Key issues to note include:

- A reduction in the number of vehicle accidents
- Fewer minor accidents and none which would be classed as major under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)
- Gaining a British Safety Council International Safety Award for the sixth consecutive year
- A successful outcome to the Peer Review audit conducted during the year.

Background

The economic climate has continued to provide challenges for the Service and how it delivers its statutory responsibilities, this has been compounded by the sporadic industrial action that has taken place during much of the last twelve months; against this backdrop the Service has remained committed to continued to operating safely and to look for a continuous improvement in its health and safety performance and the well being of its employees, volunteers and cadets.

Good H&S management supports the efficiency of the Service by reducing both the direct and indirect costs associated with accidents, work related ill health and damage to plant and equipment.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has continued to review of health and safety legislation and guidance as part of the government drive to reduce bureaucracy and the burden on UK businesses; this has resulted in regular changes to legislation and guidance, these changes must be reflected in our H&S management systems and how we manage the H&S of our staff.

During the year the HSE invited FRSs to apply for an exemption to certain sections of the Control of Asbestos Regulations, this exemption depended on the FRS meeting HSE's requirements with regard to the exposure of FFs to and decontamination from asbestos; the Service satisfied these requirements and was granted its exemption.

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Section monitors changes to national legislation and guidance and ensures that our policies and procedures remain compliant with the legislation guidance issued both by HSE and DCLG and CFA.

The Service has contributed to national consultations on changes to legislation and guidance where these changes may have an impact on our operations and the health and safety of our staff.

Key Achievements

The Service H&S management system was the subject of a Peer Review Audit by managers from other FRSs in the North West. This was an in depth audit of our managements systems using the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Quality Standard Audit (QSA) system; in addition to the management system the auditors examiner ten key performance indicators. The auditors commented favourably on the management system, the Service score improved by 10% on the previous audit.

The Service submitted its Safety Management System (SMS) for a British Safety Council International Safety Award and for the sixth time in a row it was successful, again being awarded a merit. The SMS was evaluated by an independent panel against set criteria including reactive and proactive performance measures, enforcement action and civil claims taken against the Service.

This continued success in the International Safety Award and the improved rating in the Peer Review Audit both demonstrate that the Service's H&S management system has continued to mature and meet the aim of continuous improvement set out in our H&S Policy.

The H&S section has provided training courses to 18 of the Service's Princes Trust Teams (PTT) during the year; these courses are based on the British Safety Council (BSC) Level 1 award in Health and Safety but tailored to the needs and learning styles of the team members. The course includes an examination that contributes to National Vocational Qualifications and during the year has provided 201 trainees with a basic H&S qualification to add to their CV.

The Service has continued to deliver Managing Safely courses for our staff with a 100% success rate in the examinations. Following a successful pilot last year we have extended access to the courses to both Cheshire Police and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service; we have also responded to a request from a local business to provide this training for a member of their staff. We were asked by the Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (IOSH) to be a part of the panel that reviewed the Managing Safely course; this has resulted in a revised, updated version of the course being launched in May 2015.

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) require the Service to report certain classes of accident, work related illness and specified dangerous occurrences to the HSE. We reported 5 incidents under these regulations. So as to allow comparison with the years prior to 2013 when the reporting requirements changed we also track injury accidents that result in more than 3 days absence from work. When these are included the number increases to 6, nevertheless this represents a continued reduction in the trend for this class of accident.

Accident rates

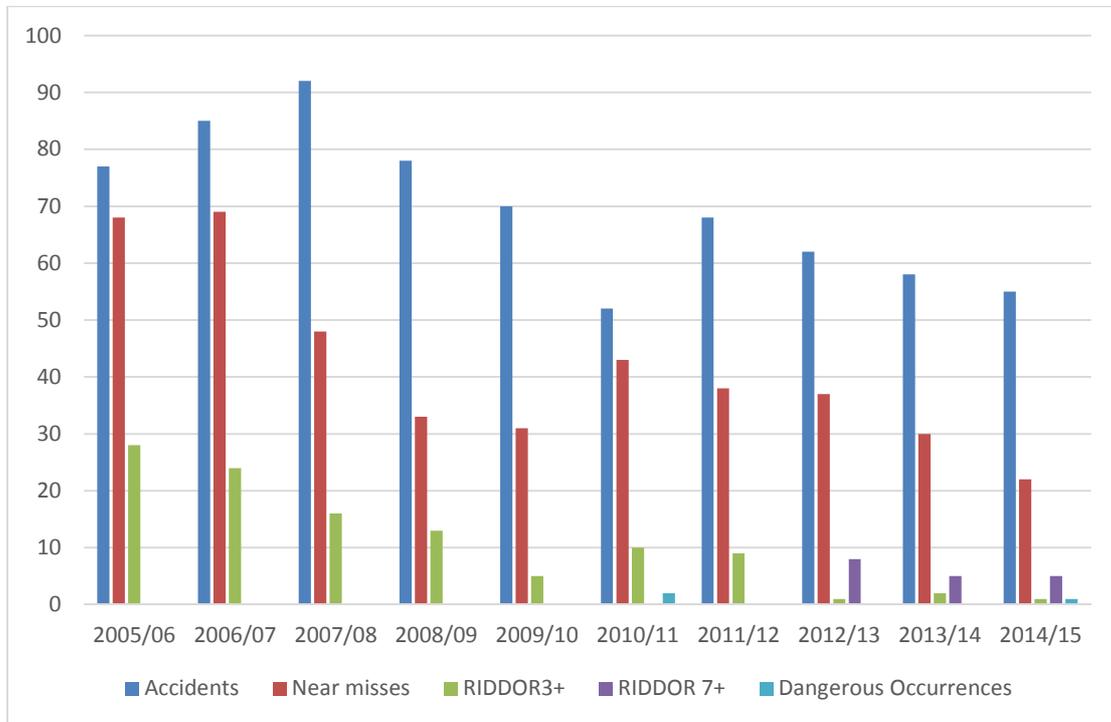
The Reportable Accident Rate (RAR) is the way in which HSE calculates accident rates for various industries, the rate is expressed as the number of accidents per 100,000 employees. Changes to HSE's statistics database mean it is difficult to compare the injury rates for the total number of staff in FRSs. However, it is possible to compare injuries to operational fire fighters. Of the RIDDOR injuries the Service reported, four were to operational staff giving an RAR for 2014-15 of 417 compared to 526 for 2013-14. We did report one Dangerous Occurrence under these regulations; this related to the failure of a BA set. The average RAR for all FRSs in the North West is 697.

HSE's national statistics for 2014-15 are yet to be published, but the rate for injuries to operational FRS staff in 2013-14 was 1525. The national RAR for all employers is 304 although the HSE recognise that due to underreporting that this is artificially low; the Labour Force Survey which is generally seen as more accurate puts the national injury accident rate for this period at 500.

Minor accidents

The Service recorded 55 injury accidents to staff, a reduction compared to 58 the previous year, 50 of these were minor accidents. The decrease in near miss reporting has continued; this may reflect an improved safety culture with staff more aware of their responsibilities for working safely and taking proactive action to report damage or poor standards. The active programme of workplace inspections aimed at identifying and rectifying any issues which may contribute to workplace accidents could also be a factor. Importantly, when trend lines are applied to the graph they show a continued reduction in all types of unsafe, unwanted events across the Service.

Figure 1: Comparison of accidents numbers and trends 2005 – 2014



Response to accident data

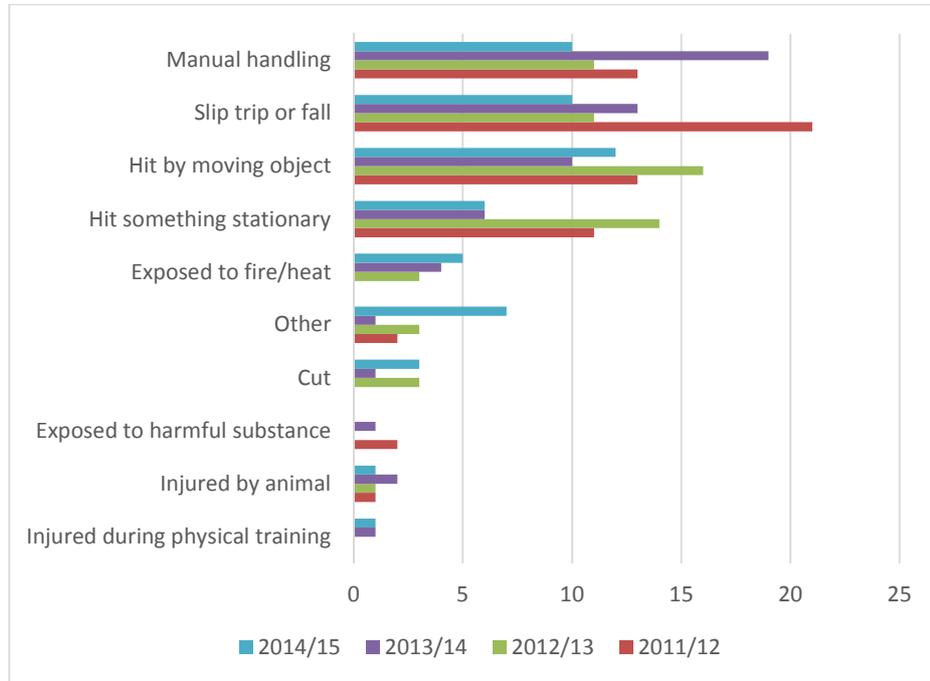
Analysis of the Service’s accident reporting database shows that in 2014-15 most of the accidents were caused when staff were hit by moving objects, with manual handling the next most common cause (Figure 2).



During 2014-15 the H&S section ran successful awareness campaigns to target the previous two causes of the greatest numbers of accidents to our staff; this resulted in a decrease in the number of employees injured as a result of manual handling and slips trips and falls.

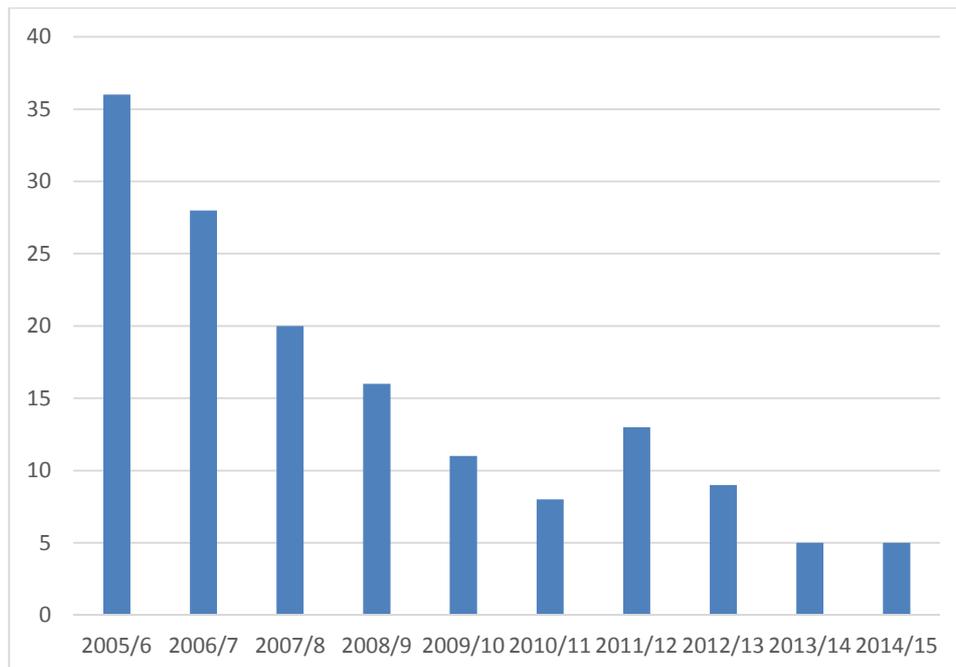
There has been an increasing trend for fire fighters to be injured as a result of exposure to fire and heat. We have investigated these reports most of which were during hot fire training and the Operational Training Group has put measures in place to try to prevent this type of injury.

Figure 2: Analysis of injury accidents by cause



Violence and aggression towards staff

Figure 3: Attacks on fire fighters by year



The number of incidents of violent and abusive behaviour towards staff (see figure 3) remains the same as in the previous year. The Service has continued to work to identify the locations where violence may occur and to engage with the local community to try to reduce the risk of violent and abusive behaviour.

There were five incidents:

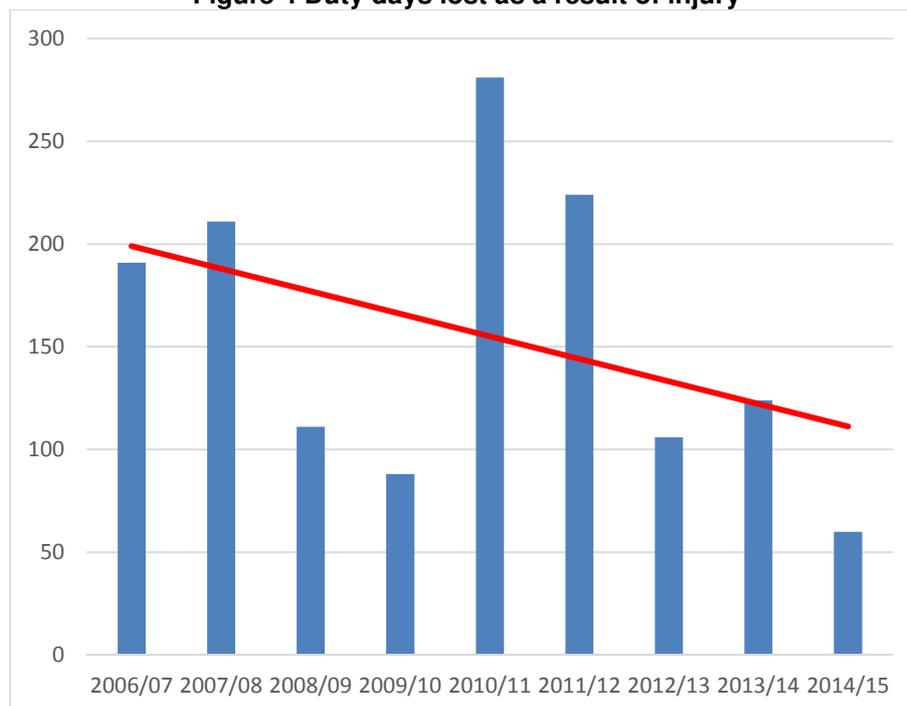
This sustained performance compares well with other FRSs in the North West where the average number of attacks on staff in a year is 15; the highest numbers of incidents being recorded in the two metropolitan brigades.

The Service will continue to collect information about violence and aggression towards firefighters and other employees and work to address the causes of this type of behaviour. When appropriate we will report violent attacks to the police and provide evidence from the closed circuit television cameras mounted on appliances where practical.

Duty days lost as a result of injury accidents

As part of its accident reporting procedure the Service records the number of duty days lost as a result of accidents, this includes days lost to both serious accidents and those of a more minor nature. This data is one of the performance measures reported to the Department for Central and Local Government. In the reporting year this was 60 days, this is the lowest in the North West and compares well nationally. The percentage of sickness in the Service due to accidents at work was 2.5%, this compares with more than 20% in some FRSs. Figure 4 shows the pattern for this data since 2006/07 there have been years when the number of days lost has been low, this probably reflects an absence of serious accidents as one fractured limb might result in more than 60 lost duty days. However the data shows that there has been a continuous trend for a decrease in the time lost as a result of accidents.

Figure 4 Duty days lost as a result of injury



Vehicle accidents

The Service has seen a decrease in the number of vehicle accidents – down from 63 to 51. The Service has a Road Risk Management Group, the purpose of which is to examine vehicle accident reports and introduce measures to drive down both the severity and numbers of vehicle accidents and to reduce the risks to the Service that arise from the use of Service vehicles. Of the 51 accidents reported during the year 6 occurred when fire engines were responding to emergency incidents under blue lights. The majority occurred when manoeuvring vehicles in narrow spaces, particularly some of the narrower domestic streets where there are often vehicles parked on both sides of the road. In ten of the vehicle accidents reported the accident was the fault of the third party.

The Service investigates all vehicle accident reports with a view to preventing a recurrence while it also continues to invest in driver training and assessment to improve their skills. Vehicle technicians ensure that Service vehicles are maintained and meet all the relevant road safety requirements while there is a requirement that the driver checks the vehicle before use to ensure that there are no problems that may affect its performance.

Claims and complaints

In the last year the number of personal insurance claims made against the Service has remained steady, most were as a result of minor injuries - one resulted from a broken rib sustained during training.

Corporate Governance

The Fire Authority continues to demonstrate its commitment to Health and Safety by appointing a dedicated Member Champion, while Principal Officers are provided with regular information about accidents, progress with personal injury insurance claims and other H&S related issues.

The results of internal H&S audits are shared with the Service Health Safety and Welfare Committee (SHSWC) which monitors the implementation of the action plans arising from these audits.

During the year the Service was the subject of a Peer Review Audit of its H&S Management System (HSMS). This was carried out by trained auditors from other FRSs in the North West. The audit, to the RoSPA QSA standard, showed that the management of H&S had improved since the previous audit. The auditors did make some recommendations for improvement of a minor nature; these have been incorporated into an action plan, the implementation of which is monitored by the Service H&S Committee. In addition the Service HSMS was again submitted to the British Safety Council's International safety Award scheme and again achieved a Merit award.

During the year the Service commissioned the Merseyside Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) to carry out an audit on the gap analysis process the Service conducted on its position with regard to the requirements of the recently published DCLG document “Health, safety and welfare framework for the operational environment”. The report from this audit was presented to the Fire Authority Performance and Overview Committee.

Risk management

The SHSWC regularly reviews the H&S Risk register to ensure the high level H&S risks to the Service are being managed.

The Service has a process for ensuring that all of our H&S policies and procedures are reviewed and remain up to date. We monitor legislation to ensure that the policies reflect the latest legal requirements and when appropriate we comment on published drafts and consultations of proposed legislation.



The Service has invested in the provision of personal issue half mask respirators to replace the paper dust masks previously used. To comply with legislation each person issued with a mask is “face fit” tested to ensure the mask is the correct size and that the wearer can achieve an air tight seal so ensuring that they are not exposed to harmful dusts.

The Service has responded to the consultations on operational guidance published as part of the National Operations Guidance Programme (NOGP). Service policies and risk assessments have been updated as new NOPG guidance is published.

Training

Training is a key element of the organisation’s strategy for maintaining and improving the H&S culture in the Service. It enables managers to identify and meet the H&S responsibilities for their area, while it encourages staff to be aware of their personal responsibilities and for the impact of their actions on others. There has been major investment in operational training, including the Service’s interactive Incident Command training facility to improve and validate the knowledge and skills needed when managing operational incidents – a key area of criticism for some FRSs after major accident investigations.



As well as ensuring all basic and refresher training is provided according to programme, the Operational Training Group (OTG) has developed new training modules to reflect the nature of incidents staff may have to respond to. The Group have reviewed and responded to training advice issued by the Chief Fire Officers Association.

OTG has continued to develop innovative training. In response to recommendations about training in the use of small tools they introduced a door for training in entry techniques; the door has sacrificial wooden inserts that can be replaced following damage during training.

The Service has continued to train managers using the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health Managing Safely course. Following a pilot last year we have offered this training to partner organisations; both Cheshire Police and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service have sent staff on courses in addition we have provided the training for one member of staff from a company in Knutsford. We ran 7 Managing Safely courses.

We have facilitated the training of new first aiders, using a change in the regulations which allows us to develop a bespoke course.

We have continued to support the Princes Trust Teams using the level 1 British Safety Council training. This training counts towards any vocational training qualifications the students take; we delivered this training to 20 Princes Trust teams. We also delivered this training for a group of cadet leaders.

Consultation

The Service Health Safety and Welfare Committee meets quarterly and is the main mechanism for consulting representative bodies and staff on matters relating to their H&S. The meeting also enables representative bodies to raise any concerns that they have about the health, safety and wellbeing of their members.

The minutes from these meetings are published on the Service's Intranet and hard copies displayed on H&S notice boards. The Member champion for H&S has continued to attend meetings of the committee.

Health and Wellbeing

The annual program of health and wellbeing campaigns is now planned with the Service Campaigns Group to ensure the most efficient use of resources and avoid the possibility of duplicating effort.

Campaigns have been run both internally to address specific issues in the Service and in partnership with external organisations such as Cancer UK; this ensures that the messages provided to staff are consistent with national messages and reinforce wider campaigns.

We have supported Northwest Control with the provision of a series of stress management training courses.

The campaigns this year have included an alcohol awareness campaign and a Fitness campaign to support a revision of the Fitness Policy to take account of new CFOA guidance.

This year we have introduced a range of reusable disposable ear plugs as part of our noise management strategy, encouraging the use of ear protection and noise awareness.

Following ongoing commitment to manage workplace stressors, the risk assessment process has been reviewed providing managers with detailed guidance for supporting staff.

Targets

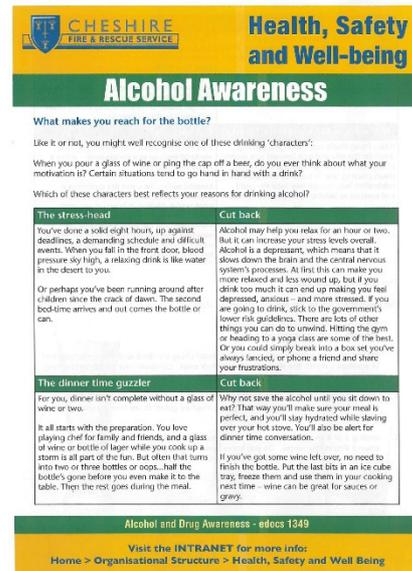
The Service's policy on Fitness testing for operational staff now means that we have a target to test all staff every year. The appointment of a Fitness Advisor will help support staff in meeting the new fitness standard and maintain operational fitness.

Other targets include:

- Conducting a further three internal audits of H&S in the Service
- Completing the programme of issuing the half face masks and fit testing employees who are required to these masks to control the risks they may be exposed to
- Continuing health awareness campaigns to improve the health and well being of employees
- Recruiting and training Fitness Advocates for each watch to help support operational staff in maintaining operational fitness
- Developing an e-learning package to support the introduction of the new electronic accident reporting system.

Conclusion

The Service has continued to achieve its aim of a continuous improvement in Health and Safety performance as set out in its Health and Safety policy. This



improvement has been achieved due to a combination of the investment of time and money by the Service management, a continuing improvement in the health and safety culture of both managers and staff in the Service and the cooperation of all employees including the participation of the representative bodies.

The Service has successfully discharged its legal duties for H&S on behalf of the Fire Authority.