



2010/11

REWARD FOR SAFETY SUCCESS

Fire chiefs in Cheshire say they are on track to deliver £1.9 million in savings from their budget at the same time as ensuring the safety of local residents and businesses continues to improve.

Cheshire Fire Authority - the body which manages Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service on behalf of local communities – says the initial reductions are the first step in its four year strategy to meet Government spending targets without compromising the safety of communities or its staff.



And the organisation has been celebrating after its performance saw it acclaimed as "Fire Service of the Year 2011" at the inaugural Emergency Services Awards in London.

Judges said that Cheshire had demonstrated exceptional all round performance and particularly praised its effectiveness at protecting local communities which has seen staff visit over 300,000 homes to give out vital safety advice and fit free smoke alarms.

Fire Authority Chair David Topping said: "The award is thoroughly deserved and reflects the pride and commitment demonstrated by everyone connected with the Service."

Now the organisation is paving the way for the significant changes it needs to make over the next few years so it can achieve a further £2.9 million in savings while maintaining its safety record.

A 12-week consultation on some of the proposals is now underway with a series of roadshows across the area - for details see www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/consultation, call 01606 868408 or email consultation@cheshirefire.gov.uk

Details of the Service's performance over the last year are on pages 4 – 5, while a summary of its statement of accounts is on page 6.

Don't follow the guys on Bonfire Night

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is urging people to attend official bonfire and fireworks events this year through an aptly named campaign "Don't follow the guys..."

Most injuries occur when people hold their own bonfire parties so residents are being encouraged to change their ways and stay safe by going to an organised display.

In the run-up to bonfire night firefighters will be visiting primary schools and inviting pupils to submit posters highlighting bonfire and fireworks safety. In addition youth teams will be on the streets, chatting to young people about the risks of building bonfires and setting off fireworks.

The Service's smaller fire engines - known as Targeted Response Vehicles (TRVs) - will be touring high risk areas to act as a deterrent and to provide a quick response to small nuisance bonfires.

Details of local bonfire and fireworks displays can be found on the Service's website - www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

Other key safety messages on the website this month highlights the potential fire risks when the Hindu, Sikh and Jain communities celebrate Diwali.

Known as the Festival of Lights, it starts this year on October 26 and sees homes decorated with candles and festival meals prepared. Candle fires increase by over a third during the period and over 20 percent of deaths caused by candles occur.

Staff spread key messages



Staff from across Halton joined up to take the Safety Day message across the Borough.

June 1st saw hundreds of firefighters, community safety staff, support staff, fire cadets, volunteers and colleagues from partner organisations take to the streets in an ambitious drive to make Cheshire, Halton and Warrington safer for everyone.

The aim of the second annual Cheshire Safety Day was to raise as much awareness as possible of how to stay safe in the kitchen, in the home, on the roads and in the community.

More than a dozen events were held across the Fire Authority area and a staggering 1,125 home safety assessments were completed. This is in addition to engaging with almost 300 road users in a bid to change people's driving habits and improve road safety.

Chief Fire Officer Paul Hancock said: "Cheshire Safety Day is a massive demonstration of our commitment to reducing the number of fires and other emergencies.

"Once again all our staff, volunteers and partners pulled together to deliver an impressive number of events and home safety assessments. Our thanks go to them and members of the public who took the time to talk to us and let us into their homes."



Pupils climbing high - p8

INSIDE



Win a cookery master class - p3



International rescue - p7

PLUS... tweet your way to a prize - p3

Life lessons

Teenagers fund new school in Ghana

A group of fire cadets from Cheshire have come back from the mission of a lifetime to provide a pathway out of poverty for young people 4,400 miles away.

The 14-strong group of teenagers and seven volunteer cadet leaders from Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service helped to complete a new school in Gbatana in the Volta region of southern Ghana. This will provide young villagers with the education they need to give them the best possible chances in life.

In spite of the difficult economic climate here in the UK and sitting their own school exams, the cadets – all aged 16 and 17 – funded the trip themselves. They raised a staggering £56,000 through car washes, packing bags in supermarkets and securing sponsorship from local organisations - £5,000 more than their original target.

It is the fourth school to be built by fire cadets from Cheshire since 2005 and Cllr David Topping, Fire Authority Chair, said the project illustrated precisely why he and fellow members strongly support the Service's impressive range of work with young people.

“The cadet scheme is just one of the ways the Service engages with young people to enrich their own lives and those of others,” he said.

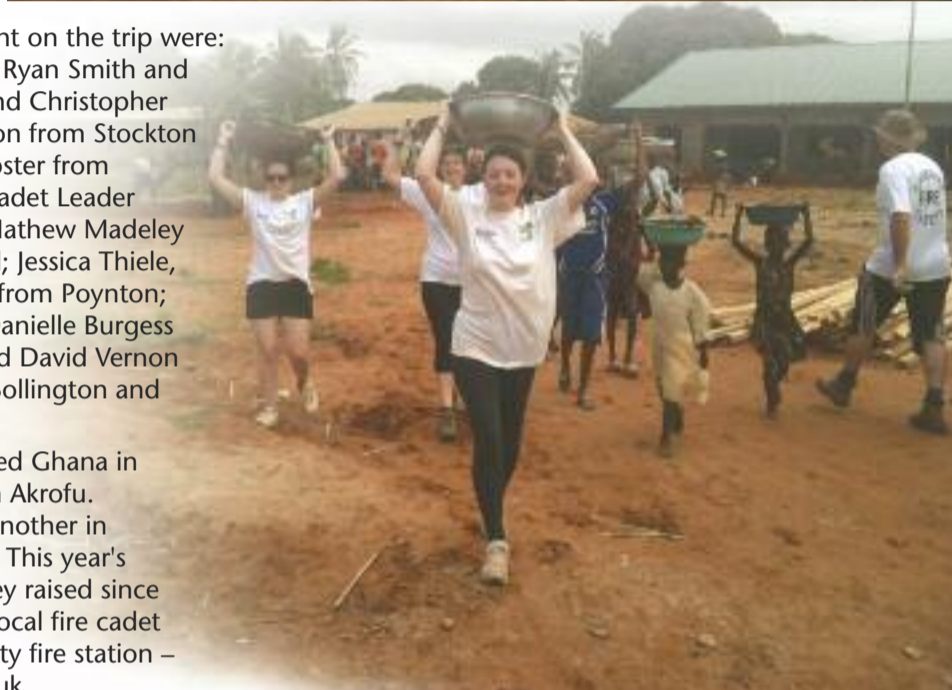
“This trip has made a real and lasting difference and has given the cadets the opportunity to shine as ambassadors not only for the Service, but also the young people of Cheshire, Halton and Warrington.”

Using tools and equipment purchased through their own fundraising efforts, the cadets helped villagers

finish a school they started building at the end of last year. They also took part in the school's colourful opening ceremony and presented village elders with the furniture, books and educational materials which they bought and shipped to Ghana ahead of the visit.

The trip co-ordinators were Kevin Kelly and Sue Cleaver while the young people who went on the trip were: Cadets Bethany Pennington and Ryan Smith and Cadet Leaders Andrew Bowles and Christopher Williams from Widnes; Zac Preston from Stockton Heath; Cadet Leader Martin Webster from Runcorn; Lauren Yarwood and Cadet Leader Victoria Elliott from Frodsham; Mathew Madeley and Abby Sullivan from Winsford; Jessica Thiele, Lewis Darlington and Ben Avery from Poynton; Jack Hodges and Cadet Leader Danielle Burgess from Congleton; Sam Morley and David Vernon from Audlem; Jake Brown from Bollington and Luke Tindall from Sandbach.

Cheshire's fire cadets first visited Ghana in 2005 when they built a school in Akrofu. They returned in 2007 to build another in Abordahi and in 2009 at Adeklu. This year's fourth visit brings the total money raised since the start to £160,000. To join a local fire cadet unit contact your local community fire station – details at www.cheshirefire.gov.uk



Cheshire drives M6 safety day

Over 1,000 drivers were given key messages in just six hours when Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service led one of the county's biggest ever road safety programmes

The day-long event in July saw firefighters, safety advocates and colleagues from a range of partner agencies take up position on motorways across the Service's area. At the same time, Cheshire helped to co-ordinate similar high profile road safety events throughout the country's motorway network with over 30 other fire and rescue services taking part.

Using the latest intelligence on road deaths and injuries and with the backing of the Chief Fire Officers Association, the message to motorists was clear - keep your distance and reduce your speed. In Cheshire staff spoke to 220 drivers at the Knutsford Services, 270 at Sandbach, 152 at Lymm, 208 at Hapsford and 180 at Burtonwood.

The Service's Road Safety Manager Martin Dowle said: “We're grateful to everyone who took the time to talk to us. It's clear from our conversations that speed and distance are drivers' biggest concerns about motorway driving so many people were happy for us to reinforce important safety messages.”

In 2010 there were 39 deaths on the roads of Cheshire, Halton and Warrington and almost 4,400 injuries. “That compares that to eight fire deaths and 40 fire-related injuries in the same period so it's clear why improving road safety is now such a significant issue for us,” added Martin.



“Fatalities have fallen in recent years as a result of extensive work with partners, but still too many people are dying on our roads. As professionals committed to saving life – not merely extracting its remains from smashed up vehicles – that's a situation we cannot accept.”

The national campaign ensured there were safety events on the day at all of the 24 service stations along the 230 miles of the M6 – Britain's biggest motorway. While it is difficult to evaluate the impact of the safety messages given out, there were just three serious incidents compared to seven on the same day the year before, while the number of casualties on the route throughout July was down 35%.



Firefighters come from

all walks of life...

Want to become an on-call firefighter? Visit www.cheshirefire.gov.uk.

Sandra's kids were going to watch TV if it was the last thing they did. It was. Never leave cooking unattended.



Cooking up a recipe for safety

Fire chiefs have teamed up with celebrity chef Brian Mellor as part of a major campaign to cut down on the number of cooker fires across Cheshire.

The high-profile "Come cook with me" campaign involves a specially drawn comic strip to highlight key safety messages as well as a prestigious competition to win a cooking masterclass at Brian's exclusive new cookery school in Cheshire.

"While the number of incidents we attend is reducing, cookers remain by far the biggest cause of accidental fires in the home," said Deputy Chief Fire Officer Mark Cashin.

"Not only can unattended cookers result in serious injuries, they can also cause devastation to people's homes. That's why we're launching this high profile safety campaign and we are delighted Brian Mellor has agreed to give his full support."



Brian, left, is an award winning Master Chef of Great Britain, who used to head up a team of 70

chefs. He has just relocated to Cheshire to establish his own cookery school at Harthill, near Tattenhall.

"It's such a unique location with great produce on the doorstep, it is a perfect place for a cookery school. I welcome the chance to work with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service in making sure people learn lessons in both cooking and kitchen safety," said Brian.

The "Come Cook with Me" competition is based on the premise that the shorter the cooking time, the less likely someone will be to walk away from their cooking - when fires tend to start.

Other kitchen safety tips:

- Clean cookers and grills each time – a build up of grease and fat can cause fire
- Keep tea towels and cloths away from cookers
- Supervise children in the kitchen at all times
- Never tackle fires yourself - get out, stay out and call the Fire and Rescue Service out!

To enter, people need to put forward a recipe that takes less than 30 minutes to cook and prepare. Brian will pick the winner who will then receive a free cooking masterclass at his new Harthill Cookery School in December.

Enter online at www.cheshirefire.gov.uk or use the coupon below. The deadline for entries is November 21 – full terms and conditions are on the website. Scan the quick response code with a smartphone to go straight to a special "Come Cook with Me" page.



The eye-catching artwork for the cooker safety campaign has been drawn up by someone with a real passion for keeping people safe – Stockton Heath firefighter Andy Jones.

Andy, 28, has been with the Service for four years, but has had a life-long passion for art and studied virtual reality design at university.

"One of my original career paths was to become a graphic designer so it is great to do something like this for the Service," said Andy.

"As a firefighter I have a clear understanding of our safety messages and have seen the effects of kitchen fires at first hand. That gave me a great insight into how I could design the artwork."

Andy is skilled in range of different techniques but used digital art for this campaign, enhancing his original pencil drawings on his computer.

Website is a Shaw winner

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has again received a prestigious accessibility award for its website – www.cheshirefire.gov.uk.

The website – which has previously been cited as a national example of best practice – has been accredited by the Shaw Trust, a national charity which provides employment services for people with disabilities.



After first running automated checks on the whole website the Trust then sets its own dedicated team to work. The members are blind, deaf, have low vision, colour blindness, dyslexia, mobility problems and learning difficulties and use their own special software and hardware to check all key online services are accessible.

"Our website can play a vital role in giving vulnerable residents access to key safety messages and services so it's essential that it is fully accessible," said Tim Bevington, Head of Communications.

In addition to again achieving the Shaw Trust award, the website has also retained the Plain English Society's Crystal Mark for clarity of information and has also just been shortlisted for a regional Best Website award by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations.

Follow and win

Residents and businesses can get instant updates about incident and events involving Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service by following its dedicated Twitter and Facebook channels.



Updates to the social media channels are posted regularly – particularly when the Service is responding to major incidents.

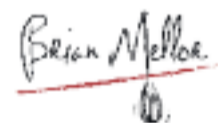
The Service is keen for more people to follow the channels and is offering a free home safety pack worth over £100 to the people who become the 3,000th follower on Twitter and the 2,000th Facebook friend.

Visit www.cheshirefire.gov.uk and click on the links to be in with a chance of winning.

Come cook with me

Entry form

Your recipe should be for an easy, healthy meal that can be cooked in less than 30 minutes. You may wish to use leftover food to minimise waste!



Recipe title:

Ingredients and quantities:

Method:

Name:

Day time telephone number:

I confirm that I will be aged over 18 on 21st November 2011 (tick box)
I accept the terms and conditions of the competition* (tick box)

Return in an envelope to:
Freepost Cheshire Fire Consultation, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire, CW7 2FQ

*Full terms and conditions on the website

Focus on Performance

Developing an excellent organisation

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to continuously improving the way it protects and increases the safety of local communities.

To enable it to do so, it is essential that key elements of its performance are closely monitored and managed. This allows the Service to respond quickly when things change, while publishing key figures means residents and businesses can check on the organisation's effectiveness. This report looks at key areas of the Service's performance in 2010/11 – if you have any questions, email intelligence@cheshirefire.gov.uk or call 01606 868700.

Key achievements by the Service during the year included:

Cheshire was recognised as the leading fire and rescue service in the country at a major national awards ceremony. The organisation won "Fire Service of the Year" at the inaugural Emergency Services Awards held at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium with judges saying Cheshire had demonstrated exceptional all round performance.

Other key achievements included:

- Sickness absence – all staff have been congratulated on helping achieve a major reduction in sickness absence. The overall figure was 5.1 days per person, well below the 6 day target and a substantial improvement on the 6.46 days the previous year
- Equality and diversity - the Service improved its rating in Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index (WEI). A self assessment report was submitted in the organisation's bid for Excellence in the national equality framework and a national seminar for alerting disabled people in the event of fire was organised
- Environment – the Service attained an International Standard in Environmental Management Systems (ISO 14001) for its Headquarters and three community fire stations. New energy-saving projects delivered a 4% reduction in direct Carbon Emissions over the previous year, despite severe winter weather and an increase in premises
- Online services – the Service's website was revamped and achieved the highest possible score in a national survey of public websites. Web page impressions increased by over 30% to more than 12 million, unique visitor numbers exceeded the 5% target, while 97% of purchase orders were completed on line, against a target of 95%.



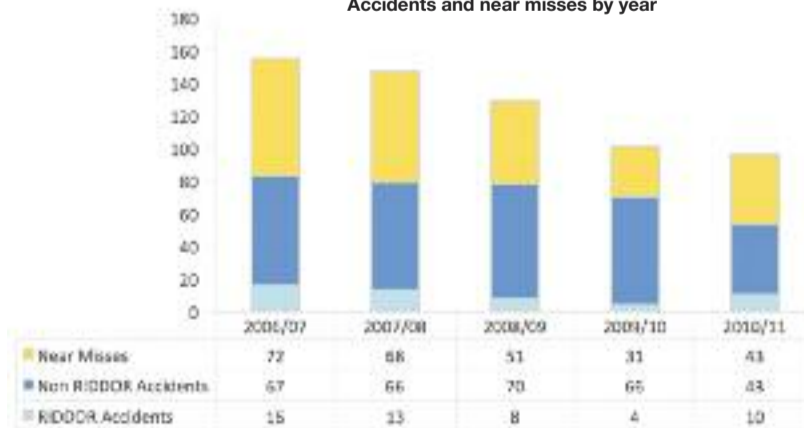
Health and safety

During the year the Service was awarded a merit in the British Safety Council International Safety Award for its health and safety management practices and processes.

Other key achievements included:

- Providing training to on-call duty staff, cadet leaders, managers and new recruits on topics from stress management and post traumatic stress to risk assessment and managing safely
- Conducting 100 random alcohol and drug tests on staff with no one testing positively, ensuring a safe working environment
- Continuing an overall downward trend in the number of accidents – see graph opposite.

Accidents and near misses by year



RIDDOR (The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) – accidents or incidents which have to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive

Protecting our communities and reducing

The Service's key project to protect communities which involves giving householders free safety

For the third year in a row the Service again exceeded its financial year. The Service completed a total of 62,194 visits to vulnerable households. Since the programme started in 2007/08, the Service has completed over 200,000 visits.

The downward trend in the numbers of accidental dwelling fires continues with a very slight reduction of six incidents in 2010/11 compared to the previous year. Just a decade ago there were over 800 accidental fires in Cheshire homes and this dramatic reduction has coincided with the high volume HSA delivery programme.

With the numbers of such incidents levelling off, the focus over the next few years will be on pinpointing and targeting homes at greatest risk using sophisticated risk profiling methodologies.

There were 43 injuries in property fires compared to 56 in the previous year, these figures again support a very positive trend, effectively cut by 60% over a four year period.

Within Cheshire there were nine fire deaths during the financial year. While this compares with only one such death in the previous year, the numbers are low relative to a population of over 1 million and the longer term trend is consistently in line with national figures.

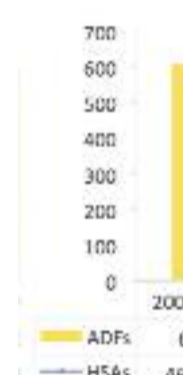
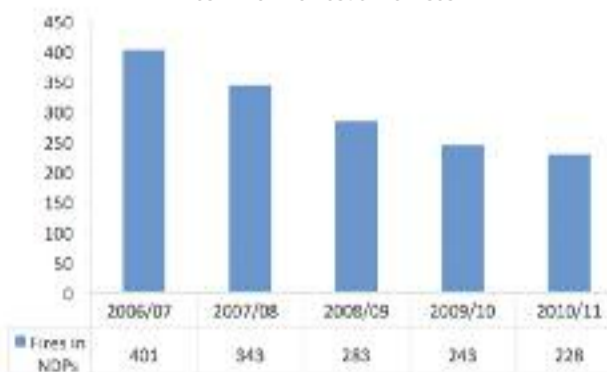
Business safety

The Service employs dedicated staff to raise fire safety awareness among local businesses and to enforce fire safety legislation. This proactive work by the Service has seen a continuing fall in the number of fires in commercial non-domestic premises – see graph below.

In addition, the Service is continuing to see a reduction in the number of false alarms it attends as a result of automatic fire systems in business and commercial premises.

During the year staff also completed a project to ensure that all Heritage Grade 1 and 2* premises have been recorded on the Service's fire risk database.

Fires in Non Domestic Premises



ce 2010/11



Communities and local risks

is its Home Safety Assessment (HSA) programme advice and fitting free smoke alarms.

led its target of delivering 60,000 HSAs during the 4 HSAs, with 66% of those (41,204) made to in 2002 the Service has completed over 300,000 HSA

Accidental dwelling fires and HSAs completed

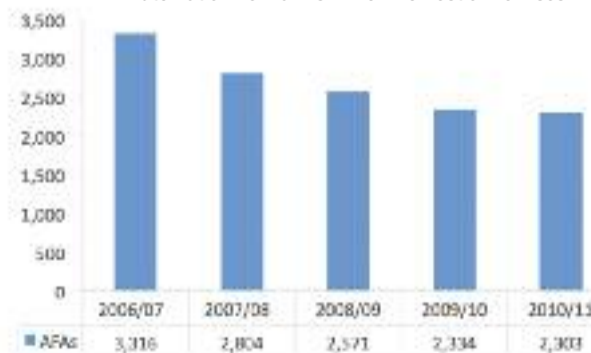


o 37 in 2009/10. While this represents an increase of medium-term trend which has seen injuries

the 2010/11 incident in the nation of over 1 single figures.



Automatic Fire Alarms in Non Domestic Premises



Responding promptly and effectively to emergencies

The Service's work to reduce the risks facing local communities continues to have an impact in driving down the number of emergencies it attends.

Around five years ago the organisation was responding to nearly 15,500 incidents a year – last year the figure was just 10,260. The only area which has seen an increase is medical emergencies as a result of the Service's co-responder project which is providing vital first aid support in the Nantwich area.

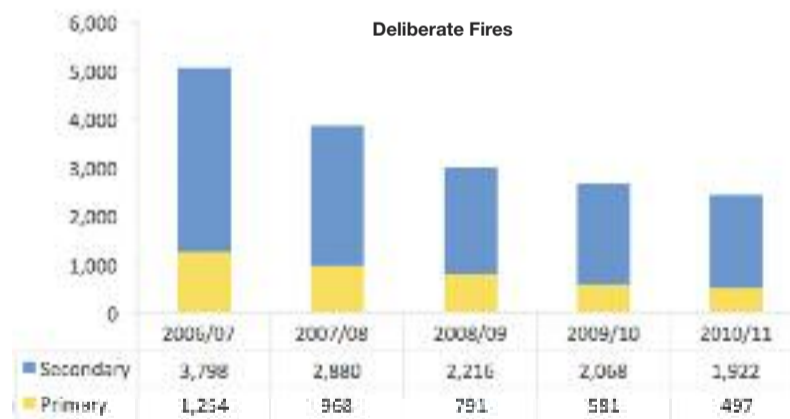
The Service operates a range of response standards according to the levels of risk in local areas and in 2010/11 it achieved its standards for residential response on 99% of occasions, against a target of 92%.



Tackling arson

The majority of arson attacks involve anti-social behaviour such as setting fire to rubbish, bins and bonfires etc. Because there is usually no clear owner of the property, these are classed as 'secondary deliberate fires' and last year saw a further 7% reduction in the numbers of these incidents.

Primary deliberate fires are those involving arson attacks on property with a clear owner such as homes, businesses and cars. Here again there has been a continuing reduction thanks to projects such as removing rubbish in areas of high arson activity and working with partners to ensure arsonists are caught and prosecuted.

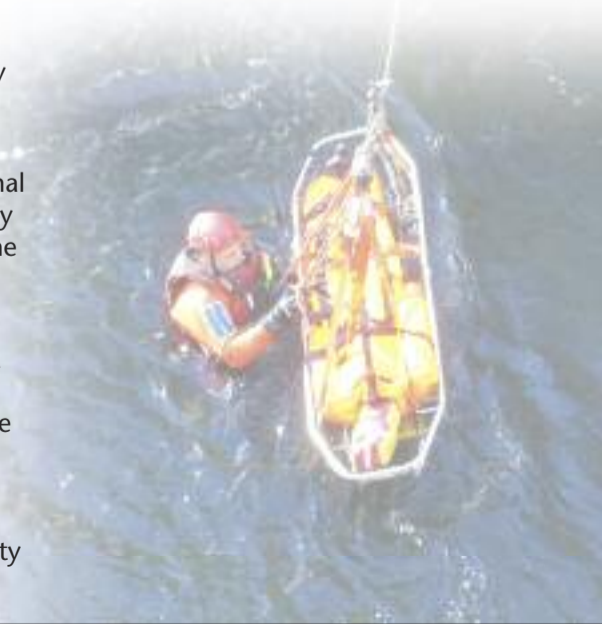


Training

The continuing reduction in the number of incidents means that it is more important than ever that staff are fully trained and able to respond when emergencies do occur.

During 2010/11 a total of 45 local exercises were carried out to reinforce the training and assessment of all operational firefighters, while specialist training was also provided to key staff in swift water rescue. In addition, a training programme was established to support the roll-out of new breathing apparatus sets across the Service.

Significant work has also been undertaken to ensure that the Service could continue to protect local communities in the event of a major incident affecting the organisation. The business continuity arrangements were rigorously tested during a recent major exercise and performed extremely well, while the organisation also received a very positive response from a recent national review of business continuity by the Audit Commission.



TEXT BOOST for business

Companies are being urged to take advantage of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's free online messaging service.

The text message service provides businesses with information about major incidents in their area as well as key safety messages and campaigns.

"While many firms have already signed up to our online system we would like to see more people register so we can provide instant updates to all Cheshire businesses," said Business Liaison Manager Mandy Eeles.

"It only takes a couple of minutes to register and I would urge all business owners to sign up, no matter what size their firm is."



Register online at www.cheshirefire.gov.uk or call 01606 868657. You can register up to three postcodes, for example the area where you are based or where similar companies or suppliers are located. There's no cost to register or to receiving alerts.

On the road to business safety

The Community Fire Protection team has had a busy time engaging with businesses throughout Cheshire, Halton and Warrington offering advice on fire safety legislation and the importance of having a fire risk assessment.

Roadshows targeting businesses have included campaigns engaging with the rural community at Beeston Market, Reaseheath College in Nantwich and businesses in Middlewich prior to the Folk and Boat Festival.

"We recognise that the pressures and workloads facing farmers can leave them with little time to consider fire safety matters so we have gone out to the markets and events they attend to spread highlight key issues," said Keith Brooks, the Service's Head of Community Fire Protection.

Copies of the Service's Farm Safety News leaflets were handed out while at the Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival staff and partner agencies visited shops, offices and pubs to highlight key messages such as:

Over 100 separate teams were involved in the day, with highlights including:

- Securing outside waste containers
- Checking external doors, roof lights and windows are secure
- Fitting security lighting in dimly lit areas
- Installing CCTV if appropriate.

For further advice and information check out the Business Safety section on the Service's website - www.cheshirefire.gov.uk



Summary of accounts 2010/11



Fire Authority

Cheshire Fire Authority is the publicly accountable body which manages the fire and rescue service on behalf of communities across Cheshire, Halton and Warrington.

The Fire Authority is made up of 23 elected Members, with eight appointed by Cheshire East Council, seven by Cheshire West and Chester Council, three by Halton Borough and five by Warrington Borough. The current political make up of the Authority is Conservative (10), Labour (10), Liberal Democrat (2) and Independent (1).

The Authority is a separate legal body and has the power to set council tax and agree its own policies and procedures, without needing the approval of these local councils. Its meetings are open to the public and are held at the Service's Winsford headquarters – full details are on the website – www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

Key duties of the Authority include setting the annual budget, agreeing the numbers of staff and levels of equipment necessary to provide an effective service and approving the organisation's key policies, plans and strategies.

Accounts

The accounts of the Fire Authority are important in showing how we use the resources provided to us to deliver a fire and rescue service in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington.

The summary accounts set out below provide an overview of where we get our resources from, how we allocate those across our services and our financial position as at the 31st March 2011.

Summary Revenue Account

The 2010-11 Fire Authority budget was £43.42m. The total expenditure incurred was £42.56m, an underspend of £0.86m which will be transferred to our General Reserve. Our reserves are proportionate to the risks facing the Authority's area and are required to ensure that the Authority has sufficient funds to deal with major incidents, but we are also mindful of the financial challenges facing the public sector. Fire and Rescue Services are not exempt from the cuts to public funding and in order to maintain the quality of service that we provide, we have developed a range of options to deliver savings. However we must also recognise that we are likely

to have to use our reserves to smooth the financial pressures of the next few years, particularly as the reductions in grant funding to Fire and Rescue Services are likely to be severe in 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Summary Balance Sheet

The Summary Balance Sheet shows the 2010-11 end of year position for the Fire Authority. The most obvious point to note is that there is a net liability of £278m i.e. the Fire Authority holds assets worth £49m, but has liabilities of £327m – most significant in arriving at the latter total is a figure of £316m (2009-10 £384m) which recognises all our future pension liabilities. The pension liability figure has reduced from last year as a result of changes in the indexation of future pension payments offset by a requirement to recognise the potential impact of the future payments of injury benefits to pensioners.

All local authorities are required to recognise future pension liabilities in their balance sheet even though it is not an immediate call on our resources, but instead is paid out over the life of our existing and future pensioners.

Summary Revenue Account 2010/11	£'000	£'000
Community Fire Safety	5,418	
Firefighting and Rescue Operations	38,664	
Corporate And Democratic Core	711	
Non-Distributed Costs	-42,110	
Net Cost of Service		2,683
Other income, expenditure and adjustments	39,872	
Amount to be met by Govt Grant and Local Taxation		42,555
Revenue Support Grant and Local Taxation	-18,621	
Council Tax	-24,794	
Net General Fund (Surplus)\Deficit		-860
Balance on General Fund Brought Forward	-6,466	
Balance on General Fund Carried Forward		-7,326

Summary Revenue Account 2010/11	£'000	£'000
Long Term Assets	36,289	
Current Assets	13,177	
Long Term Liabilities	-322,397	
Current Liabilities	-5,198	
Total Assets less Total Liabilities		-278,129
Financed by:		
Unusable reserves	292,062	
Earmarked Reserves	-6,607	
General Reserve	-7,326	
TOTAL NET WORTH		278,129

A full copy of the Statement of Accounts is available on our website - www.cheshirefire.gov.uk or by telephoning 01606 868815.

Teams tackle major disasters

Cheshire firefighters played their part in responding to two of the world's most devastating recent natural disasters.

A seven strong team were part of the international rescue mission to Christchurch after a major earthquake rocked the New Zealand city on February 22.

And just days after they returned from their two week mission, Cheshire's search dog Bryn and handler Steve Buckley flew to Japan to help in the aftermath of the major earthquake and tsunami which struck on March 11.

All those involved are members of Cheshire's International Search and Rescue (ISAR) team which was originally formed 20 years ago. They form part of a co-ordinated UK fire and rescue service response to international incidents and have advanced training in the use of specialist rescue equipment.

Station Manager Mark Coleman led the Cheshire team in New Zealand and was also Operational Commander for the overall UK Team. He said: "When we were arrived we were met by a scene of total devastation – it was shocking to see a thriving community silenced by such a traumatic event."

Encouragement

During their time in New Zealand the team searched and cleared three complete city blocks, including a 150 hour search and rescue operation at one office which had seen multiple rescues in the early stages. Sadly the team found no survivors, however, they did recover 13 bodies, which helped give closure to the families of the victims.

Mark concluded: "I don't think there was a single member of the UK team who did not at some time shed a tear. What touched us most was the encouragement, support and gratitude shown to us by the New Zealand people."

The team were subsequently invited by the New Zealand High Commission to a special memorial service in London. The other team members were Station Manager Stuart Devereux, Watch Managers Mark Bushell and Paul Bickerton, Firefighter Andy Hurst and Crew Managers Gareth Scott and Daryl Codling.

Although search dog Bryn and handler Steve Buckley, were not required as part of the New Zealand team, they joined other UK firefighters in the mission to Japan and were tasked with supporting searches in the coastal towns of Ofunato and Kamaishi.

Steve had nothing but praise for Bryn. "This mission pulled together all the training we have done and he wasn't fazed by anything that we came across. He even cut his leg during a search of a



Pictured left are the seven strong Cheshire team shortly after arrival in New Zealand and above the main office block where they worked.

Below search dog Bryn and handler Steve Buckley check buildings for survivors in Japan.



house but didn't make a sound - fortunately we had a doctor on our team who looked after him towards."

Although the teams in Japan didn't find any trapped victims, they did recover bodies allowing the Japanese people to find some closure on finding their loved ones.

Red fleet turns green

Cheshire Fire Authority has invested almost £1 million in buying new fire engines to keep its fleet up to date.

The organisation has taken delivery of three Scania CP31 appliances, designed to ensure fire crews can get to incidents as quickly and safely as possible.

The new engines will operate out of Crewe, Northwich and Runcorn Community Fire Stations and developments in new technology mean they are lighter and more environmentally-friendly than existing vehicles.

New features include lightweight and recyclable bodywork, a more carbon efficient engine giving off lower emissions, easier accessible rescue ladders and equipment lockers, a bigger water tank and a more effective pump.

The recyclable polymer bodywork also provides the option to 'second-life' the body on to a new chassis after thirteen years – the general operational life of a fire engine.

Fire Authority Chair David Topping, said: "These new appliances are part of our fleet replacement programme which aims to ensure our crews have modern and effective equipment to help them protect their local communities.

"I am delighted that we have been able to make



this investment and that these new appliances not only make it easier for our firefighters to do their jobs, they also help to reduce our impact on the environment."

Other features of the new fire engines are:

- slide and tilt ladder beam systems
- increased LED lighting for greater efficiency
- full front and rear air suspension with a front or rear lowering facility to ease the crews' access to operational equipment
- an 1800 litre water tank and a new dual pressure fire pump.

Preparing for emergencies

While the chances of being caught up in a major emergency are low, it is important to know what to do if such an event happens.

The Service has teamed up with local partners to form a group called Cheshire Resilience. It aims to help you prepare for, respond to and recover from any emergency. A pocket-sized publication summarising key information is available from public buildings across Cheshire or download from www.cheshirefire.gov.uk or www.cheshireresilience.org.uk



KEY MESSAGES

GO IN go indoors, upstairs if possible and on the side of the house away from the incident.



STAY IN close all doors and windows, switch off gas supplies. Don't collect children from school unless told to do so – they will be taken care of.



TUNE IN tune into local radio / TV and websites and follow official instructions. Have a wind-up or battery radio in case of a power cut.



Rising to Phoenix challenge

Widnes firefighters set a challenge - the Phoenix Challenge – for Widnes primary school children.

The Phoenix Challenge is an exciting new initiative for Year Six pupils from the four Widnes 'Phoenix' schools affiliated to each Widnes Fire Station. Working in partnership with Halton Borough Council's sports development coach, fire crews visited All Saints Upton, St Basil's, St Gerard's RC and Farnworth C of E schools and set Year Six pupils challenges. Each school then selected eight pupils to compete for the prestigious Phoenix Trophy in the Grand Final at Kingsway Leisure Centre.

Grand Final challenges set were tennis, table tennis, problem solving, pond dipping, minefield, relay, basketball and a staff challenge. Sports and hobby club representatives offered vouchers for children to test the various activities available in the area. After a closely fought competition St Basil's emerged as the overall winner, returning to school with the Phoenix Award.

Crew Manager Paul Rostance said: "From a fire and rescue service perspective this event was aimed at encouraging young people off the streets and offering them sporting opportunities. There's been a fantastic turn out with parents cheering their children on and we hope this will become an annual event."

The Project has seen the development of bio-diversity gardens, traversing walls, firefighters visiting schools for



The official launch of the Community Garden at the successful St Basil's School and right, the climbing wall at Runcorn Community Fire Station.



reading and writing assistance, design and technology projects, school fairs, open days and assemblies.

Unitary Performance Manager for Halton, Gus O'Rourke, added: "The Phoenix Project began in 2003 following a devastating fire at a Halton primary school. It has proved so successful that the Project now covers eight schools."

Witness plea in arson attacks



Ten arson attacks in the Murdishaw area of Runcorn in the last twelve months has prompted warnings from both firefighters and police.

One incident to hit the community was an arson attack on Murdishaw Methodist Church and Centre. The damage caused affected the community centre, main chapel, organ and exterior of the building. The blaze had been started in a wheelie bin which appeared to have been deliberately placed in front of a roller shutter over a church door and window. The fire spread behind the shutter and into the building - pictured above.

Fire Investigation Officer, Steve Flanagan, said, "This type of malicious action costs taxpayers thousands of pounds and, more importantly, it costs people their lives. It also has a major impact on the local community.

"This sort of behaviour is not acceptable and we will do all we can to trace those responsible and ensure that they are prosecuted accordingly."

Residents are advised to remain vigilant and to report any suspicious activity in the area immediately either by calling Runcorn NPU on 0845 458 0000 or, anonymously, via Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Residents escape blast

Narrow escape for residents after an explosion in a ground floor flat of a three-storey block of flats in Richards Close, Runcorn.

Firefighters wearing breathing apparatus immediately carried out a search of the building helping residents to safety and, in conjunction with police and ambulance staff, evacuating some 50 residents from all of the 40 flats.

The flat at the centre of the explosion was unoccupied at the time and there was no significant fire following the blast. Fortunately there were no casualties but all residents were given emergency accommodation in Castlefields Community Centre whilst fire and rescue crews carried out a second precautionary search and the Gas Board isolated the gas supply.

Following investigations it was found that there had been a gas leak which had caused the explosion. Police are continuing to investigate



the theft of gas piping which could have led to the leak and have appealed for anyone with any knowledge to contact them on 0845 458 000 or Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555 111.

Halton Unitary performance area profile



The Service in Halton has two main objectives - improving home safety and reducing anti-social behaviour fires.

Over the last three years, accidental house fires in Halton have dropped by 16%, from 63 incidents in 2008/09 to just 53 incidents in 2010/11. Fire crews and advocates have visited over 80% of the homes in the borough to fit free smoke detectors and offer fire safety advice as a result injuries from fires in the home are on an all time low and the borough has been free from deaths in accidental house fires for over three years. This year will see the Service carry out more than 1,300 visits to the homes of our most at risk members of the community.

Anti-social behaviour fires remains a focus for the Service in Halton; our innovative and award winning youth engagement projects such The Phoenix Project, RESPECT, Fire Cadets, Prince's Trust and The Runcorn Community Garden are truly starting to pay dividend as deliberate fire activity has dropped by 30% in the last three years. Primary fires (those involving property such as buildings, cars etc) are down by 51% whilst secondary fires (those involving rubbish, grass etc) are down by 24%.

The Service has a high profile in Halton. It works closely with partners with a strong focus on youth engagement to change minds and actions for the good of all, Runcorn and Widnes communities.

Key statistics	08/09	09/10	10/11
Deliberate primary fires per 10,000 pop	15.50	9.77	7.58
Deliberate secondary fires per 10,000	60.83	49.37	46.00
Primary fires per 100,000	262.85	190.40	168.49
Fatalities from primary fires per 100,000	1.67	0	0
Non-fatal casualties per 100,000	5.86	5.05	6.74

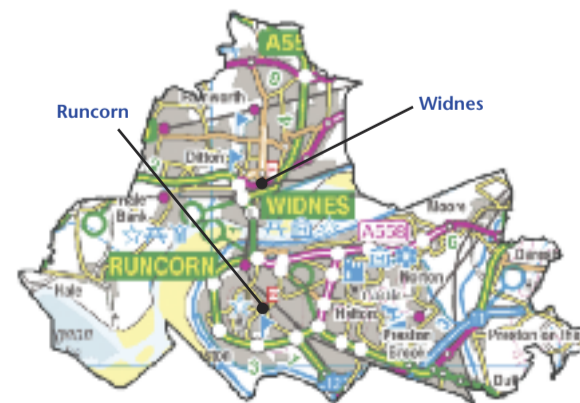
Your local station

For more information about your local fire station, its opening times and any upcoming open days or other events please visit our website www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

Key contacts			
Gus O'Rourke Unitary Performance Manager	Lorna Lucas Unitary Safety Manager	Liz Thompson Unitary Administration Manager	Kevin Massey Station Manager - Community Fire Protection

Fire Authority Members

Stef Nelson	Rob Polhill	Linda Redhead



- Wholtime station
- Day crewed station
- On-call station

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