

National praise for website

A SERIES of new features to inform and involve residents have helped Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's revamped website – www.cheshirefire.gov.uk – to gain national recognition in a major IT survey.

In its annual report on public internet sites, SOCITM – the Society of Information Technology Management – reviewed 10 Fire and Rescue Service websites ranging from Avon and Greater Manchester to Merseyside and London.

It said Cheshire was the best, adding: "...This is what a Fire Authority can do with its website – the others should take note. Comprehensive, interesting and useful, including current events being attended by fire crews."

- An e-mail alerts system which means people can register, highlight which issues they are interested in and then receive an automatic e-mail whenever we update information in that area.
- A RSS (Really Simple Syndication) newsfeed which automatically updates your computer when new content has been added to the website.
- An eNewsletter 'Firelink', which is emailed out monthly to subscribers.
- A latest incidents section, which is continually updated with information on a selection of incidents that the Service attends.

The new features include:

- A message broadcasting system which sends text messages to your mobile phone if the Service responds to a major emergency near your home or workplace. Registering is via a simple online form.

The site also allows people to find out what is going on at their local community fire station. Each fire station has its own section highlighting local news, open days or special events, performance information, community initiatives and contact details. Users just need to click on the 'Local Fire Stations' button on the home page and then select their



local station. Other features include details of all current jobs with the Service, Fire Service news which provides links to articles published in the local and national press, and forums where people can raise issues and questions to get a more detailed understanding of particular issues.



Cadets' class act in Africa

THERE is now a brand new school in Africa thanks to the efforts of 12 young fire cadets from Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service.

The new school is in Abordahi in the Volta Region of Ghana in West Africa and is now providing an education for 120 children in a remote rural community, and is the second school Cheshire fire cadets have built.

The project started back in December 2005 when the fire cadets were invited to apply for places on the team which would be challenged to raise £32,000 to build the school and provide equipment.

After 18 months of sponsorship, fundraising and challenges, the team not only raised enough money for the school but also provided a further village with a borehole allowing the village to have clean fresh water for the first time.

With the fundraising complete, the party of 12 fire cadets from across Cheshire, Halton and Warrington and five staff from the Service travelled to Ghana to work with the village in order to complete the school for the opening

ceremony and celebration to be held with the British High Commissioner for Ghana.

The Cheshire team set to work and despite the heat and tropical storms, managed to complete the building work and the school will be formally opened on Saturday 29th October 2007. Following the opening, there was an enjoyable celebration organised where the cadets took part in drumming, singing and traditional Ghanaian dancing.

The project was supported by Ghana Outlook, a registered charity who identified the village and arranged for the building materials and support for the party during their stay in Ghana.

Kevin Kelly, Cadet Manager, Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service said: "The finished school will provide an education for generations of young Africans and assist them on a pathway out of poverty. There is no doubt that after experiencing life in a rural African community the cadets will have returned to their lives in Cheshire with a new set of values and many happy memories."

Having your say...



CHESHIRE Fire & Rescue Service is continuing to urge residents in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington to join 'Response' – its dedicated residents' consultation panel – to regularly have their say about the way the Service develops.

The special consultation panel was set up last year and almost 400 people have joined so far, but more members are needed so that the views of all sections of the community are genuinely represented.

In particular, the Service is appealing to residents living in Ellesmere Port; Chester; Malpas; Crewe;

Macclesfield; Poynton; Wilmslow; Northwich and Warrington.

Members of Response take part in up to four postal or online questionnaires a year, with all returns entered into a prize draw for £100 in Marks & Spencer vouchers.

Chief Fire Officer Steve McGuirk said: "We are very grateful to all the Response Panel members who have taken part in our surveys so far and given us honest and constructive feedback.

"We are committed to consulting with the community and want local residents to sign up and join Response, not only to have their say but to also

help shape the future of the Service."

Mary Edwards, a member of Response living in Warrington, added: "I have gained new insight into the day to day running of the Fire and Rescue Service and by being involved as a panel member, I feel that I am making a valuable contribution."

Application forms for the panel are available online by visiting the Service's website – www.cheshirefire.gov.uk – or by calling Consultation and Communication Officer Jeanette Bate, on 01606 868994 or email: jeanette.bate@cheshirefire.gov.uk

Seasonal safety

WITH summer over, the clocks going back and Bonfire Night just round the corner, the Service would like to remind residents of some key safety messages:

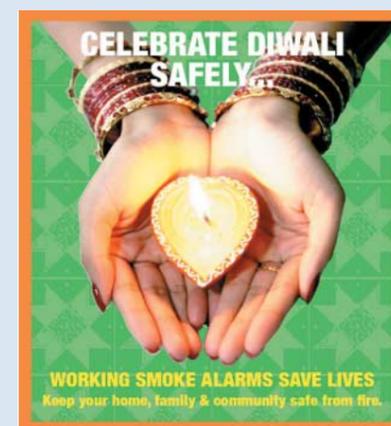
Clocks – check your smoke alarms are working as you put the clocks back on 28th October.

Keeping warm – Ensure electric blankets are working properly, any heaters are not obstructed and don't leave fires on overnight.

Bonfire night – Follow these tips to keep you and your family safe:

- Store and use fireworks responsibly.
- Light fireworks at arm's length using a safety lighter, stand well back and never return once lit.
- Keep a bucket of water handy.
- Take care of children and pets.
- Go to an organised bonfire but if you must light your own, don't use flammable liquids and site away from buildings and trees.

Eid and Diwali – Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service have issued the following advice as part of a national campaign during the festival seasons of Eid and Diwali, to ensure that Hindu, Jain, Sikh and Muslim communities celebrating the festivals do so safely. Eid takes place on 13th October,



marking the end of Ramadan, while Diwali starts on 9th November for five days.

Candle fires increase by over a third during the Diwali period and over 20 percent of deaths caused by candles occur at this time. Take care by:

- Keeping candles away from curtains, furniture and decorations. Long hair and clothing are also very flammable
- When cooking deep-fried food, never fill the pan more than one third full with oil and if the oil starts to smoke, turn off the heat and leave to pan to cool.

Autumn driving – The colder autumn nights lead to a greater chance of fog forming, so slow down if visibility is poor and allow extra time for journeys.

