



**2022-23**

**Health, Safety and  
Wellbeing  
Annual Report**

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# Forewords

*"I am very pleased to be writing my fourth foreword to the annual Health, Safety and Wellbeing report. Whilst the impact of Covid-19 has significantly reduced the lessons learnt have been incorporated into the business-as-usual operations; we hope that we will not need to reintroduce the severe prevention and control measures.*

*It is pleasing to report again the low level of health and safety incidents across the Service. This is testament to how all employees understand that health, safety and wellbeing is paramount to themselves and to the public that we serve. As always, the key message is prevention but if incidents do occur that lessons are learnt and fed back as preventative initiatives.*

*The Health and Safety team is small, dedicated and professional; all members are very well respected throughout the Service. The team works with operational and support staff to understand how best to deliver the safe working environment that is something from which all staff and the public benefit."*

Councillor Keith McLean  
Lead Member for Health, Safety and Wellbeing, 2022 - 2023  
Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

"2022/23 was another busy and challenging year for Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS) and Health & Safety remained a key focus. The Thames Valley Breathing Apparatus project is just one example of collaboration being used to not only realise financial benefits, but also to ensure that frontline staff are provided with the most technologically advanced and safety enhancing equipment. The Health & Safety team procured and rolled out Visor, the Services new accident reporting system. This system not only ensures the timely reporting, investigating and monitoring of safety events, but provides real time performance data which informs BFRSs key performance indicators. Safety events continue to place a significant financial burden on the Service; however, a cost cannot be placed against death or serious injury, which is why we must continue to maintain a positive health and safety culture which is inclusive for all."

Jason Thelwell  
Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive  
Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

# Executive summary

**Our Performance:** The safety event statistics for the year 2022/23 identify that there has been a **decrease** in the number of vehicle damage safety events **by 13.6%**. This is an excellent result; however, there has been **an increase** in the number of personal injury events, and also an **increase of 20%** in the number of equipment damage safety events; more detail is provided in the report.

**Employee Wellbeing:** Trauma support training has been provided for 12 new debriefers, bringing the cadre of available trauma support debriefers to 22.

Service procedures and guidance documents have been updated or created, from supporting menopause in the workplace, flexible working, supporting employees with mental and physical disabilities, supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse and violence, supporting employees with neurodiversity and hybrid working.

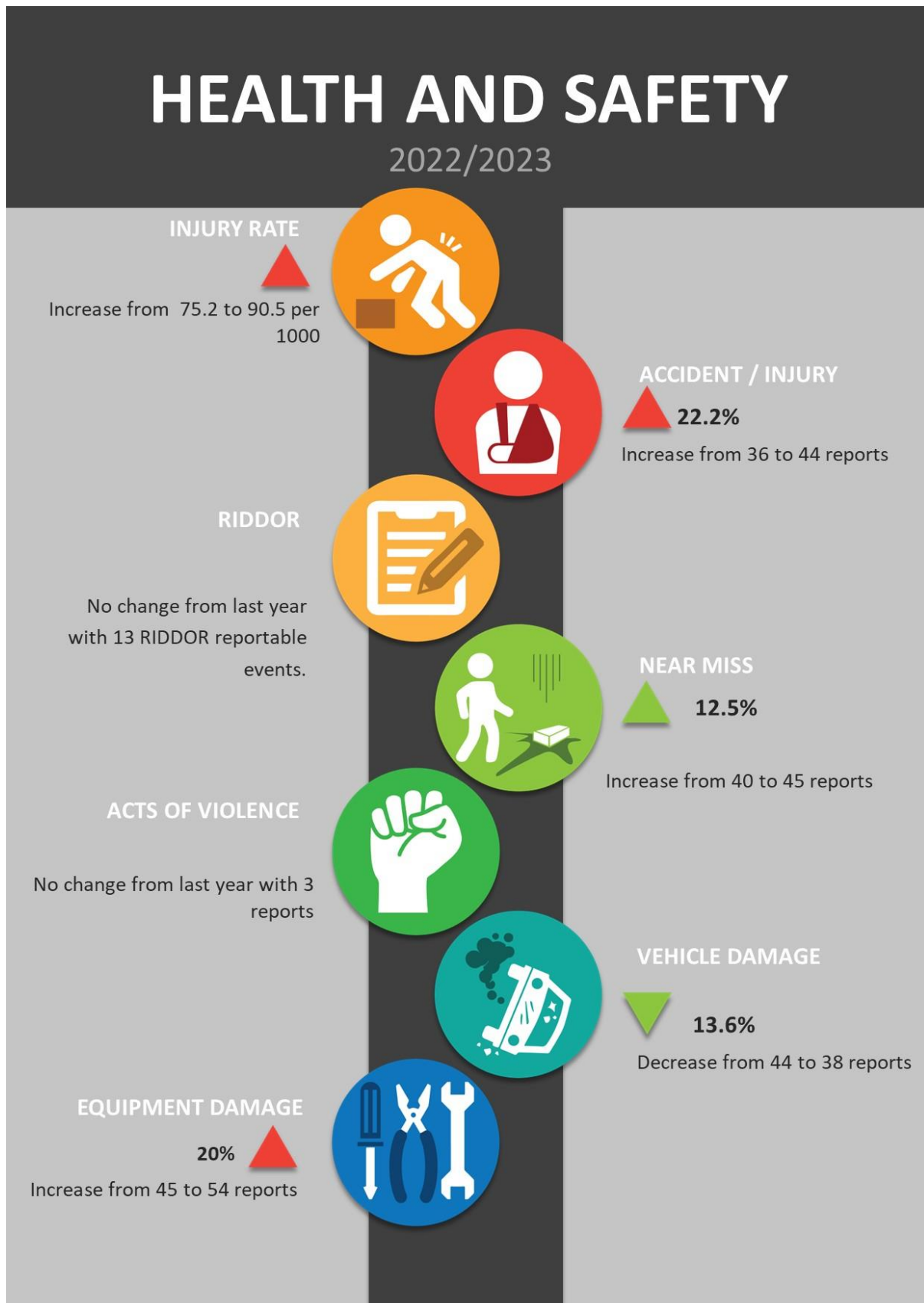
The Service has also worked closely with The Fire Fighters Charity to introduce online wellness workshops, specifically designed to help and support the health and wellbeing of employees.

**New Safety Event Reporting System:** March 2022 saw the 'go live' of the new safety event reporting and investigation system, Visor, supplied by Cuttlefish Software. The system has been in place for a whole financial year within the Service and feedback from users has been very positive.

**Thames Valley Breathing Apparatus (BA) Project:** As part of Operational Alignment with the other Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services, Royal Berkshire (RBFRS) and Oxfordshire (OFRS), Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) are leading the Thames Valley BA Project. The Interspiro 'incurve' BA set was selected with the new equipment being delivered in February 2023 in preparation for its "go-live" date in April 2023.

**Protecting Firefighters Against Contaminants:** In September 2021, following research carried out by Professor Anna Stec and the University of Central Lancashire, into the effects of exposure to contaminants, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) launched a "DECON" Campaign. Whilst the Service has robust processes in place, the Health and Safety team continue to work closely with the FBU, and South East Region Health and Safety Group to implement the recommendations from the report so far as is reasonably practicable.

# Our performance at a glance



# Performance overview

In 2022/23 the number of incidents attended was 7,659 and the number of mobilisations was 10,184. These figures do not include co-responding incidents or officer mobilisations.

Overall, there has been a reduction in one of the seven categories. Vehicle damage safety events have decreased significantly which is a great achievement. There has however been an increase in the number of equipment damage safety events and an increase in personal injury safety events. There has been no change in the total number of acts of actual violence, and the number of events that come under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) as detailed in "Our performance at a glance" graph above. The number of 'near-miss' reports has increased this year from 40 to 45. An overview of the figures is provided below.

**Personal injury:** The *injury rate* is determined by calculating the number of incidents reported; divided by the number of employees and multiplied by 100,000 as set out by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). For the year 2022/23 the *injury rate* is 90.5 per 1000 employees compared to 75.2 in 2021/22 which is a slight increase. In terms of the actual numbers of personal injury safety events, there has been an increase from 36 in 2021/22 to 38 in 2022/23.

The severity of a safety event is determined by multiplying the 'likelihood' of the safety event occurring again by the 'severity' of the injury sustained. The resulting figure is known as the risk factor score:

- 1 to 5 is deemed a minor event
- 6 to 12 is moderate and
- 15 to 25 is a major event

Of the 44 personal injury safety events, 15 have been recorded as minor in nature and 29 as moderate, 6 of which occurred at the Fire Service College and the Service is working with them to reduce reoccurrence.

There was a safety event which attributed to 7 injuries following a chemical exposure caused by an inexperienced contract cleaner. The persons affected were removed to fresh air following suffering ill effects from the exposure. A thorough investigation was conducted, and this was picked up with the contractor to address the issues raised from this event.

Serious workplace injuries, occupational diseases and specified dangerous occurrences are reportable to the HSE under the RIDDOR Regulations.

The number of RIDDOR reportable events for 2022/23 is 13, the same total as 2021/22. Analysis of these events resulted in:

- 5 dangerous occurrences relating to Breathing Apparatus
- 4 "major" injuries (heat-induced illness and a fracture)

- 4 'over 7 days' sickness absences

2022/23 has seen a decrease in the number of vehicle safety events with 38 safety events compared to 44 in 2021/22. 28 were of a minor nature, and 10 were classified as moderate. There has again been a pleasing downward trend in the total number of moderate events. Slow speed manoeuvres continue to be a problem for fire and rescue services nationally. 7 of these moderate safety events were due to slow speed manoeuvres, 3 were attributable to either vehicle damage or identified issues to Service vehicles.

There has been an increase in the number of equipment damage safety events compared with 2021/22 from 45 to 54; 45 of these were of a minor nature and 9 were moderate. Analysis carried out by the Health and Safety team identified that the moderate events have decreased from last year which is pleasing and that they were mostly isolated incidents with 2 of the 9 incidents related to teething issues from the new Interspiro equipment.

In the category "Acts of violence against firefighters", unfortunately there were 3 separate, unrelated incidents to report this year. 2 of these events were as a result of members of the public targeting fire appliances with fireworks, none of which resulted in any injuries. This remains at the same level as 2021/22. It is important to note that any act of violence against a member of staff is taken seriously and reported to the police.

For the year 2022/23 there has been an increase in the number of "near-miss" reports of 45, compared to 40 in 2021/22. This result highlights that staff are reporting more "near misses" which is pleasing. It is positive as "near miss" reporting reduces the likelihood of issues becoming safety events. The increase in "near misses" correlates to the increase in safety events, but the percentage increase of "near misses" (12.5%) is higher than the increase in safety events (4%). As standard practice, staff are continuously encouraged to report "near misses" no matter how trivial as inevitably these reports can reduce the increase in safety event numbers.

**Working Time Regulations compliance:** The Resource Management Team monitor the hours worked by operational personnel focusing on those who have more than one contract with the Service. This is managed via the resource management system and has proved to be very successful in eliminating breaches of the Working Time Regulations.

A breach may occur when a worker does not have a full 24-hour uninterrupted rest break in any 7 days or 48 hours in 14 days, or the total of hours worked per week exceeds 84. The Service has implemented a limit on the number of hours worked at 78 per week to build in extra protection against fatigue for staff. Two periods of 24-hour uninterrupted rest are also given in line with the national terms and conditions for firefighters – the Grey Book.

From April 2022 to March 2023 there were 4,750 Bank shifts worked and of those there were 0 breaches. This is an excellent result and highlights the positive work the Service has taken to ensure compliance with the Working Time Regulations.

**Performance Statistical data:** The performance statistical data received from the Home Office for 2022/23 **relates solely to operational personnel** and is displayed as league tables of fire and rescue services with similar numbers of employees to provide a more accurate comparison of performance between BFRS and its peers.

There has been an increase in the **total number of persons injured** from 30 in 2021/22 to 35 in 2022/23. Of these, 17 occurred at training events, 9 during routine activities, 8 at fires and 1 from non-fire incidents. Overall, this resulted in BFRS remaining in third position in the league table.

The total number of **injuries at fires** has increased from 6 in 2021/22 to 8 in 2022/23 resulting in BFRS placing in fifth position of the National Peer Group Performance Comparison table detailed in Appendix 1.

The total number of **injuries at non-fire incidents** has decreased from 4 in 2021/22 to 1 in 2022/23. With this decrease, BFRS retains its position at the top of the peer table.

There has been no change in the total number of **injuries during training events** with 17 in 2021/22 and 2022/23 resulting in BFRS placing in seventh position in the league table.

In terms of **injuries during routine activities** there has been an increase in the figures from 3 in 2021/22 to 9 in 2022/23 which was skewed by one event resulting in 7 injuries caused by a third party. This has resulted in BFRS placing in seventh position in the league table.

**Injuries over 7-day absence** figures have reduced from 5 in 2021/22 to 4 in 2022/23 which places BFRS in sixth position in the peer table.

Finally, there were 4 *major injuries* for the year 2022/23 resulting in BFRS taking eleventh position in the league table.

Health and safety performance is reported quarterly at the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer. Key stakeholders, the representative bodies and the Representative of Employees are invited to attend these meetings. Governance is via the Performance and Senior Management Boards on a six-monthly basis. The reports include statistical data on the number and type of safety events occurring at operational incidents, training and routine activities and the number and types of safety events involving Support staff.



# Employee Wellbeing

## **Attendance Management** – authored by Faye Mansfield, Human Resources

The Service continues to promote the value of health and wellbeing with employees throughout all roles and is committed to establishing a positive health and wellbeing culture within the workplace. This, includes promoting awareness and understanding of wellbeing, implementing effective and fair processes, and instilling positive behaviour by all. The Service recognises that mental and physical health and wellbeing are equally important and acknowledges the potential impact that work can have on both.

All long-term sickness absence cases are flagged within Human Resources, who then work with the line manager, employee, and Occupational Health in managing the employee's absence and return to work. All employees with over 28 days sickness absence are managed under the Attendance Management procedure and referred to Occupational Health.

For any sickness due to stress, anxiety or depression, the employee is automatically referred to Occupational Health regardless of the length of their absence. Occupational Health determines how work, or the workplace might impact on an employee, as well as how health, lifestyle or personal circumstances may impact on their ability to attend work or to return to work. The Service will seek advice from Occupational Health to guide in the management and progression of attendance management cases, ensuring employees receives appropriate support.

Measures are in place to support employees and a safe place of work is provided; however muscular skeletal sickness absence resulting away from the workplace cannot be mitigated by actions taken by the Service. Working with Occupational Health, the line manager and employee, every effort is made to get the employee back to work as soon as reasonably practicable. Where appropriate and when recommended by Occupational Health, physiotherapy is provided to employees. For cases of long-term sickness absence relating to stress, anxiety, depression and PTSD, and when recommended by Occupational Health, specialist counselling can also be provided.

All employees have access to an employee assistance programme, a free, independent, and confidential service, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, online or on the phone. The service offers expert advice, guidance, and support to help resolve a wide range of issues, and they will aim to answer any questions immediately or refer the employee to the most appropriate advisor, counsellor, or source of information. In addition, monthly newsletters and webinars on a variety of topics are available to employees via the Health Assured App and online, and regularly published on the Service's Intranet.

The Service's Welfare Officer is an additional point of contact to ensure employees have access to appropriate welfare support arrangements by providing advice, guidance, and assistance to those absent from work, returning to work, or going

through difficult personal circumstances. In addition, the Welfare Officer will provide advice and guidance to line managers to assist with individual cases where welfare support is required, including return to work plans and ongoing support. The Welfare Officer, along with members of the Service's mental wellbeing support network (another source of support) can signpost employees to appropriate wellbeing support.

The mental wellbeing support network has been refreshed, resulting in a total of 37 mental health first-aiders being trained from roles across the Service. This information has been shared with employees throughout the Service and members of the team are easily identifiable with dedicated lanyards being worn and names posted on noticeboards in all Service Premises.

Trauma support training has been provided for 12 new debriefers, bringing the cadre of available trauma support debriefers to 22. The purpose of trauma support is to provide reassurance about natural reactions to traumatic situations and an opportunity to discuss coping strategies. The focus of debriefing sessions is to see how individuals are coping following a traumatic event in order for appropriate support to be provided and to help individuals adjust post incident after a traumatic event.

Service procedures and guidance documents have been updated or created, for supporting menopause in the workplace, flexible working, supporting employees with mental and physical disabilities, supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse and violence, supporting employees with neurodiversity and hybrid working. A suicide awareness package has been added to the Service's online training system and is accessible by all employees. National campaigns are supported and communicated to employees throughout the year and a range of "me too" articles have been produced and published on the Service's Intranet, as a way of sharing employees' stories to help others; analysis showed that these were some of the most frequently visited pages in the Service.

The Service has a social media Wellbeing group on Facebook with over 100 members (and growing), this allows Human Resources to share wellbeing messages with employees using a range of more modern mediums.

The Service has worked closely with The Fire Fighters Charity to introduce online wellness workshops, specifically designed to help and support the health and wellbeing of employees. In addition, The Fire Fighters Charity and Hope for The Community have partnered to run self-management programme for individuals looking to improve their mental wellbeing and resilience, called the Hope Programme, a six-week interactive online programme, focusing on individuals and their wellbeing. Working with The Fire Fighters Charity, the Service has also established "living well" groups. The intention of these groups is to provide a meeting place for former employees to network and access support where necessary. The Fire Fighters Charity also offers residential mental wellbeing and rehabilitation programmes that are available to current and past employee.

# Risk Management

**Health and Safety audits and Fire Risk Assessments** – are conducted across all stations and sites on an annual basis. The form has been reviewed this year to ensure that the question set remains relevant with additional questions added mainly in relation to the management of contaminants on station.

This year these were conducted by the Station Commander or site manager who are minimum NEBOSH General Certificate qualified in conjunction with a member of the Health and Safety team and Property team. On submission of the completed audit both the Health and Safety and Property teams devise an action plan to remedy any issues that have been highlighted. Outcomes and progress on the identified actions are discussed at the quarterly Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee meetings.

**Protecting Firefighters against contaminants and Fire Brigades Union (FBU) DECON Campaign** – In September 2021, the FBU launched their “DECON” campaign to help firefighters protect themselves and others from harmful contaminants encountered when fighting fires. “DECON” encourages firefighters to make simple changes at work and at home that can help to prevent cancer and other diseases.

As background information, the FBU commenced a contaminants project, in conjunction with Professor Anna Stec from the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) to investigate rates of cancer and other diseases in UK firefighters; understand the long-term health effects of fire contaminants and find ways to reduce exposure to contaminants whilst fighting fires.

UCLan’s 2020 Interim Report found that UK firefighters are 4 times more likely to get cancer in their working life. Key findings include:

- Contaminants can be inhaled, ingested, or absorbed through the skin
- Skin absorption of fire effluents increases as body temperature increases. Some studies suggest that skin absorption increases by 400% when body temperature increases by 5°C
- Contaminated kit such as dirty gloves and helmets re-expose firefighters
- Skin, head, and neck cancers are more common than average in UK firefighters.

The Report recommends:

- Using BA more effectively
- Avoiding cross-contamination
- Cleaning kit, clothes, and spaces
- Washing and changing after fires

The campaign has published 11 key steps that firefighters should take to reduce their exposure to contaminants as part of their training package. These steps are:

#### Before an Incident:

- Firefighters before an incident must clean their kit regularly
- Handle dirty kit with care – if dirty kit is to be touched then disposable gloves must be worn

#### During an Incident:

- Firefighters must wear BA until the job is done
- Contain any dirty kit by sealing any clothing or PPE exposed to fire in an airtight bag or box before taking it into the appliance

#### At the Station:

- Upon return to station from an incident firefighters must shower within an hour
- Firefighters must not eat or drink until themselves and their clothes are clean
- Firefighters must also check their kit for visible damage every shift

#### Going Home:

- When returning home from work, firefighters must shower and change clothes if they have attended a fire before driving as well as wiping down the steering wheel, dashboard and handles regularly
- Firefighters must clean what they carry e.g., regularly wipe down mobile phones, wallets and other belongings brought to work
- Firefighters must have a shower when arriving at home if showering and changing clothes at the station was not possible
- Firefighters must ensure if any clothes are taken home that have been near a fire are put straight into the washing machine from the bag or box they are sealed in; these clothes must not be touched with bare hands, mixed with other laundry, or left lying out.

The campaign also encourages current and retired firefighters to sign up to the UK Firefighters Cancer and Disease Registry to help researchers understand and tackle firefighter health risks. Funded by the Firefighters100 Lottery and administered by UCLan, the Registry helps researchers to study the long-term health risks of firefighting.

After completion of the training package, the "DECON" campaign encourages everyone to sign their pledge to follow the everyday "DECON" habits and encourage other firefighters to take daily action against contaminants.

“DECON” asks firefighters to step up and become the first generation that takes daily action against contaminants to change the culture. The campaign encourages firefighters to tell other firefighters about why “DECON” matters and how they can use it to protect themselves, their colleagues, and their families.

In January 2023, UCLan confirmed that firefighters are “substantially more likely to get cancer” with new research finding that toxic contaminants in fires are directly linked to increased rates of cancer and mental health issues among firefighters. The findings support the ruling from the International Agency for Research on Cancer, which says that exposure through working as a firefighter is carcinogenic.

The Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services have agreed to adopt the training package which has been tailored to meet the needs of each of the three Services. This package has been added to the Service’s eLearning platform and is a mandatory requirement for all operational staff to complete.

As improvements are identified which can mitigate the risk of exposure to contaminants, the Service will take a consistent approach across all its stations and sites to ensure it enables staff to protect themselves within the workplace so far as is reasonably practicable.

The Service is working closely within the Thames Valley region and also the South East Region Health and Safety group with regards to implementing measures to reduce the risk from contaminants within the workplace. The group is steered by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) in implementing any measures that they produce. The NFCC have initiated working groups for contaminants where the South East region is leading on safe systems of work and risk assessments.

# New Safety Event Reporting System

In 2020, the Health and Safety team initiated a project to source a new safety event reporting and investigation system.

The previous safety event reporting and investigation system had been in use since 2017 and allowed the Service to move from paper-based reporting and investigation to an electronic system.

It had become apparent however, that despite the positive step in moving to an electronic based system; reporting and investigating safety events was not as intuitive for the user as it could have been. As a result, the standard of the data captured was not always consistent and led to the project being initiated.

Initially, the market was researched for alternative systems, and from this, three potential systems were identified.

To ensure that the most appropriate system was selected, a working group was formed. The group comprised a mix of support and operational staff across a range of levels to enable feedback from all groups of staff that could potentially use the new safety event reporting system.

Demonstrations were arranged with all three suppliers with feedback received from the working group.

As well as engaging the working group for the system, it was important to involve key stakeholders within the project such as Procurement and ICT. This was vital to deliver the project on time and ensure that the governance procedures were followed correctly.

After reviewing the information supplied by the companies it became apparent that only one solution was viable given the budget. After analysis of the feedback, it was decided that Cuttlefish Software's "Visor" safety event reporting system would be chosen to replace the "eSafety" system.

The "Visor" system is a configurable and fire service bespoke system which was the driving factor in deciding to opt for it rather than remaining with the current system. The system has many other benefits such as:

- A single log in facility removing the need for passwords
- An audit log which captures the history of an investigation
- Linked to Microsoft Power BI which is a system that provides facilities for in depth investigations into the trends of safety event data
- A simpler process for monitoring investigations and actions, an improved quality assurance process to ensure a consistent and high standard of investigations
- Provides access to those in different departments to improve the efficiency of data collation such as Insurance and the Operational Assurance Team
- A more transparent system which keeps the investigator updated via e-mail notifications on the progress of their investigation as it goes through the different stages of sign offs and assigned actions

Weekly meetings were held with Cuttlefish Software to prepare and build the system before “going live” with it. This process was important so that the system was designed to follow the current safety event reporting and investigation process. The system was initially built for OFRS and was developed further to meet the needs of this Service. Part of this development was to ensure that the system would be as simple to use as possible, but also designed so that quality of the data could be assured.

In addition to this, the transferring of data from the old system had to be factored in. It was agreed that all personal injury data would be transferred along with the basic information of all other types of safety event investigations and actions so that all appropriate records were retained.

Once the system had been built to a standard where it was due to “go live”, the members of the working group attended a practical demonstration of the system where they could trial it using the test system.

Following the success of the live demonstration, the “go live” date was 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022. The active investigations were transferred onto the new system to ensure their completion, and since the implementation of the system there has been numerous amounts of positive feedback from different members of staff who have been impressed with the functionality, ease of use and access.

Following the use of the system for a whole financial year it is pleasing to note the numerous positive feedback from end users from the system. Feedback to the department consisted of the system being user-friendly and more intuitive and easier to use than the previous system. In some cases, it has been stated that it has encouraged users to report more events as they feel that the system flows well and is not as time-consuming.

Users have reported minor bugs or suggested minor amendments to the system which have been implemented. During the use of the system, the Health and Safety team have also identified areas of improvement which have either been worked on or identified for system changes which will be implemented in the very near future to allow for better reports to be made from the system.

The team meets with the supplier regularly and any updates on the system are discussed and actioned effectively.

The implementation of the new system has been a success and for the product which the Service has now compared to before, it has proven value for money with improvements in the completion of investigations on time, higher quality reports and analysis of data using Microsoft Power BI which interlinks with the system, and stricter auditing of the system to ensure investigations and actions are fully completed.

# Thames Valley BA Project

As part of the alignment work between the three Thames Valley fire services; BFRS OFRS and RBFRS, the project for procuring the replacement BA set was initiated to ensure that all Services are using the same Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE). A tender process took place with trials of sets from 3 suppliers being undertaken at the Fire Service College.

The trials were supported by training instructors from each Service who devised and facilitated the scenarios used to put the equipment through its paces. This was also overseen by other members of the project team including the Health and Safety Manager, Procurement Manager and the FBU. Each exercise was then used as a scoring mechanism for the candidates on the equipment they used.

The areas tested included:

- Mounting and dismounting appliances
- Hose running, equipment carries and ladder climb
- Working at height
- 'Confined space' / obstacles
- Guidelines
- Searching for and rescuing casualties
- Set removal
- Extinguishing fires / compartment firefighting
- Gas tight suits
- Communications
- Cable entanglement
- Emergency air supplies
- Use of telemetry

Following a robust procurement process, Interspiro Ltd. was selected as the supplier of choice.

The rollout has seen the Incurve-E SCBA BA set, utilising a 300-bar cylinder, with telemetry enabled entry control boards (ECBs) to monitor wearer progress and welfare.

The completion of this project means that all BA wearers in the Thames Valley will be using the same equipment, so will be able to be committed to incidents through the same Entry Control Boards at cross border incidents, thereby further enabling all the benefits that come with improved Operational Alignment including firefighter safety.

The equipment was delivered to the Service in February 2023, and Interspiro technicians worked through the Service, visiting all sites to carry out some minor changes and upgrades to equipment.





The equipment delivered was the station stock moving into the go live phase and was used from February until the go live date to improve training opportunities on stations. All staff have been reminded that they must keep up competence with the equipment and ensure it is always maintained correctly. Final items including tripods and ECB covers were delivered into Service soon after along with any remaining small items.



The project team continued to meet regularly to discuss the progress of the project along with any areas of concern to insure they were addressed; especially with the go live for RBFRS which took place in March 2023, and to ensure a successful go live for BFRS in April 2023, and OFRS in July 2023.

The risk assessment set was reviewed in conjunction with the Technical team leads and the health and safety teams of the three Services to ensure that they were suitable and sufficient.

# Working With Others

## **Internally**

Following a couple of incidents where the management of asbestos at incidents was highlighted as a concern, the Health and Safety team met with the HazMat lead, the investigating officer for the incident which occurred, and Ops Assurance to ensure the areas of concern were addressed. This included further education with additional training being added to the HEAT online learning system, update of the Asbestos Thames Valley Operational Information Note, and an article written to be published in the Ops Assurance newsletter.

It was also highlighted that lone workers within the Service with public facing roles did not have an effective Safe System of Work (SSoW) implemented to manage their interactions safely. The Health and Safety team have worked closely with Protection and Prevention in terms of relaunching the use of the lone worker device currently within the Service. Meetings were held with the respective teams to set out the process for the relaunch which included locating all devices and sending them back to the team to assign to users. This work also included engaging PeopleSafe to provide clearer training materials so that the Health and Safety team can implement the devices effectively so persons can use them when conducting 1 to 1 visits.

Further work on this is to be carried out, with the introduction of new lone working devices from PeopleSafe expected in Autumn 2023 which will involve further engagement work with the Protection and Prevention teams.

## **Externally**

The Health and Safety Manager sat on the National Fire Chief's Council Health and Safety Committee until August 2022 where topics discussed are fed into the South East Region Health and Safety Committee. These matters are also fed into the Service's own Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee meetings.

The Health and Safety team attend the South East Region Health and Safety Committee regularly and within this forum it gives the opportunity to share information within the region with the ongoing work with contaminants and welfare at the incident ground following the summer pressures of 2022.

As part of the audit process within the South East Region, the Health and Safety team have volunteered to offer support to the lead auditors for the West Sussex and Oxfordshire audits respectively in 2023/2024.

The Driving Centre, which is a partnership with OFRS delivering a common and shared approach to emergency response driving training, continue to monitor trends to ensure avoidable safety events can be reduced and improve driving performance and standards.

# Health and Safety Training

Health and safety training is provided to all employees as part of an induction programme when joining the Service and regularly for Manual Handling and Display Screen Equipment as a legislative requirement.

Additionally, any health and safety training relevant to role is provided, ideally, as acquisition training prior to an individual going into role. This has been one of the objectives set by the Health and Safety Manager over the past four years and it is pleasing to confirm that this is now routinely the case.

Funding of £26,910 was allocated to Health and Safety training and was used to provide the following courses:

## **External providers**

An **Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) Managing Safely** course was delivered this year which took place in January 2023.

This year, as there were only a small number of employees who needed to undertake the **National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) General Certificate**, BFRS procured 2 places from OFRS as it was more cost effective.

A **Fire Warden** course took place to boost the number of fire wardens at SHQ to support the fire alarm testing and monthly fire warden check programme.

A **Level 2 accident investigator** course was delivered at West Ashland Fire Station to increase the numbers of support staff trained to carry out these investigations as well as a small number of staff in the Station Commander pool.

A **First Aid at Work** course was delivered as it was identified that coverage between SHQ, Workshops and Unit 7 required increasing. Following the course, this has ensured sufficient coverage of first aiders on duty should assistance be required.

# A Look Forward

**Lone Working** – Work will continue with Protection and Prevention to ensure a sufficient system is in place to ensure the protection of lone workers. Training is to be provided in the interim on the current devices with emphasis on users testing their devices regularly to ensure that it works and to give them confidence that they can be used in uncomfortable situations.

Once the new equipment is provided by PeopleSafe, the Health and Safety team will ensure training materials are provided to the respective teams. The teams will then manage their lone working safe system of work and review if it is working for them.

**Contaminants** – Work on contaminants will begin to ramp up in 2023-24 as it has been agreed that zoning of stations will begin with 3 trial stations being looked at first as part of the exercise. This will be carried out between Health and Safety, the Station Commander for the station and a member of the FBU.

Alongside the zoning, work will continue and increase on requirements for managing contaminants at the incident ground, PPE and Workwear, and reviewing the work RBFRS have carried out on contaminants exposure recording to see what can be implemented within BFRS.

**Safe to Command Training** – The proposed training for Firefighters is to provide them with the vital skills to take on the “Officer in Charge” role at the incident ground. As part of this health and safety is one of these skills, and depending on the approval of this training, a Health and Safety input to include training on risk assessments and safety event reporting will be provided.

# Performance Indicators

## **Budgets**

The Health and Safety budget for the year 2022/23 resulted in an underspend of around £46K due to the vacancy of the Health and Safety Manager role.

The total spent on training was £12,947 which resulted in an underspend of £13,963 which went back into the training budget. 2 courses were deferred; however, the remaining courses which took place come in under budget as the original predicted direct cost was £21,415.

## **Health and Safety Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)– 2022/23**

The objectives set for the year 2022/23 were in line with the Public Safety Plan in terms of managing risk. They were:

1. Investigations to be completed within the set timeframes of 2 weeks for a level 1 investigation and 4 weeks for a level 2- achieved on 75% of occasions with a 10% tolerance.
2. Health and safety acquisition training to be completed prior to going into role on 85% of occasions and 100% of occasions on substantiation of the role.
3. Health and Safety training packages to be completed on 90% of occasions with a 10% tolerance.

Progress on these KPIs were reported on quarterly at the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee meetings.

The above objectives will remain in place for the next financial year and progress against these will be regularly reported on at each Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee meeting.

The KPI set will be reviewed again for the 2024-25 to ensure that they remain useful and relevant measures of performance.

# Appendix

## National peer group performance comparison tables 2021/22 and 2022/23

The Health and Safety department is required to report on BFRS end of year accident statistical returns to the Home Office on 31 May 2023 for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

### Summary:

The Health and Safety department provided returns for:

**HS1** - injuries during operational incidents, encompassing both Wholetime and On-Call employees and sub-divided into injuries at fires, at road traffic collisions and at other Special Service calls.

**HS2** - injuries during training and routine activities also encompassing Wholetime and On-Call employees and sub-divided into injuries during operational training, fitness training and routine activities.

### Findings:

**HS1** – The year 2022/23 has seen no change in the *total number of personnel injured at operational incidents* which remains at 17. Injuries at fires increased from 6 to 8, whereas injuries at non-fire incidents reduced from 4 to 1.

**Outcome:** In the national peer group league tables for *total number of injuries*, BFRS has remained in third position in 2022/23. For *injuries sustained at fires* BFRS has moved up from fifth position to second position with an increase of 2 from 6 to 8 injuries. For *injuries sustained at non-fire incidents* BFRS experienced a reduction from 4 to 1, and still retaining the top position.

**HS2-** *Injuries at training events* has remained at 17 in 2022/23. *Injuries sustained during routine activities* has increased from 3 to 9 in 2022/23.

**Outcome:** BFRS' position in the peer group table for *injuries at training events* has moved remained in seventh. For *injuries during routine activities*, BFRS are placed in joint seventh.

Below are the league tables which provide a visual image of the overall safety performance of BFRS in the operational arena compared to their peer group. BFRS are in the top three of three of the seven categories.

*\*Please note the Services shown in the tables below are placed in alphabetical order where the totals are the same.*

<b>Total number of persons injured</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
Oxfordshire	32	6
Northamptonshire	38	29
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>35</b>
Suffolk	27	37
Warwickshire	20	38
Berkshire	31	42
Hereford and Worcester	44	43
West Sussex	47	45
Cambridgeshire	69	47
Norfolk	57	57
East Sussex	46	60
Bedfordshire	47	63

<b>Total number of injuries at fires</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
Oxfordshire	2	1
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>
East Sussex	7	9
Hereford and Worcester	14	9
Berkshire	5	11
Suffolk	5	11
Norfolk	17	13
Northamptonshire	9	14
West Sussex	13	15
Bedfordshire	9	17
Warwickshire	1	17
Cambridgeshire	11	29

<b>Total number of injuries at non-fire incidents</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2021-22</b>
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
Berkshire	6	1
Oxfordshire	5	1
Warwickshire	4	1
Suffolk	5	4
Northamptonshire	5	5
Hereford and Worcester	7	6
West Sussex	7	6
Cambridgeshire	17	13
Norfolk	7	15
Bedfordshire	9	16
East Sussex	23	22



<b>Total number of injuries during training</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
Northamptonshire	15	1
Cambridgeshire	21	2
Oxfordshire	20	3
East Sussex	14	11
Warwickshire	9	11
Bedfordshire	18	14
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>
Berkshire	11	20
West Sussex	17	20
Norfolk	25	21
Suffolk	12	21
Hereford and Worcester	14	22

<b>Total number of injuries during routine activities</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
Oxfordshire	5	1
Suffolk	5	1
Cambridgeshire	20	3
West Sussex	10	4
Hereford and Worcester	9	6
Norfolk	8	8
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>
Northamptonshire	9	9
Warwickshire	6	9
Berkshire	9	10
Bedfordshire	11	16
East Sussex	2	18

<b>Total number of over 7-day injuries</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
Warwickshire	2	0
Norfolk	6	1
Northamptonshire	4	2
Bedfordshire	6	3
Hereford and Worcester	5	3
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
East Sussex	4	5
Suffolk	2	5
Cambridgeshire	12	6
Oxfordshire	4	6
West Sussex	10	6
Berkshire	4	7

<b>Total number of major injuries</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>
Hereford and Worcester	0	0
Norfolk	0	0
Northamptonshire	0	0
Oxfordshire	1	0
Suffolk	0	0
West Sussex	1	0
Bedfordshire	1	1
Berkshire	1	1
Cambridgeshire	0	1
Warwickshire	2	1
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
East Sussex	1	5