



# Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

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**Meeting and date:** Fire Authority, 7 December 2022

**Report title:** Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2021-22

**Lead Member:** Councillor Keith McLean

**Report sponsor:** AC Calum Bell, Head of Protection, Assurance and Development

**Author and contact:** Daniel Cadwell, [dcadwell@bucksfire.gov.uk](mailto:dcadwell@bucksfire.gov.uk)

**Action:** Noting

**Recommendations:** That Members note the health, safety and wellbeing performance as detailed in the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report for 2021/22.

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**Executive summary:** The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report covers the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 including:

- COVID-19 pandemic
- Statistical overview
- Employee Wellbeing
- Risk Management
- New Safety Event Reporting System
- Thames Valley BA Project

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**Financial implications:** If risks are not managed and controlled effectively, they can potentially lead to serious injury and breaches of legislation which can have significant financial implications by way of claims or fines for the Authority.

**Risk management:** Risk management involves understanding, analysing and addressing risk to ensure the Service can achieve its objectives.

**Legal implications:** The safety management system is well embedded throughout the Service and its performance is subject to regular audit by peer fire and rescue services to ensure it remains fit for purpose, as well as ensuring compliance with legislation. If this scrutiny does not take place, it is possible that breaches of health and safety legislation may occur.

**Privacy and security implications:** A Data Protection Impact Assessment for this report exists and has been reviewed. There are no personal details provided in this report and statistical data is generic rather than specific to protect the identity of

those involved. The data collected as part of personal injury safety events is name, date of birth, gender and home address when required for Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) reporting – a legislative requirement.

**Duty to collaborate:** Collaboration work continues with our Thames Valley FRS counterparts and this report highlights the on-going collaboration work.

**Health and safety implications:** As restrictions have eased the main priority has been ensuring a safe return to business-as-usual activities. The Service has had to adapt its guidance for staff throughout the pandemic to ensure safety amongst staff and the public it serves. As of March 2022, standard guidance emphasising the importance of cleanliness and hygiene has been published to ensure staff are able to operate in the safest environment as possible.

**Environmental implications:** None identified

**Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:** The data collected as part of personal injury safety events is name, date of birth, gender and home address when required for RIDDOR reporting. Where the number of personal injury safety events is so low that there is the potential for affected individuals to be identified, they are reported generically rather than specifically.

**Consultation and communication:** As this is a report on health, safety and wellbeing for the year 2021/22 there is no requirement to consult with other stakeholders.

**Background papers:**

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2021/22	None



Appendix 1

# 2021-22

# Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report

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# Forewords

*"I am very pleased to be writing my third foreword to the annual Health, Safety and Wellbeing report. In the year COVID-19 continued to have a significant impact on the way the Service operated; the protocols used prevented our key asset, our staff, from being impacted by significant unavailability due to COVID-19. Thank you to all staff for their adherence to the protocols.*

*Once again there has been a continuation of low levels 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 they 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, but all members are very well respected throughout the Service. In the year Ali Quainton, Health and Safety Manager, was awarded the prestigious Chairman's Award for her sterling work promoting Health and Safety across the Service, demonstrating how important this is to the Service".*

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

*"This year has seen us adapt to living with COVID-19 on a permanent basis and a return to "business as usual" for the Service. Staff have returned to the workplace and all face-to-face interactions have resumed. Humans are, by nature, social beings and it is pleasing to see the benefits of this return to normality in our professional working relationships and the associated improvements in our mental health and wellbeing. Hybrid working has been introduced for those staff who are able to work from home which has been well received.*

*Moving forwards, we continue to strive for excellence in health and safety performance through proportionate risk management, the setting of realistic and achievable key performance indicators and the monitoring of progress against the same and through recognition of the importance of 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

**COVID-19 Pandemic (COVID):** With the return to “business as usual”, the Service has issued instructions on the measures that will continue to be in place for the foreseeable future to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID within the workplace. These focus on maintaining hygiene routines, cleanliness and encouraging the continuation of taking regular lateral flow tests; instructing all staff to remain at home/work from home where possible should they return a positive test.

**Our Performance:** The safety event statistics for the year 2021/22 identify that there has been a **decrease** in the number of personal injury safety events **by 18.2%**. This is an excellent result; however, there has been **no change** in the number of equipment damage events, but an **increase** of **15.8%** in the number of vehicle damage safety events; more detail is provided in the report.

**Employee Wellbeing:** Sickness absence has increased for Wholetime and On Call employees in 2021/22 when compared to 2020/21. Support staff employee sickness levels also saw an increase for the same period. Whilst the increase in absence levels for all groups during 2021/22 appears high, they are returning to pre-pandemic levels. Overall, long-term sickness has decreased for all groups over the five-year period, whilst short-term sickness levels have increased.

**New Safety Event Reporting System:** March 2021 saw the ‘go live’ of the new safety event reporting and investigation system, Visor, supplied by Cuttlefish Software. Feedback from users thus far, has been very positive.

**Thames Valley BA Project:** As part of Operational Alignment with the other Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services, Royal Berkshire (RBFRS) and Oxfordshire (OFRS), Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA) are leading the Thames Valley BA Project. The tender process has been undertaken with trials taking place at the Fire Service College. From the trials, the Interspiro ‘incurve’ set was selected and work is progressing to enable a planned “go live” from Spring 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 are working closely with the FBU to implement the recommendations from the report so far as is reasonably practicable.

# COVID-19 Pandemic

With the uncertainty of the course of the pandemic since March 2020, similarly to last year, a significant amount of time this year has been devoted to managing the pandemic in its various stages internally and in supporting the communities we serve.

The first part of the year focused on the Service's response as restrictions began to ease following the winter lockdown. Gradually over the course of the year the Service began its pandemic recovery from the back end of the summer.

Taking a cautious approach by easing restrictions within the workplace gradually after their removal by the Government, the Service carefully managed to maintain COVID secure environments throughout all stations and sites. This resulted in 8 spot inspections by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) raising no issues.

By the end of the financial year, following the lifting of all legal guidelines the Service announced its formal COVID guidance moving forwards with the following:

- Regular lateral flow testing continues to be encouraged – the workplace collect scheme remains in place
- If individuals test positive for COVID they are to stay at home
- Regularly wash hands and use hand sanitiser
- Continue to risk assess all activities that involve the public; taking all reasonable steps to reduce the potential for transmission
- Maintain regular cleaning regimes of all sites and vehicles
- Take steps to reduce the risk of transmission when planning work in other people's homes and discussing all work activities with households before visits

The Health and Safety team have conducted several reviews of existing COVID risk assessments to ensure they remain suitable and sufficient, reflect the Government's changes to restrictions imposed and the requirements of the Service throughout the year. As of March 2022, COVID is now captured as its own section on all relevant activity risk assessments.

In certain situations, COVID has been designated as a disease that is reportable to the HSE under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1998 (RIDDOR). These situations relate to not wearing the appropriate PPE, a failure of the PPE or a dangerous occurrence such as an unintended incident at work that has led to someone's possible or actual exposure to COVID. To manage these eventualities the Service provided guidance to all staff as to the levels of PPE that should be worn according to the level of risk present.

When an employee is confirmed as having COVID they must self-isolate and not return to work until they have had two negative tests consecutively. Before they return to work the Resource Management Team (RMT) will contact them and

work through a set of questions created to determine if the virus was contracted whilst at work. If this is the case, the Health and Safety Team will report it to the HSE under the RIDDOR Regulations.

The HSE has been instrumental in providing guidance to employers on mitigating the risk of transmission of the virus. An example of such guidance related to adequate ventilation, both natural and mechanical. The Service has implemented the requirement that windows on all stations and sites are to be opened when occupied to ensure circulation of fresh air. For those stations and sites that have air handling systems the Property department have maximised the input of fresh air and increased the frequency of filter changes. The Property department have also installed windows that open out in key areas within Headquarters to increase the natural ventilation.

# Our performance at a glance



# Performance overview

In 2021/22 the number of incidents attended was 8,998 and the number of mobilisations was 9,867. These figures do not include co-responding incidents or officer mobilisations.

Overall, there have been reductions in two of the seven categories. Personal injury safety events have decreased significantly which is a great achievement. There has been no change to the total number of equipment safety events, but there has been an increase in the number of vehicle damage safety events as well as acts of 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 33 to 40. 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 HSE. For the year 2021/22 the *injury rate* is 75.2 per 1000 employees compared to 89.0 in 2020/21 which is a significant reduction. In terms of the actual numbers of personal injury safety events, there has been a decrease from 43 in 2020/21 to 36 in 2021/22.

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 36 personal injury safety events, 21 have been recorded as minor in nature and 15 as moderate.

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 2021/22 is 13, 7 more than in 2020/21. Analysis of these events resulted in:

- 1 occupational disease (COVID)
- 3 dangerous occurrences relating to Breathing Apparatus
- 3 "major" injuries (heat-induced illness and a fracture)
- 6 'over 7 days' sickness absences

There has been no change in the number of equipment damage safety events compared with 2020/21 which was 45; 33 of these were of a minor nature and 12 were moderate. Analysis carried out by the Health and Safety team identified that the moderate events were isolated incidents with 2 of the 12 incidents related to dangerous occurrences involving BA.

2021/22 has seen an increase in the number of vehicle safety events with 44 safety events compared to 38 in 2021/22. 27 were of a minor nature, 16 moderate and 1 major. There has been an increase in the minor vehicle damage safety events which has largely contributed to this increase. The major event involved an overhead parking barrier swinging into the cab of an appliance, thankfully there were no injuries to the crew. Slow speed manoeuvres continue to be a problem for fire and rescue services nationally. 5 of these moderate safety events were due to slow speed manoeuvres, 5 were attributable to either vehicle damage or identified issues to Service vehicles. The remaining 6 were separate safety events which cannot be specified due to the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

In the category "Acts of violence against firefighters", unfortunately, there were 3 incidents to report this year which is an increase of 3 compared to 2020/21. 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 2021/22 there has been an increase in the number of "near-miss" reports of 40, compared to 33 in 2020/21. 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" (21.2%) is higher than the increase in safety events (3.9%). 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.

As more business-as-usual activities have commenced, safety event numbers have risen. The trends will be monitored in the future to compare performance prior to the pandemic as we continue to work alongside the standing risk of COVID.

**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 will 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 2021 to March 2022 there were 4,581 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 2021/22 **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 BMKFA and its peers.

There has been an increase in the **total number of persons injured** from 24 in 2020/21 to 30 in 2021/22. Of these, 17 occurred at training events, 3 during routine activities, 6 at fires and 4 from special service calls. Overall, this resulted in BMKFA placing in third position in the league table.

The total number of **injuries at fires** has increased from 4 in 2020/21 to 6 in 2021/22 resulting in BMKFA placing in fifth position of the National Peer Group Performance Comparison table detailed in Appendix 1.

There were 4 **injuries at special service calls** in 2021/22 compared to 0 in 2020/21. Despite this increase, BMKFA 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 2020/21 and 2021/22 resulting in BMKFA placing in seventh position in the league table.

In terms of **injuries during routine activities** there has been no change in the figures with 3 in 2021/22 and 2020/21 which is pleasing. This has resulted in BMKFA remaining in second position.

**Injuries over 7-day absence** figures have increased from 3 in 2020/21 to 5 in 2021/22 which places BMKFA in seventh position in the peer table.

Finally, there were 3 *major injuries* for the year 2021/22 resulting in BMKFA taking last 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 Fire Authority member, 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

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 an attendance management case, ensuring employees receives appropriate support.

All employees have access to an employee assistance programme, a free, independent, and confidential service, available 24 hours a day, 7 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.

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.

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, and depression, and when recommended by Occupational Health, specialist counselling can also be provided.

# Risk Management

**Health and Safety audits** –are conducted across all stations and sites on an annual basis and cover the following:

- Policies and procedures
- Premises
- People
- Plant
- Question set designed to test health and safety knowledge amongst employees

These audits are conducted by the Station Commander or site manager who must be NEBOSH General Certificate qualified. 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.

The COVID section was removed for this year's round of audits due to the stations completing a monthly inspection and the Health and Safety team completing COVID spot audits.

**Risk Assessments** – There has been a focus on the completion of “on and off station” drill/exercise risk assessments. Communications have been issued by the Health and Safety Team reminding crews of their responsibility to ensure that all drills and exercises must be risk assessed. Although there has been an increase in the submissions of these risk assessments, more work is necessary to embed this requirement.

**Fire Risk Assessments** – Whilst the Fire Authority is the ‘responsible’ person under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 the Station Commanders and site managers are the ‘duty holder’ and as such are required to complete a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment. Training in fire risk assessment has been provided to ensure those persons are competent to carry out this requirement. The assessments are then reviewed either on an annual basis or whenever there is a change in circumstances such as a refurbishment of the premises or a ‘sleeping risk’ is introduced.

**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.

The Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services have agreed to adopt the training package which will be tailored to meet the needs of each of the three Services. This package is currently being built and will be added to the Service's eLearning platform.

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.

# 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 focused 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, an agreed “go live” date was set for 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 its implementation, an evaluation of the project will be undertaken in the financial year 2022/23 to capture successes and learnings. The Health and Safety team will continue to amend the system to improve its effectiveness and end user experience. As the system is fully configurable, any desired changes to further improve the Service’s safety event reporting and investigation process can be made to improve efficiency.

# Thames Valley BA Project

As part of the alignment work between the three Thames Valley fire services, 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). The 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.

Throughout 2022-2023, new equipment will be rolled out to all three Services. There will be marked changes to all Services in this rollout; two Services seeing a new supplier, two Services being introduced to telemetry and all three Services having brand new equipment which uses the latest technology to improve firefighter safety and comfort.

The rollout will see 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 will mean 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.

Following the selection process, the risk assessments for the set were divided between the working group for the project and the Service's Health and Safety team were heavily involved in this.

"Go live" is expected to commence in the Autumn of 2022 for RBFRS, early Spring 2023 for OFRS, and late Spring 2023 for this Service.

All risk assessments, equipment manuals, guidance notes and procedures will be in place before "go live".



# Working With Others

## **Internally**

Managers from Property, Health and Safety, Procurement and Response have been working together on the procurement and installation of the new Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) training rig at Aylesbury fire station replacing the existing drill tower. Following successful consultation and approval for funding via the Business Transformation Board this has now been erected and crews are delighted with it. This training rig removes the requirement for crews to travel to the Fire Service College to undertake their training which is a considerable cost saving in terms of the cost of the course (approximately £10K) and ensures the crew remains available to respond to incidents when training, which was not possible before.

The redundant drill tower is being refurbished and will be relocated to another station.

Throughout the year there has been close working between different departments to ensure the success of the new safety event reporting system project. The positive work between all key stakeholders ensured that the project was successfully delivered on time.

The Health and Safety team have been involved with key stakeholders in the development and initial stage implementation of hybrid working, the first phase of the Work Evolution programme. Members of staff can apply to their line manager to work from home a set number of days a week. This has been well received with a number of staff applying for this option.

## **Externally**

There has been good work with external partners as the focus on the alignment of procedures for the Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services continues through the Thames Valley Development Group (TVDG). Another example of collaborative working is the purchase of the Volvo fire appliances.

Between the Thames Valley Services and the FBU there has been close working on the National Operational Guidance (NOG) risk assessments.

There has also been close working between the Southeast Region Fire and Rescue Services on the FRS audit tool peer audits with Surrey being audited in March 2022 and Royal Berkshire will be audited in November 2022.

The Health and Safety Manager continues to sit on the National Fire Chief's Council Health and Safety Committee where topics discussed are fed into the Southeast Region Health and Safety Committee which she chairs. These matters

are also fed into the Service's own Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee meetings.

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 three years and it is pleasing to confirm that this is now routinely the case.

Following the easing of the Government restrictions within this financial year, the Service was able to support face to face training once more. This was pleasing as most delegates would agree that they benefit more from this method of learning.

Funding of £25,000 was allocated to Health and Safety training and was used to provide the following courses:

## **External providers**

Two **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Assessors** courses took place to increase the pool of qualified assessors within the Service.

Two **Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) Managing Safely** courses were delivered this year which took place in January and March 2022.

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**, Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS) procured the course and sold six places to OFRS to share the cost. The course was run face-to-face in January.

Two **Evac-Chair** training courses were undertaken and as a result of this there are now four in-date trained personnel on the use of the Evac-Chair. These chairs may be needed to transport employees, who are less mobile, from the building in the event of an emergency.

A **Fire Warden** course took place at the Blue Light Hub to ensure the fire evacuation plan could be carried out effectively with the use of the Tag-Evac system within the building.

# A Look Forward

**Health and Safety Audits and Fire Risk Assessments:** The current process for the health and safety audits and review of fire risk assessments involve the Station Commander/site manager completing the station audit between May and July each year. The fire risk assessment review is then completed in September, with the outcomes of both the fire risk assessment review and health and safety audits presented at the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee meeting in December.

Moving forwards, it has been agreed between the Territorial Group Commanders and the Health and Safety and Property departments that this work will be spread across the year on a rolling programme. The health and safety audit and the fire risk assessment will be completed by the Station Commander or site manager along with one member of the Health and Safety team and one member of the Property team to form an audit team. This has been agreed to reduce pressure on the Station Commanders and site managers, improve efficiency and provide a standardised process across the estate using the same auditors on each occasion.

The trial of this began in May 2022 and will be implemented across the Service by means of a rolling 12-month programme. The outcomes will be reported regularly at the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee meetings.

**BA:** With the return to business as usual following the pandemic, a decision to increase the frequency of the face fit Portacount testing has been taken. This will now take place every 2 years and when a change of helmet or physical stature occurs.

Regular face fit testing carried out by crews has been reintroduced which was temporarily paused due to the COVID pandemic.

# Performance Indicators

## **Budgets**

The Health and Safety budget for the year 2021/22 resulted in an underspend of just over £2.5K.

The total spent on training was £15,550 which resulted in an underspend of £9,450 which went back into the training budget.

## **Health and Safety Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)– 2021/22**

The objectives set for the year 2021/22 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.

There will be an additional KPI set for the next year which relates to the completion of recommendations made as a result of safety event investigations. The target set will be that the recommendations will be completed on 80% of occasions with a 10% tolerance either way.

# Appendix

## National peer group performance comparison tables 2020/21 and 2021/22

The Health and Safety department is required to report on BMKFA end of year accident statistical returns to the Home Office on 31 May 2022 for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

### 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 2021/22 has seen an increase in the *total number of personnel injured at operational incidents* from 4 to 10. Injuries at fires increased from 4 to 6, whereas injuries at special services increased from 0 to 4.

**Outcome:** In the national peer group league tables for *total number of injuries*, BMKFA has remained in third position in 2021/22. For *injuries sustained at fires* BMKFA has moved from first position to fifth position with an increase of 2 from 4 to 6 injuries. For *injuries sustained at special service calls* BMKFA experienced an increase from 0 to 4, but still retaining the top position.

**HS2-** *Injuries at training events* has remained at 17 in 2021/22. *Injuries sustained during routine activities* has also remained at 3 in 2021/22.

**Outcome:** BMKFA's position in the peer group table for *injuries at training events* has moved from eighth place to joint seventh. For *injuries during routine activities*, BMKFA has remained in second position which is a pleasing result.

Overall, of the 7 categories, the number of injuries sustained to firefighters has increased in 5 and remained the same in 2 which could be due to returning to "business-as-usual" activities.

Below are the league tables which provide a visual image of the overall safety performance of BMKFA in the operational arena compared to their peer group. BMKFA are in the top three of three of the seven categories – although it is disappointing to see an increase in some areas which are being examined and analysed to identify any trends and areas for improvement.

<b>Total number of persons injured</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>
Warwickshire	20	20
Suffolk	26	27
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>30</b>
Berkshire	27	31
Oxfordshire	42	32
Northamptonshire	37	38
Hereford and Worcester	46	44
East Sussex	71	46
Bedfordshire	47	47
West Sussex	17	47
Norfolk	74	57
Cambridgeshire	76	69

<b>Total number of injuries at fires</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>
Warwickshire	4	1
Oxfordshire	10	2
Berkshire	6	5
Suffolk	5	5
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>
East Sussex	18	7
Bedfordshire	10	9
Northamptonshire	4	9
Cambridgeshire	25	11
West Sussex	7	13
Hereford and Worcester	15	14
Norfolk	16	17

<b>Total number of injuries at Special Services</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>
Warwickshire	8	4
Northamptonshire	4	5
Oxfordshire	5	5
Suffolk	1	5
Berkshire	3	6
Hereford and Worcester	10	7
Norfolk	13	7
West Sussex	5	7
Bedfordshire	6	9
Cambridgeshire	11	17
East Sussex	31	23

<b>Total number of injuries during training</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>
Warwickshire	4	9
Berkshire	11	11
Suffolk	14	12
East Sussex	9	14
Hereford and Worcester	16	14
Northamptonshire	20	15
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>
West Sussex	3	17
Bedfordshire	15	18
Oxfordshire	18	20
Cambridgeshire	26	21
Norfolk	28	25

<b>Total number of injuries during routine activities</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>
East Sussex	13	2
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
Oxfordshire	9	5
Suffolk	6	5
Warwickshire	4	6
Norfolk	17	8
Berkshire	7	9
Hereford and Worcester	5	9
Northamptonshire	9	9
West Sussex	2	10
Bedfordshire	16	11
Cambridgeshire	14	20

<b>Total number of over 7-day injuries</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>
Suffolk	0	2
Warwickshire	0	2
Berkshire	2	4
East Sussex	5	4
Northamptonshire	5	4
Oxfordshire	4	4
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
Hereford and Worcester	4	5
Bedfordshire	7	6
Norfolk	8	6
West Sussex	2	10
Cambridgeshire	7	12

*\*Please note the Services shown in the table below are placed in alphabetical order. There were no major injuries in 5 of the 12 Services.*

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