



Health and Safety Annual Report 2022/23

.....
www.cheshirefire.gov.uk



This page is blank

Health and Safety

Annual Report

2022 – 2023

1. Summary

This annual report highlights the Health & Safety (H&S) performance over the previous financial year (1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023).

Performance and evaluation have been measured by the number and severity of accidents reported, the number of lost time days as a result of injuries and the proactive measures taken for continual improvement.

Overall performance has been satisfactory, accident numbers remained low although minor accident numbers did increase on the previous year.

Manual handling injuries and slips, trips and falls remained the most frequent contributor to injuries for operational employees, which is not unexpected given the high number of manual handling activities undertaken by the Service. For fire support employees, mental health issues remained to be the main contributor to absenteeism.

Key points to note during the period include:

- A small increase in the number of minor injuries; however,
- A decrease in the number of lost time days;
- Significant improvement in operational employee fitness; and
- A focus on managing safely training for managers.

2. Background

In April 2022 the Service appointed a new Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager following the retirement of the post holder after fourteen years' service. This was managed in a way that allowed a handover period to familiarise the new manager with the Service.

The new Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager is a chartered member of the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, has extensive knowledge and experience gained over twenty-eight years' within the chemical sector.

Throughout this change the Service has remained committed to operating safely and driving continual improvement in its H&S performance.

As the Health & Safety Executive continues to update legislation and guidance, the Service has implemented the necessary changes in our management system.

Changes to legislation are monitored via external providers and, internal checks ensure that our policies and procedures remained compliant to changes issued

by the Health and Safety Executive, the Home Office and National Fire Chiefs Council.

Accidents reports from other fire and rescue services were reviewed to identify any learnings that may need to be considered in our own operational procedures and Coroners' letters published under Regulation 28 to prevent future deaths were monitored for lessons learned.

3. Key Achievements

There has been an increase in the number of operational employees passing the Service fitness test. The Service is now back to pass rates seen prior to the Corona Virus pandemic.

Eighty random screening tests carried out for alcohol and substance abuse has not identified any related concerns within the Service.

An audit schedule and plan was introduced by the health and safety department to ensure that all Service facilities are visited annually to identify any health and safety issues and to share best practice improvements. No major health and safety concerns were identified.

A new eLearning package was developed for new starters ensuring that all employees have a basic awareness of health and safety expectations and how to raise their health and safety concerns when necessary.

Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) managing safely refresher courses were introduced, for all relevant employees to be refreshed every three years. This year has seen significant attendance ensuring that management level employees are provided with mandatory training.

A wellbeing focus group named 'StayWell', was created from Service employees that had stakeholder interest in improving overall health and fitness, this group now meets quarterly to discuss employee fitness, nutrition and overall health.

An opportunity was provided to a small number of employees to obtain a level three personal trainer qualification. Following the training the Service now has eleven additional fitness instructors that are able to provide support to all employees following the guidance and support of the fitness advisors.

The further development of initiatives to manage risks to operational employees from contaminants by the refinement of training videos for the disrobing process, preventing exposure from contaminants after incidents and training exercises.

Four accidents were reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations, which is the same number the previous year. One of the incidents reported was regarding Service activities that injured a member of the public who has now fully recovered.

4. Accident rates

The Reportable Accident Rate (RAR) is the way in which HSE calculates accident rates for various industries, the rate is expressed as the number of accidents per 100,000 employees. Of the RIDDOR injuries the Service reported, three were to operational employees giving an RAR of 349 which is lower than the previous year [564].

5. Minor accidents and Near Misses

The electronic accident reporting system introduced to make the reporting and investigation of accidents easier and quicker has achieved its aim, however newer software platforms are now available which could improve the quality and efficiency of data reporting and identification of trends.

Reports and investigations are being completed in a timely manner, typically with 21 days with those outside of the allocated time being more complex incidents that required more thorough investigations or external support.

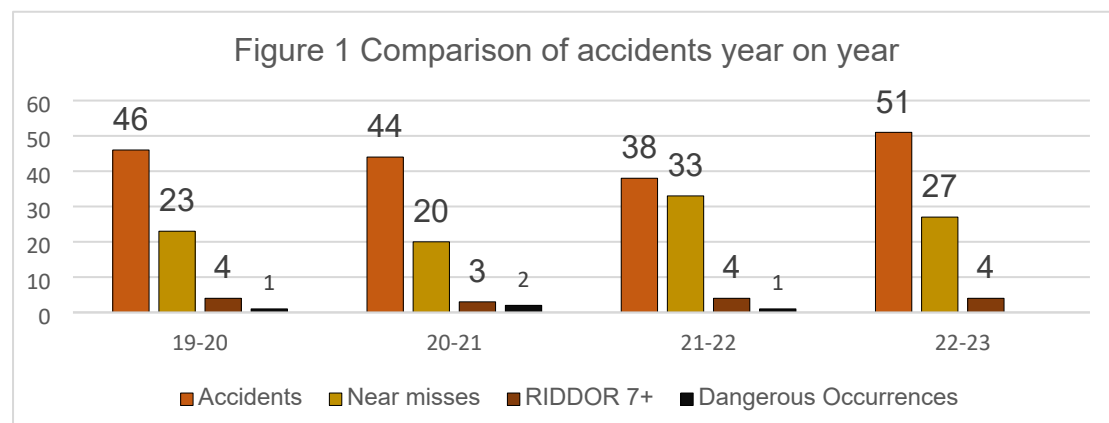


Figure 1 shows a comparison of the number of minor accidents, near misses, RIDDOR reports and dangerous occurrences for the last four years.

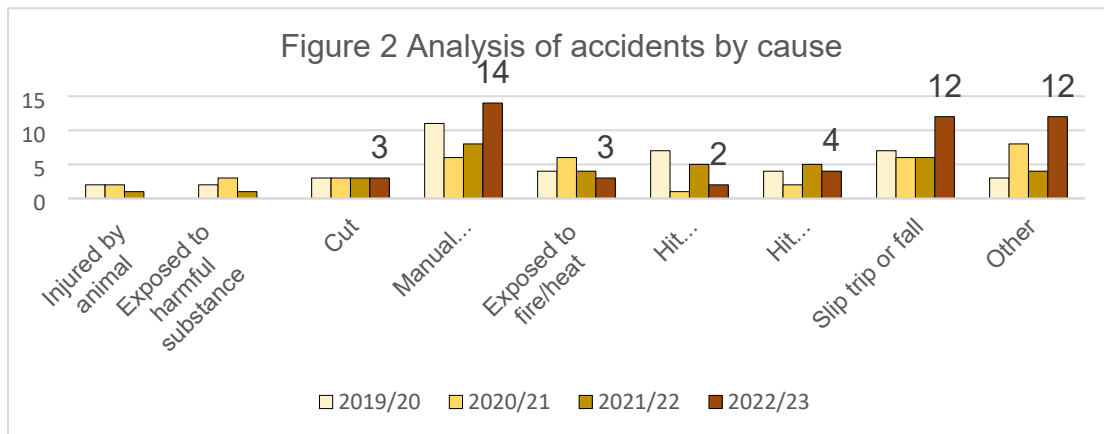
This year the Service recorded fifty-one injuries to employees, an increase of thirteen compared to thirty-eight the previous year, however, there has been a reduction in the injury severity evident in the number of lost time days.

Disappointingly there was a reduction in the number of near misses reported, this type of event report allows the Service to learn from incidents without injury or damage, but aids in the prevent of future injuries.

6. Response to accident data

Figure 2 shows a breakdown of accidents in the Service by cause, comparative data is shown for the past four years.

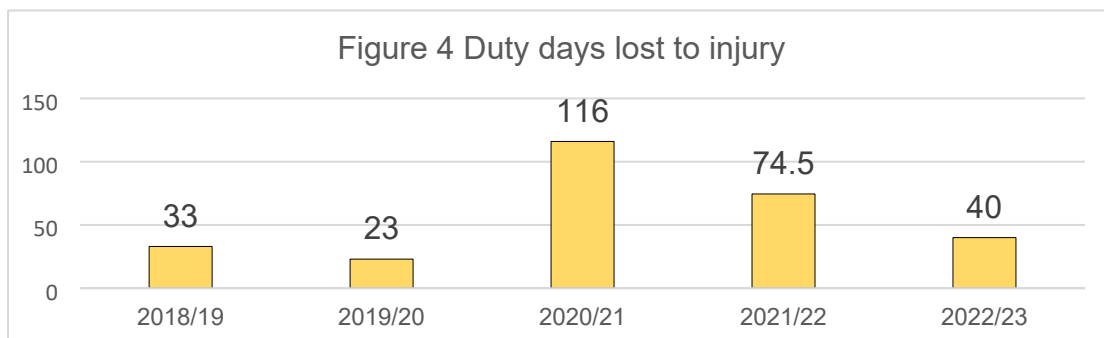
The analysis of the Service's accident reports shows that manual handling and slip, trip and fall incidents have been the cause of the most accidents.



All accidents are investigated at an appropriate level to ensure that learnings are identified with the aim of preventing a recurrence. Accident data helps identify future areas for campaigns and to focus training and resources where they will achieve the greatest benefit.

7. Duty days lost as a result of injury accidents

As part of its accident reporting procedure the Service records the number of duty days lost as a result of accidents.



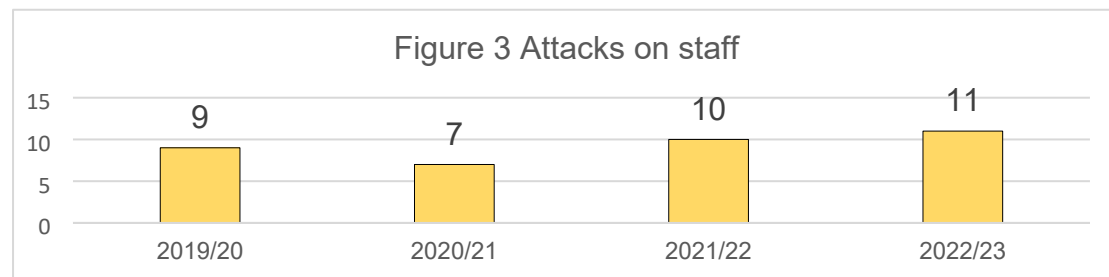
This data point is one of the performance measures reported to the Government. The number of days lost as a result of injuries this year is 40, a significant reduction on last year [74.5].

8. Violence and aggression towards staff

The Service recorded eleven incidents of violent and abusive behaviour towards employees which is one more than the previous year. The Service has continued to work to identify the locations where violence may occur and to engage with the local community to try to reduce the risk of anti-social behaviour. Data from the last four years is provided in Figure 3.

The Service will continue to collect information about violence and aggression towards employees and work to address the causes of this type of behaviour.

When appropriate, the Service employees will report violent attacks to the police and provide evidence from the closed-circuit television cameras mounted on Fire Engines.

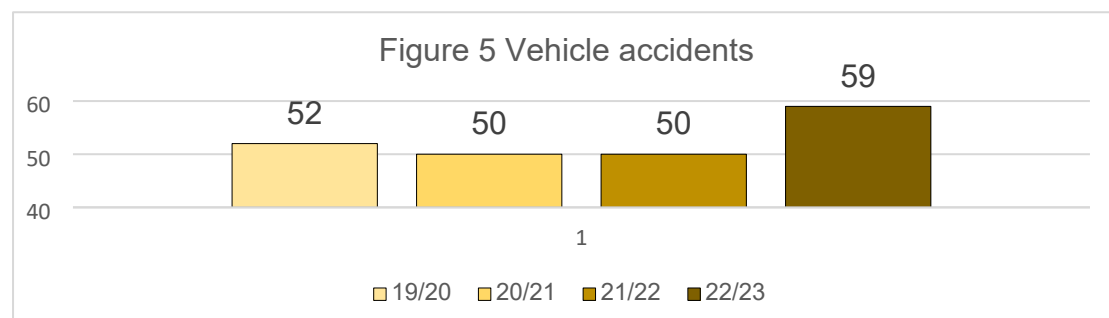


Attacks on firefighters have primarily occurred during the Bonfire Night period. There were three occasions where crews were called to small outdoor fires, that resulted in items such as fireworks and pieces wood being thrown or directed towards the appliance causing some very minor damage.

Verbal attacks were more frequent, eight events were recorded in total, three were abusive comments directed at firefighters and four were laser pens shone directly at appliance drivers and firefighters on scene. One event was recorded for the Protection Department, which was abusive language from a business owner.

9. Vehicle accidents

The number of vehicle accidents reported was fifty-nine; this is a slight increase over last year. All vehicle accidents were minor resulting in low-cost damage. Figure 5 shows a comparison of vehicle accident numbers for the last four years.



The Service has a Road Risk Management Group, the purpose of which is to examine vehicle accident reports and introduce measures to drive down both the severity and number of vehicle accidents.

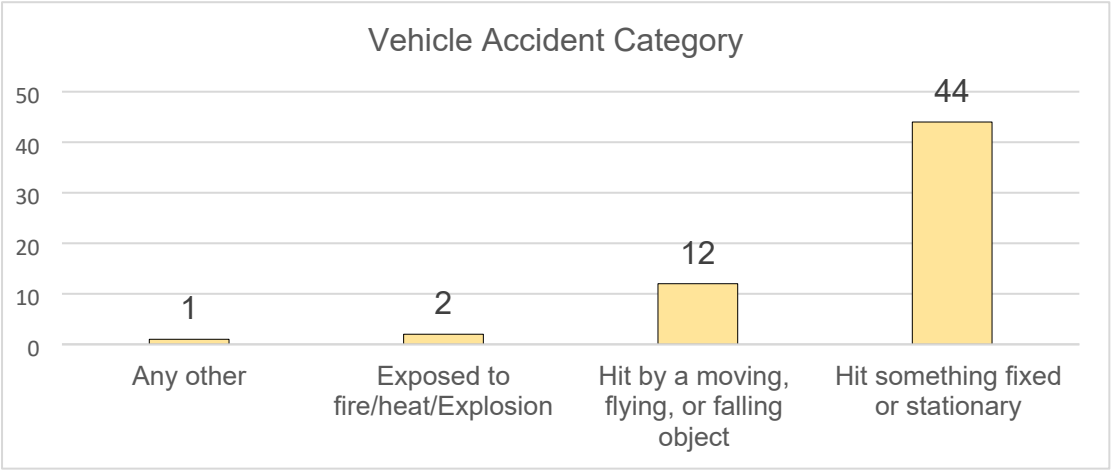
There has been a sustained and successful campaign to reduce the number of serious accidents when Service vehicles are being driven at higher speed.

Of the fifty-nine vehicle accidents reported, thirty-six occurred when fire engines were responding to emergency incidents. The majority occurred when manoeuvring vehicles in narrow spaces at low speed, particularly in some of the narrower domestic streets where there are often vehicles parked on both

sides of the road. Accident reduction focus has now transitioned to lower speed manoeuvring improvements.

An indication of vehicle accident types can be in figure 6.

Figure 6 (vehicle accident category)



The Service investigates all vehicle accident reports with a view to preventing a recurrence, while it also continues to invest in driver training and assessment to improve driver skills.

The Service has refined a video to train the banksperson who helps guide the driver when manoeuvring in tight spaces.

Vehicle technicians ensured that Service vehicles are maintained and meet all the relevant road safety requirements and drivers carry out a pre-use check before driving to ensure there are no problems that may affect a vehicles operational performance.

10. Claims and complaints

In the last year the number of personal insurance claims made against the Service has remained low at two, one injury was sustained at a bungalow fire in Runcorn where the employee suffered burns to one hand, and the second was a cut to the hand during boat training.

The Service continues to contest any claims, if on the balance of probabilities its duty of care has not been breached.

11. Corporate Governance

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

12. Risk management

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

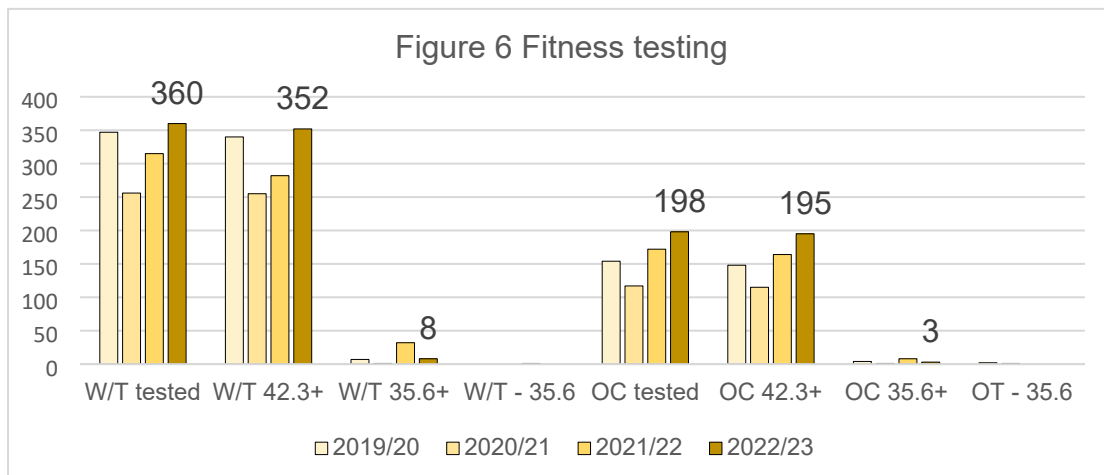
The H&S department has an overview of the practices of contractors working on Service premises and is involved in the refurbishment projects to ensure a consistent approach.

The Service has continued to implement guidance issued by NFCC regarding firefighter fitness. Currently two fitness advisors are fulfilling the role via job share arrangements. The fitness advisor that was on maternity leave has returned requesting a shorter working week, which was accepted by the Service.

Fitness testing schedules and employee pass rates have returned to back to pre-pandemic levels, after a short period of reduction, and future fitness programmes will continue to drive continual improvement.

Figure 6 shows the results for fitness testing during the year and, the increase in the number of tests conducted is evident.

It may be seen from the data that no employees failed to meet the minimum fitness standard.



(W/T Whole time & OC On call)

(42.3% VO2 MAX is the fitness requirement)

13. Training

Training was a key element of the organisation's strategy for maintaining and improving the H&S culture in the Service. It enables managers to identify and

meet the H&S responsibilities for their area, while encouraging staff to be aware of their personal responsibilities and for the impact of their actions on others.

As well as ensuring all basic and refresher training was provided according to the programme, the Operational Training Group (OTG) has developed new training modules to reflect the nature of incidents staff may have to attend and the Group has reviewed and responded to training advice issued by the NFCC.

The Service has recommenced the IOSH Managing Safely training courses that were suspended during the pandemic be reinstated and, has formalised the arrangements for providing refresher training for managers periodically.

14. Consultation

The Service H&S Committee meets quarterly and is the main mechanism for consulting representative bodies and staff on matters relating to their H&S; during the reporting year these meetings were held in person at Sadler Road. The meeting was the mechanism for consulting staff on new and revised policies. The meeting also enables representative bodies to raise any concerns that they have about the H&S of their members.

The minutes from these meetings are published on the Service's intranet with hard copies displayed on H&S notice boards.

15. Health and Wellbeing

The annual programme of health and wellbeing (H&W) campaigns is now planned in a H&W sub-group that includes members of Occupational Health and Human Resources to ensure the most efficient approach.

Last year this group identified a trend towards an increase in the body mass index (BMI) of firefighters attending in-service medicals which was accompanied by an increase in the number of people struggling to meet the fitness standard, this trend has now been reversed by the formation of a working group to look at developing a holistic approach to fitness that includes nutrition advice and mental health support alongside a physical training regime.

The campaigns this year have continued and included mental health awareness campaigns led by the Mental Health and Wellbeing Advisor; these are the subject of a separate report on Mental Health submitted to the Authority.

16. Conclusion

The Service has continued to achieve its aim of a continual improvement in health, safety and wellbeing performance as set out in its health and safety policy.

This improvement has been achieved due to a combination of the investment of time and money by the Service Leadership Team, a continuing improvement in the health and safety culture of both managers and employees and the

cooperation of all employees including the participation of the representative bodies.

The Service has successfully discharged its legal duties for Health and Safety on behalf of the Fire Authority.

CONTACT: KIRSTY JENNINGS, GOVERNANCE OFFICER
TEL [01606] 868814
BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE