

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 14 February 2024

Subject: Attendance at “Special Service” Incidents

Report by: The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

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For: Discussion

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) with an update on the number and type of non-fire (Special Service) incidents that are attended by Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) and to provide a breakdown of the impact of the incidents attended.
2. The report also provides details in relation to Leicestershire Police’s “Most Appropriate Agency” initiative, which may impact on call demand placed upon LFRS.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that the CFA notes the update and acknowledges the Most Appropriate Agency Initiative being deployed by Leicestershire Police.

Executive Summary

4. The Fire and Rescue Service attends a broad range of calls for emergency assistance. Incidents that don’t involve fires are referred to as “Special Service” calls. Examples of Special Service incidents are listed in paragraph 8 below.
5. In more recent years the number and types of these calls has increased. This is for many reasons but mainly due to supporting other agencies or attending incidents on their behalf.
6. This is having an impact on the welfare of FRS employees, particularly due to the nature of some incidents being attended. LFRS is managing this through an increased internal welfare provision for staff.
7. Leicestershire Police has introduced a Most Appropriate Agency initiative to manage its workload and capacity. This is likely to impact on the number of calls to and the workload of the Service, particularly for incidents where it doesn’t have a statutory duty to attend. Although to date this has not been problematic, the situation will be monitored and managed accordingly if it presents itself as an issue.

Special Service Calls

8. Fire and Rescue Services are called to many different types of incidents which can be incredibly wide and varied in nature. These incidents are generally categorised into four main areas:
 - a. Primary Fires – Fires involving property with a value, such as houses, factories, cars etc.
 - b. Secondary Fires – Fires involving items with no insurable value, such as rubbish, trees, grass etc.
 - c. False Alarms – Either through an automatic fire alarm system or a person.
 - d. Special Services – encompassing everything else, such as Road Traffic Collisions (RTC's), floodings, water rescue, effecting entry to properties and hazardous material incidents.
9. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (FRSA 2004) is the primary legislation that set out the statutory duties of the CFA and subsequently Fire and Rescue Services. This legislates two specific duties for attending incidents;
 - “A fire and rescue authority must make provision for the purpose of (a) extinguishing fires in its area and, (b) protecting life and property in the event of fires in its area” (section 7(1) FRSA 2004) and,
 - “A fire and rescue authority must make provision for the purpose of (a) rescuing people in the event of road traffic accidents in its area, and (b) protecting people from serious harm, to the extent that it considers it reasonable to so, in the event of road traffic accidents in its area.” (, section 8(1)FRSA 2004).
10. The FRSA 2004 provides a power (but not a duty) to respond to other eventualities if the authority considers it appropriate (section 11(1) and(2)
 - (1)A fire and rescue authority may take any action it considers appropriate (a)in response to an event or situation of a kind mentioned in subsection (2); (b)for the purpose of enabling action to be taken in response to such an event or situation.
 - (2) The event or situation is one that causes or is likely to cause (a)one or more individuals to die, be injured or become ill; (b)harm to the environment (including the life and health of plants and animals).
11. Except for Road Traffic Collisions all other special services fall under s.11 FRSA (above) so are not statutory duties but undertaken with the view of reducing harm from incidents to the local community and environment.
12. In the last five years, the number of Special Service incidents has increased. A significant contributory factor in this was a national trial of approximately half of the UK Fire and Rescue Services (including Leicestershire) responding to medical incidents as first responders. This also encompassed responding to

people who had fallen in the home. The national trial concluded prior to the Covid-19 pandemic but no conclusion has been determined from this.

13. In collaboration with partner services (most notably the Police and East Midlands Ambulance Services), LFRS agreed to undertake effecting entry to buildings when there is a concern for welfare. This was agreed to alleviate the workload on the Police Service and to reduce the wait time for the Ambulance Service in gaining entry to buildings.
14. Undertaking this work has resulted in Fire Service staff being exposed to more occurrences of death and the impacts to family members who are also commonly at the scene. This has had a welfare impact on LFRS staff, and the Service has invested in its supporting arrangements to assist them. This is multilayered and bespoke to individual needs and circumstances, but includes:
 - Informal discussions with peers
 - Discussions with line managers
 - Trauma Incident risk Management (TRiM) – trained individuals, who can help and guide staff to more specialist support.
 - Occupational Health team – including trained Doctors, Nurses, and specialists.
 - AMICA – this is an external counselling Service provided and funded by the FRS but outside of any span of control for confidentiality and impartial advice and support outside of any management chain.
 - The Firefighter's Charity offers independent specialist advice and support.
15. If more specialist support is needed this can be accessed through the Occupational Health team but also an individual's GP and the NHS. Table 1 below shows the number of special service incidents attended in the last 12 and 24 month periods.

Table 1

	22/1/23 - 22/1/24 12 months	22/1/22 - 11/1/24 24 months
Assist other agencies (such as supporting with bariatric patients and extrications, screening off sensitive scenes, washing down of scenes)	761	1577
RTC (This is a statutory duty under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004)	795	1497
Effecting entry/exit	432	818
Medical incident - First Responder (encompassing co-responder and other medical incidents)	295	580
Flooding	258	461
Lift release	135	283
No action (not false alarm)	146	285
Animal assistance incidents	104	237
Removal of objects from people	109	187
Other rescue/release of people	92	186
Making safe (Not RTC)	72	135
Hazardous Materials incidents	68	140
Suicide/attempts	81	169
Removal of people from objects	56	121
Rescue or evacuation from water	73	94

16. In responding to this range of incidents, responders need appropriate training, equipment, and knowledge to be able to safely resolve the situation. For example, to safely respond to wide area floodings or fast flowing water flooding, crews need Personal Protective Equipment (fitted dry suits, helmets, boots, personal floatation devices) and then suitable rescue equipment (Throw lines, reaching equipment, inflatable rescue paths, un-powered sleds and then boats with engines). Purchase of this equipment is not currently funded through any government grant, but from the Service's budget.
17. This is especially relevant considering the likelihood of flooding is increasing (as identified within the Community Risk Management Plan) along with the need for more specialist teams. However, there is no statutory or legislative requirement on the Fire and Rescue Service to do this.

Most Appropriate Agency – Leicestershire Police

18. Leicestershire Police has been consulting with local partners for some time regarding its initiative called Most Appropriate Agency (MAA). This includes all aspects of the “Health” structures of the NHS, along with other category 1 responders (as described in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004).
19. The Police is concerned that its officer’s time and resources are being overly utilised at incidents and calls that they are not best placed to resolve. This is draining capacity for the Police Force to adequately meet its statutory requirements and has at times been reported negatively in the media. This is commonly reported as “mental health crisis” incidents in national media, but in fact covers a much broader range of incident types and involvement.
20. Leicestershire Police has stressed that under the MAA initiative it will continue to respond to all calls where there is a threat to life.
21. The MAA initiative seeks to ensure that the Police Force’s resources are available to deal with its statutory duties and incidents that it is best placed to resolve and seeks to shift other incident types back to other agencies under the MAA principles.
22. The impact of this is not yet known but there is a potential that “other” services or partners may not be able to cope with the MAA’s shift of demand. This may result in a gap or perceived gap from the community that may add more pressure or calls to service onto the Fire and Rescue Service. If this is not correctly monitored and managed, there is concern that it may quickly outstrip resources.
23. This potential has not currently become a reality and will continue to be monitored to ensure that LFRS continues to support the community as best as possible, whilst not becoming overrun by non-statutory duties that are best performed by other agencies.

Report Implications/Impact

24. Legal (including crime and disorder)

The main legal implications are set out above. In addition, s12 of the FRSA 2004 enables the LFRS to provide services of any of their employees or any equipment to any person for any purpose that appears to the authority to be appropriate, including outside of the CFA’s area.

S.44 of the FRSA 2004 provides authorised employees with the power to do anything they reasonably believe to be necessary if they reasonably believe an emergency to have occurred, for the purpose of discharging any function conferred on the fire and rescue authority in relation to the emergency. This includes a power to enter premises by force if necessary, to move or break into a vehicle, deal with traffic and restrict access to premises.

As well as the statutory duties and powers referred to arising from the FRSA 2004, LFRS is categorised as a 'First Responder' under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 which confers a duty to assess and plan for the risk of an emergency.

The arrangements for the special services incidents will be subject to a governance arrangement under the MAA.

Although the activities referred to in this report are within the scope of the powers and duties of the LFRS, the LFRS insurers have been notified of the arrangements to ensure transparency around insured activities.

In the event of spate conditions and/or major incident the decision may be taken by the Chief or Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officers to cease any non-statutory functions to ensure that resources are appropriately focused to discharge functions appropriately.

The CFA has a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the Health Safety and Welfare at work of all its employees and to conduct its business in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that its employees are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

25. Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)

The costs associated with Flooding/water Rescue uplift as proposed in the CRMP is included within the 2024/25 budget setting. Any further increase would need to be determined.

26. Risk (including corporate and operational, health and safety and any impact on the continuity of service delivery)

There is a risk that the MAA initiative may shift a high workload on to the Service that could drain all capacity and mean that attendance times for statutory duties are negatively impacted.

The impact of increased activity on the Fire and Rescue Service under MMA, may see an increase not only in demand, but also staff exposure to traumatic incidents. The CFA have previously been advised of the range of welfare provisions we have in place to mitigate and minimise the impact of this.

27. Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders (including the Equality Impact Assessment)

The CFA has a duty under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the Health Safety and Welfare at work of all its employees (ii) to conduct its business in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons not in its employment who may be affected directly are not thereby exposed to risks to their health and safety.

28. Environmental

No Environmental impact

29. Impact upon Our Plan Objective – Please detail from “Our Plan”

Update paper – no current impact.

Background Papers

Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

[Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

Civil Contingencies Act 2004

[Civil Contingencies Act 2004 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

Fire and Rescue National Framework 2018

[\[Title\] \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Officers to Contact

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