

Highlight Report



Name and Role	Joanne Hellen Senior Health and Safety Advisor
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Period covered:

Date from:	01/01/2024	Date to:	31/03/2024
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Highlights / achievements this period

Departmental Work - Prevention, Protection and Response, Develop and broaden the roles and range of activities undertaken by the Service, make best use of our resources, Collaborate with our partners.

Issued Safety Flashes:

Safety Flash 32: Prohibited use of Firefighting Activities from Rear of Off-road Vehicles, published 16-Jan'24

In conjunction with the Orsett ladder Serious Accident Investigation Board (SAIB), Safety Flash 32 was issued as part of a review of working at height on specialist appliances. It was identified that crews may be working outside of safe systems of work by operating hose reel firefighting equipment from the 6 x 6 Off Road Vehicle whilst in motion. Staff were reminded that under no circumstances should firefighting activities be allowed to take place from the rear load space of the vehicle.

Safety Flash 33: Kidnapped Posters, published 13-Feb'24

The department were informed of incidents where West Midlands Fire Service personnel had been injured when removing Kidnapped posters which had razor blades hidden behind them. Safety Flash 33 was issued to inform personnel of the danger of removing these posters and requested for personnel not to attempt to remove them.

Ongoing Significant/Serious Accident Investigation Boards:

INC-000134 SAIB Orsett Bulk Foam Module Ladder - Fall from height when ascending the access ladder to carry out inventory checks on the Bulk Foam Module (BFM), 14-May'23.

Following the accident above, an immediate SAIB was initiated and the access ladder from all three BFM's were impounded as an immediate control measure.

The board has met on 6 occasions since the accident with the most recent meeting in Q4 taking place 07-Mar'24. A total of 19 recommendations have been identified by the board to date, 2 of which were immediate control measures, 9 short term and 8 long term.

The majority of the recommendations have been closed with 5 identified as outstanding due to further evidence being required. An action plan has been initiated to track these recommendations which will be managed by the Health, Safety and Welfare Strategic Group (HSWSG) alongside their quarterly meetings. The SAIB closure meeting is taking place 08-May'24.

INC-000092 SAIB Orsett Bay Appliance Cab Fire, 13-Jul'23

A fire investigation was conducted following the Orsett Bay Fire which was concluded to have been caused by a failure of the spare thermal imaging camera lithium-ion battery that was in the charging unit in the appliance cab. A SAIB was initiated with a board set up to review the report and progress recommendations put forward by the investigators. The board has identified 4 recommendations of which 2 were closed in Q3.

The open recommendations are surrounding ongoing fire alarm upgrades at 3 stations following a review of the requirements against the system we have in place. The other is regarding fire risk assessment training for those responsible for carrying out the reviews. Both recommendations will require evidence of how the work will be undertaken moving forward to finalise the investigation and dismiss the board.

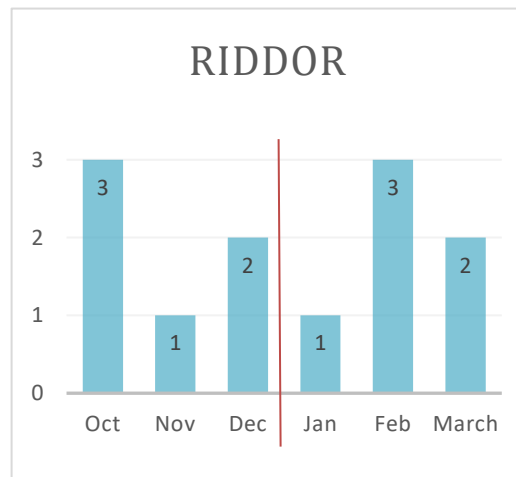
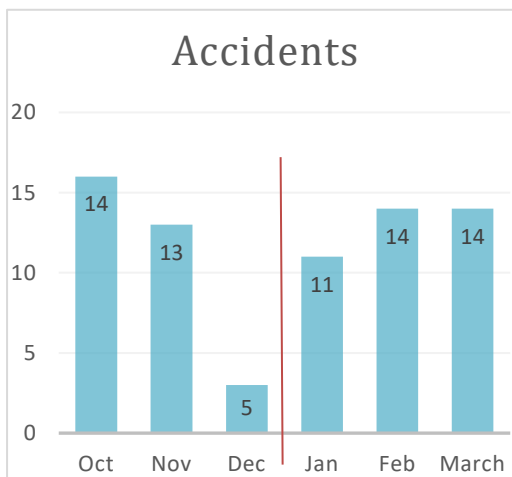
INC-000338 SAIB Chelmsford Training Centre - BA Training finger injury, 08-Aug'23

Following the finger injury during BA training above a SAIB was held to review BA training closed door procedures to prevent the incident from reoccurring. The board identified 11 recommendations, which have been closed with the action plan awaiting sign off for closure of the SAIB in May'24.

Safety Event Figures Q4 2023/24 January, February, March and Q3 2023/24 October, November, December - Prevention, Protection and Response, promote a positive culture in the workplace, Be transparent, open, and accessible.

The graphs below show Q4 safety event data in comparison with Q3.

Accidents and RIDDOR



Accidents/Ill Health – There were 39 accident/ill health reports submitted in Q4 against 32 in the Q3. Local accident investigations have taken place to ensure learning opportunities are captured to mitigate the risk of similar events reoccurring. Below is a breakdown of the Q4 reports by month.

January 2024

Of the 11 accident/ill health reports submitted in January, 4 related to operational incidents: 1 x back strain, 1 x knee pain, 1 x ringing in ears from appliance sirens and 1 x pain in back caused by a dip in the road when proceeding to incident.

3 reports related to physical activity on station: 1 x grazed shin as a result of IP slipping off box during box jumps, 1 x loss of consciousness in station gym and 1 x pulled muscle practicing for the Chester Walk Test.

2 were reports during drills: 1 x rolled ankle tripping over hose reel and 1 x aggravation of previous knee injury during ladder drills.

The other 2 reports were 1 x pain in neck & back while undertaking inventory checks and 1 x Member of Public bumped head on rescue pump door on station during a Beavers visit.

February 2024

Of the 14 accident/ill health reports in February, 4 related to Operational incidents: 2 x reports of scalded knees whilst Firefighting from ground level, 1 x heat exhaustion and 1 x casualty's blood in FFs mouth when assisting persons trapped at an RTC.

2 reports related to station drills: 1 x knee/shoulder pain aggravating previous injury during drills, 1 x turned ankle twisting on hose during drills.

Other reports included 1 x fall from rubble pile (approx. 3.5ft) during an exercise causing soreness in shoulder/back, 1 x knee popped causing pain during BA session, 1 x knee pain practicing for Fitech on station, 1 x IP banged head on shower door handle resulting in cut to eyebrow, 1 x historic injury report of loss of hearing, 1 x twisted ankle slipping on water at Service Training Centre (STC), 1 x twisted back placing hose on appliance and 1x report of hand pain due to aggravation previous injury at STC.

March 2024

Of the 14 accident/ill health reports submitted in March, 7 related to Operational Incidents: 1 x caught hand between appliance door and fire control panel, 1 x twinge in leg as a result of slipping on step getting into rear of cab, 1 x FF tripped on hose reel and shut their hand in the appliance door, 1 x heat exhaustion whilst wearing BA, 1 x object in eye at operational incident, 1 x hose delivery sheered from appliance and struck IP and 1 report of a pulled back lifting a casualty down stairs.

4 reports related to routine activities: 1 x pulled muscle in arm/shoulder when lifting a deflated airbag out of its stowage box during routine testing, 1 x IP tripped over dragon lamp during station drills, 1 x Halligan bar fell from locker and hit shin leaving cut and swelling during locker checks and 1 x spasm in back dismounting appliance following driver checks.

3 reports were during operational training: 1 x FF taken in water when block dragged them under at Lee Valley and 2 reports of hot hands at a rescue demo exercise at Wethersfield Training Centre (WTC).

RIDDOR – There were 6 RIDDORs reported in Q4 of which 5 were over 7-day absences and there was 1 specified injury. A breakdown by month is as follows:

January

There was 1 RIDDOR submitted to the HSE in January which was a specified injury where a member of staff lost consciousness when working in the station gym.

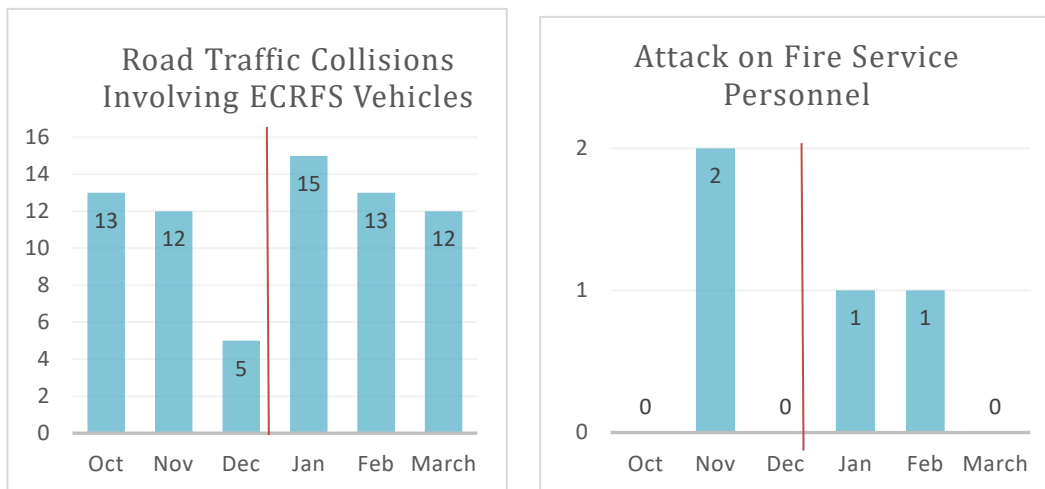
February

There were 3 RIDDOR reports submitted in February which were all over 7-day injuries. 2 reports were lifting and handling injuries: 1 report of knee pain caused when kneeling down to lift a drill dummy during a BA session at the end of January, the other due to pain caused aggravating a previous non service injury during an on call training course at STC.

March

2 RIDDOR over 7-day injuries were submitted in March although one of these was a late report of an incident in October 2023 where a FF sustained a shoulder injury at Lee Valley. The other report was of a FF suffering a pulled ligament when practicing for the Chester Walk Test.

Road Traffic Collisions and Attacks on Fire Service Personnel (FSP)



Road Traffic Collisions/Vehicle Damage – There were 41 RTC incidents reported during Q4, an increase of 10 from Q3.

Our highest category of RTC/Vehicle damage reports related to forwards operational vehicle movements which accounts for 41% of reports submitted in Q4. This is a continual trend with the most common journey purpose relating to travelling on route to operational incidents.

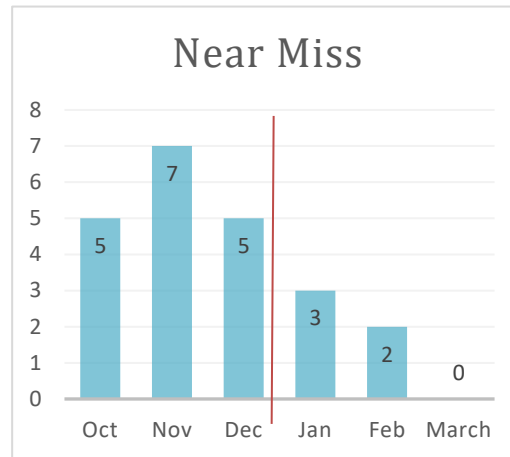
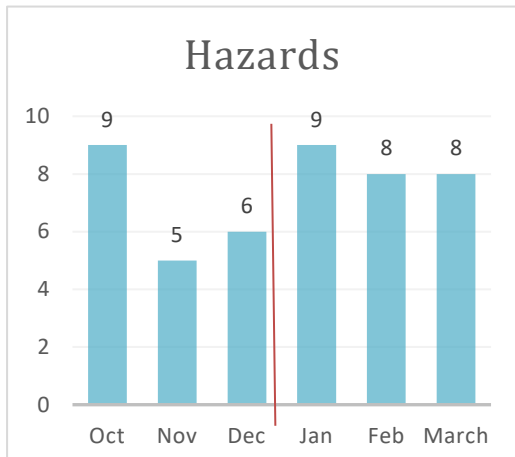
The Assure vehicle incident module has been reconfigured to allow for more accurate reporting and data scrutiny to identify trends sooner for action to be taken. The data will feed into the Occupational Road Risk Group for members to discuss control measures to mitigate risk of reoccurrence.

Attacks on FSP – There were 2 reported attacks on Fire Service personnel during Q4 compared with 2 in the previous quarter.

The first attack was reported in January and was following a home safety visit where a member of staff received a threatening message written on a business card placed on the driver's window of the Fire Service vehicle. The member of staff proceeded on their journey and was met with a van approaching at speed, stopping, and blocking them in at the junction whilst staring at the individual before leaving to continue their journey.

The other attack was reported in February and involved a Cadet verbally abusing other cadets and the instructor on station.

Hazards and Near Misses



Hazards – 25 hazards were reported during Q4 compared with 20 hazards in the previous quarter. We encourage all hazards to be reported to ensure measures are taken to avoid them developing into accidents. Below is a breakdown of the reports received this quarter and brief details of remedial action taken.

Premises:

- Running fuel/oil spill across USAR yard - Container was isolated/removed and spill was cleaned up with use of detergent. Service Workshops were informed.
- Mouse seen running under kitchen appliances & units - The kitchen was taken off the run and pest control arranged to visit. The kitchen is now back on the run and no further reports have been received of a similar nature from the station.
- Several of the panels of the canopy/covered wash area at the rear of the station had become loose with screws missing causing it to hang down slightly - The area was cordoned off and appliances were told to use the bay area via the front doors only until the problem is rectified.
- Pigeons living and nesting in the towers - Towers were taken off the run and crews were made aware. Property services notified to provide a solution.
- Large amount of furniture and boxes obstructing a fire exit route and exit - Raised with property to arrange removal of items.
- Flickering lights in the upstairs main office in KP - Discussed with Property Services who confirmed the lighting contractor had been arranged under our 24hr call out contract. H&S requested DSE assessments to be complete via the intranet & the Shout to capture lighting issues in the office. Contractors have since resolved the issue.
- Alert lighting not working in ground floor Crew Manager dorm, mess area, hallway and thinking room - Property were informed and contractors visited to resolve the problem. Due to outdated equipment, they were not familiar with the system and a review of the lighting is required.
- Drill yard deteriorating with sections of concrete missing - Raised with Property and recorded on the FB153.
- Use of station yard as a walk through – Station Manager spoke to homeowner using the yard and informed Property Services.

PPE (Personal Protective Equipment):

- Member of staff without adequate PPE, hi vis etc. when changing tyre on service vehicle in a layby on the A12 - Work is being undertaken as part of the Occupational Road Risk Group originally to discuss first aid kits but full emergency kits have since been identified as a requirement. Technical services have confirmed that Fleet would hold the budget for

this. Work is ongoing to identify what should be included in the kit, training requirements, communications and necessary risk assessment updates.

- Inadequate PPE at domestic fire - Crews were briefed on the situation and additional resources were made up.

Equipment:

- Battery on light portable pump overheating whilst on charge - LPP was removed from the machine and the battery disconnected for testing at Workshops.
- New HRP do not have sun visors on side windows - Fleet informed for future procurement of new vehicles.
- Body fluids left on casualty car bag when sent back to SWS - Wearing appropriate PPE, both items were removed and placed in a hazardous waste bag, sealed, and disposed of in the medical waste bin at Stores. The inside of the bag was wiped with alcohol wipes before replenishment.
- Tray locking mechanism not working with a possibility of the tray opening whilst driving - The tray was cleared of all equipment and secured in closed position.
- BA set missing from position in rear of cab, exposing hazardous plastic and metal - Crew informed not to use position until a spare BA set is available.
- Drone equipment post incident in common clean areas - A new cleaning procedure is in place and drones will be banned from being on mess tables. BA wipes have been issued to drone locations, van and charging station in USAR building.
- Drone equipment and LIPO batteries charging with no firefighting blankets or extinguishers available - Personnel were reminded of safe charging practices and to not leave batteries unattended or charge overnight.
- 5 reports of mobilising system issues – Raised with Service Control who are aware of ongoing issues.

Routine Activities:

- Community Wellbeing Officers fitting smoke alarm base plate caused small crack to ceiling plaster when using self-tapping screw - Property informed to discuss options for making good/compensation.
- Service Control crewing inadequate - Raised with Service Control. Work is ongoing surrounding staffing issues and the Control Business Continuity Plan.

Near Misses - 5 near misses were reported during Q4, against 17 in the previous quarter. Local accident investigations have taken place to ensure learning opportunities are captured to mitigate the risk of similar events reoccurring. Below is a breakdown of the reports received in the quarter:

Equipment:

- Unable to deploy BA set from appliance as the seat belt was snagged within the cylinder strap locking mechanism - Workshops informed and snagging seatbelt replaced.
- FFs in a BA exercise connected via personal line when line snapped - The BA set was impounded and sent to Workshops for investigation which found the cause to be from general use where the plastic housing was rubbing on the same area of the line. It was advised for the line to be inspected prior to any exercise due to the high volume of use.

Premises:

- Outside tyre contractor attended station without informing the Watch on duty - The contractor had informed an Officer from another station of their attendance so were asked to inform the driver or officer in charge in future and to follow the correct signing in procedures.

- Youths unauthorised access to the roof of the fire station - Youths were advised to come down from the roof by an off-duty member of staff. No further incidents have been reported.
- 4ft wall located at the rear of the station building had blown/ fallen over in the wind - Reported to Property Services.

Key Risks (problems and opportunities predicted, not occurring)	Mitigating actions – how prevent a problem or develop an opportunity

Key issues (problems occurring now – needing action)	Actions required e.g., decisions needed