

report

meeting	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY	
	COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE	
date	20 July 2007	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

REPORT ON ACCIDENTAL DWELLING FIRES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members on the approach of Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service in reducing accidental dwelling fires and deaths and injuries as a result of accidental dwelling fires including performance for the period 2006/07.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A key element of the Service' Risk Reduction Strategy is home safety. The Service is a partner in both Nottinghamshire County Council's and Nottingham City Council's Local Area Agreements (LAAs), especially the target to reduce avoidable injuries in children and young people 0-15 years old, and older people 65 years and older.
- 2.2 The Service while undertaking this work must also focus on fire safety in the home as this is one of the key targets Government measures the Service's performance. The Fire Public Service Agreement covers fire and rescue authorities in England and aims to reduce the number of fire deaths in the home by 20% averaged over the eleven year period to 31st March 2010 with a floor target of no fire and rescue authority having a fatality rate more than 1.25 times the national average by 2010. This target is measured in conjunction with Best Value Performance Indicators which is detailed in this report.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 The avoidable injury agenda covers a wide range of issues from burns and scalds to poisoning in children and young people, to slips, trips and falls in the elderly. It does need to be noted that these causes are not mutually exclusive to each group.
- 3.2 The Service makes a significant contribution to reducing injury and tackling these issues through the RiskWatch programme, targeted at primary school children, the Caring for Carers programme which focuses on older people's risks in the home, and Home Safety Checks, which focus on all age groups through the multi-issue assessment of the home by firefighters.
- 3.3 As part of Nottingham City Council LAA, the Service has entered into a partnership with the City Primary Care Trust to commission two Avoidable Injury Outreach Workers. One post will focus on Children & Young People while the other will target Older People's injuries. These two posts will work closely with the Service and will enhance the Service's contribution to reducing hospital admissions due to avoidable injuries.

3.4 The Service further supports the delivery of the avoidable injury targets through the supply of a wide range of safety equipment, including deep fat fryers, child safety equipment and smoke alarms. This partnership approach also assists the Service in delivering Fire & Rescue Service specific targets related to home safety.

3.5 The Service has to report on three dwelling related Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) :

- BVPI 142ii Accidental Dwelling Fire
- BVPI 143i Fatalities
- BVPI 143ii Casualties

3.6 Accidental Dwelling Fires

During 2006-2007 the Service attended 666 accidental dwelling fires, this was a decrease of 5.3% on the previous year's performance and continues an ongoing trend of decreasing incidents over the six years.

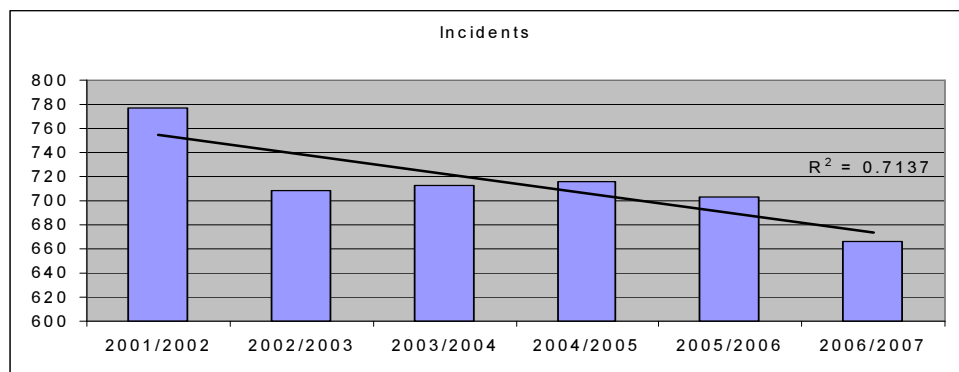


Figure 1 Accidental Dwelling Fires 01/02 – 06/07

3.7 Fatalities in Accidental Dwelling Fires

3.7.1 During 2006-07 there were six fatalities as a result of accidental dwelling fires; this is unchanged from the previous year. A break down of the fatalities shows that 83% were males, 50% were over 60-years old and smoking (83%) was the main primary cause of ignition.

3.7.2 When dealing with such small numbers, it is extremely difficult to make meaningful year on year comparisons and a more reliable indicator is the trend over a number of years. Figure 2 indicates that over the past six years the trend is stable.

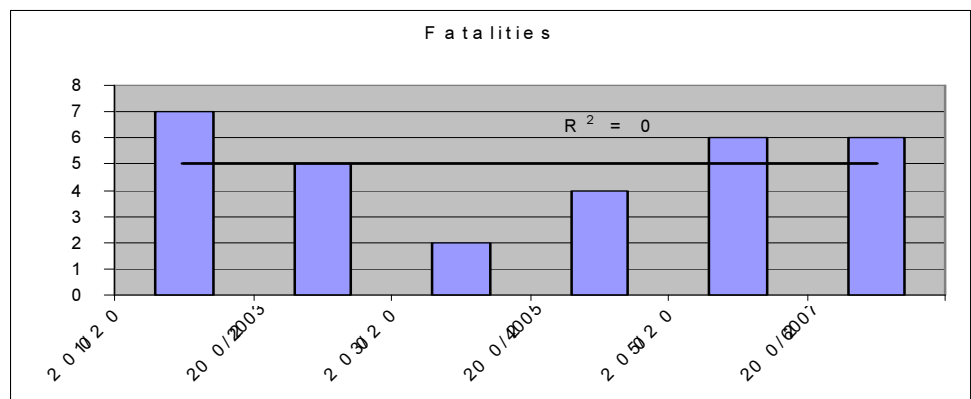
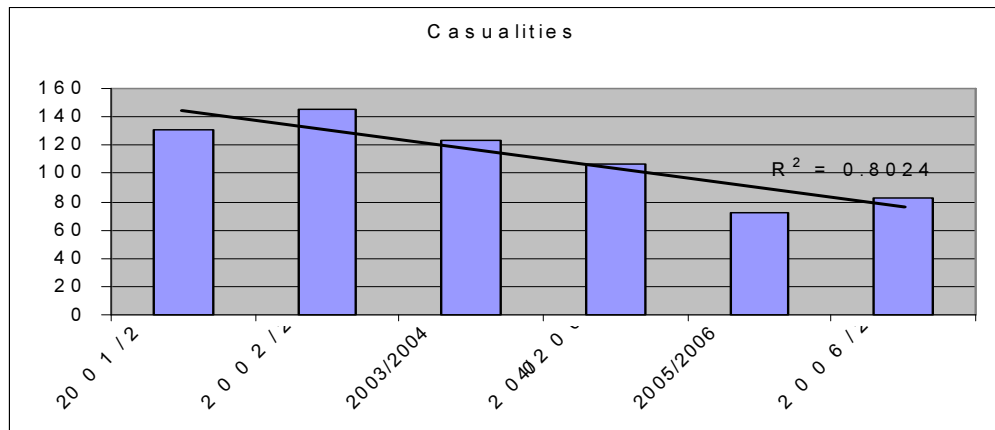


Figure 2 Fatalities 01/02 – 06/07

3.7 Casualties from Accidental Dwelling Fires

During 2006 -07 83 people needing medical treatment following accidental dwelling fires compared with the previous year's figure of 72 (15.2% increase). Although this increase is concerning and needs to be addressed it is encouraging to note that this is the second lowest casualty figure over the past 16-years. The longer term trend continues to show an ongoing reduction in the number of casualties with a reduction of 43% over the past 5-years.



3.8 Risk Reduction Activities Aimed at Further Improving the Service's Performance

- 3.8.1 The Service undertakes a number of initiatives aimed at reducing accidental dwelling fires and the resultant fatalities and casualties, these include Home Safety Checks, Risk Watch and the Caring for Carers programme which are detailed earlier in the report. Crews also ensure that following any dwelling fire homes close to the property involved in the fire are visited within 24 hours and offered a Home Safety Check, this initiative is known as Hot Spotting.
- 3.8.2 The Service has also been working with partners in specific areas of concern highlighted by the detailed analysis undertaken by the Arson Reduction Team following fire investigations of fatal fires.
- 3.8.3 Smoking materials and matches account for the majority of causes of fatal fires. The Service has been working county-wide with the Smoke Free Nottinghamshire Tobacco Control Alliance and at a regional level with the Regional Tobacco Task Group. A key object of the Service's involvement is to support the health agenda of reducing smoking but also to promote the use of reduced ignition propensity (RIP) cigarettes. The tobacco companies have had the technology to produce self extinguishing or RIP cigarettes for at least 15 years, yet they choose not to produce these for the UK market.
- 3.8.4 There is an established standard for RIP cigarettes which is in place in a number of US States and in Canada. This standard can reduce the risk of fires by up to two thirds. The standards were first introduced in New York in June 2004, and the statistics already show a significant fall in the number of fires and fire deaths.

- 3.8.5 The Service is currently working in partnership with the Police and Nottinghamshire County Council to expand the role of Neighbourhood Watch volunteers into a wider safety role. Members of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme are well placed in communities to help the Service identify vulnerable individuals. The volunteers are undergoing training with the Service so that they can identify key risk factors that signpost someone as being vulnerable. The volunteers can then refer the person concerned via a newly joint funded Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator to local crews who can then carry out a Home Safety Check and put in place appropriate safety measures. This initiative assists the Service in ensuring that more rural communities are able to access the Service's safety initiatives and that any interventions are intelligence led.
- 3.8.6 The two Local Area Agreements (LAA) covering the Service area contain an Avoidable Injury target that focuses on the two most vulnerable groups where accidental dwelling fires are concerned; older people and families with children. The LAA target enables the Service to work with Social Service, Health, Housing and Voluntary colleagues in a joined up way focusing on a variety of issues including slip trips and falls in older people groups, poisoning and other home safety issues in children as well as fire safety in both groups.
- 3.8.7 Finally the Service is a key partner in the roll out of the First Contact scheme which has been designed to enable colleagues from a vast array of organisations to refer vulnerable people to one focal point and from there the relevant lead organisation can ensure that the appropriate service is delivered. In the Service's case this will result in colleagues from other organisations recognising that a home does not have a smoke alarm or there are fire hazards and a referral being made via the First Contact point to local crews who can then ensure a priority Home Safety Check is carried out.
- 3.8.8 Further reports contained in the Community Safety Committee agenda details measures that are being developed to improve the intelligence led approach of the Service and as a result help reduce deaths and injuries from accidental dwelling fire and the fires themselves.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

All the initiatives detailed within this report are contained within the 2007/08 budget and as such do not pose any further financial burden to the Fire & Rescue Authority.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

There are no personal implications contained in the report.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

There are no direct implications for equalities related to this specific report as each initiative is assessed individually.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

All of the above ensures that the Authority meets its aspirations as laid out in the Community Safety Plan. Failure to undertake these initiatives and reduce deaths from accidental dwelling fires in line with Government targets could lead to potential intervention.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members continue to support Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service in its Community Safety initiatives and agree to receive future reports on progress.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION

None.

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