



Chief fire officer, Rob Barber welcome

Welcome to our latest community newsletter, we start this edition by showcasing two new vehicles, our Aerial Ladder Platforms which will be hitting the streets in the February. We have just two of these vehicles in the county and although they are based at Burton and Longton they can be sent to incidents all over the county. They are a massive investment for us but are expected to last over 20 years. Another addition to support us is the introduction of drones which can help us identify the best ways to tackle fires, there's more about these on page 3.

There's an update on our now award-winning falls initiative that we first shared with you in our last edition. This project has gone from strength to strength and the likelihood is that if you or someone you know has had a fall in the past year, that required support in getting them back on their feet without hospital treatment, then it will probably have been one of our teams that have come out. Hot off the press news is that we'll be extending our work with health partners to now include a Home From Hospital service. This will involve a dedicated team of fire employees supporting those who are returning home following a stay in hospital to settle and check they have everything they need to maintain a safe and independent lifestyle. There will be more on this in our next edition once the project is up and running.

Finally just a thank you to all those who contributed to our recent consultation on our extended Safety Plan, I'm delighted to announce that our updated version of our plan is now available to view on our website.

Investment in two state-of-the-art vehicles

We have invested in two new state-of-the-art aerial ladder platform (ALP) vehicles, worth a total of £1.3 million, to help us to keep firefighters safe and tackle difficult to reach fires.

The ALPs, which will be based at Longton and Burton, will be used from February next year and are designed to apply water to fires from above and will also help with rescues from taller buildings and difficult to reach locations and provide observation platforms.

The new ALP's will replace the existing vehicles which have been used by the service for more than 20 years.

They have been built by Angloco, a specialist firefighting vehicle manufacture, to our specification which firefighters have had an input into. They will extend to 32m and the cages can accommodate wheelchairs and five firefighters at any one time, rather than three on our previous vehicles.

Firefighters have been training with the new vehicles since their arrival including on taller buildings.

Chief Fire Officer, Rob Barber, said: "I am delighted that we have invested in this important equipment, which is part of the programme to update the service's fleet with vehicles incorporating the latest technology.

"To maintain a modern fire and rescue service, it is important that we provide fit-for-purpose, 21st century operational equipment to support our firefighters in the delivery of excellent services to the communities we serve."



Trial to Improve Response to Incidents Extended

A trial to improve our availability and response times to emergency incidents across the county has been extended until the end of 2024. This is to ensure further training and data gathering can take place, along with full consultation with the public.

The new approach involves sending an extra crew of three on-call firefighters (workers that respond to emergency incidents from their home or workplace) to incidents, instead of only mobilising a crew of four on-call firefighters. This team of three can attend smaller incidents such as a bin fire or they can attend larger incidents providing they are supported by other crews.

The pilot has been introduced in order to maximise the use of the personnel available to crew the appliances, in order to ensure a timely response to incidents throughout the county. The service will always strive to have at least four firefighters on a fire engine, however having a minimum of three firefighters available to respond is an extra resource that can attend incidents quicker than the next nearest fully crewed appliance, which may be several miles away. We recognise that at some incidents they will not be able to fully resolve the incident by themselves but they can make important and life saving interventions in the time that the public would normally be waiting for a full crew to attend.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Glynn Luznyj said: "The stats speak for themselves, our on-call firefighters in teams of three have been able to attend 274 incidents in the past six months that they previously wouldn't have been sent to. We are now able to provide our communities with a quicker emergency response, particularly those in rural areas. We have heard a number of success stories from across the county of firefighting and rescue actions that crews of three have been able to do by making quicker interventions at emergencies.

"We will be consulting with the public on this new approach in the summer as part of our community risk management plan consultation."



Falls response team successes one year on from launch



One year on from the launch of our falls response service, we are delighted to share its successes.

Run in collaboration with the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board (SSOTICB) and NHS Urgent Care at Home Team, the scheme allows us to support some of the most vulnerable people in our communities at their time of need.

During its first year, the team has helped more than 700 residents following a fall. Overall, we have been able to assist more than 85% of patients without the need for further medical intervention. This shows how the service is mutually beneficial to patients and the ambulance service, since it reduces both demand for ambulances and potential hospital admissions caused by "long lies".

The team has had its accomplishments acknowledged twice this year: in July, we won the Organisational Award at the ALARM Risk Awards. Then in November, we were presented with the Prevention and Protection Award for Partnership Working during the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Conference.

Ian Read, Head of Prevent, Protect and Partnerships said: "For the service to win two national awards within its first year is a real testament to all those involved. I hope that these successes reassure the people of Staffordshire that their safety and wellbeing are at the forefront of everything we do."

Are your batteries SANTA safe?

We are using our Christmas campaign this year to issue a reminder about the serious risks posed by lithium-ion batteries. These batteries are used to power many electrical appliances, including e-bikes and e-scooters. Lithium-ion batteries can catch fire, or even explode, when they create more heat than they let out. This can be the result of a manufacturing defect or owner negligence.

That's why we are calling on all owners of e-bikes, e-scooters and other devices with a lithium-ion battery to be aware of **SANTA**:

Smoke, Aroma, Noise, Temperature, Appearance

Smoke - Is smoke coming out of your device or battery?

Aroma - Is there a strong or unusual smell coming from the battery?

Noise - Can you hear your battery hissing or cracking? Is your device making any other unusual sounds?

Temperature - Does your device or battery feel extremely hot to touch?

Appearance - Does the battery look swollen? Has it drastically changed shape?

If you notice any of the above, you must immediately:

- Turn off the device
- Unplug it from the power source
- Call the device manufacturer or retailer for further instructions.

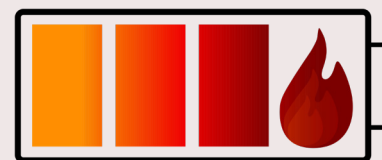
In the event of smoke or fire coming from your device, you must:

- Raise the alarm
- Vacate the building
- Call 999.

Prevention is obviously better than cure, so here are two key measures that you can take to minimise any potential risk:

- Only buy e-bikes, e-scooters, chargers and batteries from reputable retailers. It might cost you a little bit more, but your life is worth more than a few pounds saved on a fake charger.
- Check your battery regularly for any signs of damage. This should especially be done if the battery has been dropped or if you have crashed your e-bike or e-scooter. Even if you think there is a slight chance that your battery is damaged, you should not use or charge it; you must replace it immediately.

Buy Safe



Charge Safe

Eye-in-the-sky technology helps firefighters on the ground

We have welcomed eye-in-the-sky-technology to help crews tackle emergency incidents across the county.

Our firefighters now have access to two state-of-the-art drones to gather vital aerial intelligence by live-streaming imaging to colleagues on the ground. This capability alone makes them a valuable asset in improving safety for crews and the wider public.

They provide additional support by gathering information of the structural integrity of buildings, monitoring fire spread and confirming safe areas. Key features include a thermal imaging camera, night vision and zoom capability. They are based at fire stations in Hanley and Lichfield and represent an investment of more than £20,000.

Group Manager, Dave Steele said: "Drones are perfect for giving us real-time data of evolving scenes, such as this, and hard-to-reach emergencies.

"They can be mobilised to any incident but will be particularly useful for helping us to deal with large building fires, wildfires, waste fires, hazardous materials, water rescues, missing persons investigations and assisting our partner agencies.

"The use of such technology at large incidents can result in the prevention of escalation and earlier resolution, safeguarding our crews and the public, and leading to a smaller release of contaminants, such as smoke and debris, into the atmosphere."

Firefighters are training in how to use the drones with the aim of establishing a team of 12 pilots. Training involves online theory and an exam, plus a practical flight assessment giving a qualification of GVC (General Visual Certificate).



Performance information

This section provides the data in relation to our performance for the last six months in the local authority area.

All Attended Incidents	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sept 23	Oct 23	Total
South Staffordshire	93	97	68	84	60	48	450

These figures detail the total number of incidents firefighters attended, these incidents can vary but typically include business fires, house fires, outdoor fires, road traffic collisions and animal rescues.

Accidental Dwelling Fires	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sept 23	Oct 23	Total
South Staffordshire	1	2	1	2	2	3	11

These figures detail the number of accidental house fires firefighters attended. The most common cause of these incidents is cooking, however other common causes are electrical fires and cigarettes not fully put out.

Road Traffic Collisions	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sept 23	Oct 23	Total
South Staffordshire	18	15	11	12	7	5	68

These figures detail the number of road traffic collisions firefighters attended. Firefighters don't attend all road traffic collisions however of the ones they do they are either required to make the vehicles safe or at the most serious collisions they often have to cut casualties free from their vehicles using specialist cutting equipment.

Safe and Well Visits	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sept 23	Oct 23	Total
South Staffordshire	22	41	84	86	103	90	426

These figures detail the number of safe and well visits. A safe and well visit involves a member of staff going into the homes of the most vulnerable to talk to them about fire safety and put measures in place, such as smoke alarms, to improve their safety.

In an emergency always dial 999.

General enquires: **0300 330 1000** (freephone)

Safe and Well: **0800 0241 999**

For people who are deaf or hard of hearing text: **07528 983 101**

