

**MEETING: 15 DECEMBER 2008**

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**SUBJECT: FIREWORKS AND BONFIRE INCIDENTS FROM THE 1<sup>ST</sup>- 6<sup>TH</sup>  
NOVEMBER 2008****REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information relating to the level of operational activity and associated incidents that occurred across the November 2008 bonfire period.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 As Members will be readily aware, the November bonfire period is, traditionally, an extremely busy time for the Fire and Rescue Service and this year proved to be no exception. In anticipation of this, measures were taken to ensure that the Authority had the capability and resources to deal with the increase in calls to anti-social fires whilst also maintaining operational capacity to respond effectively to life threatening calls or major incidents.
- 2.2 During the period staffing levels were temporarily increased to provide additional capacity and arrangements established to deal with "spate" conditions to ensure the maintenance of a strategic reserve to attend life threatening incidents.
- 2.3 In addition, a number of intervention programmes were undertaken in the period leading up to 5<sup>th</sup> November aimed at reducing the number of fire incidents and associated injury risks. This included a high profile campaign entitled, "Fireworks and Bonfires Ruin Lives in a Flash". This was a partnership campaign with Northumbria Police, Local Authorities, Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service, North East Ambulance Service and the North East Strategic Health Authority.
- 2.4 The statistics presented in this report show that the work of the Authority, together with its partner agencies, across the bonfire period, has been successful in limiting the number of incidents. However, the period in question still remains one of the most resource intensive of the year and the rise in attacks on firefighters is also extremely disappointing and should be condemned. The full set of data relating to the period in question is set out below.

**3 INCIDENT DETAILS**

- 3.1 The number of calls received by the Tyne and Wear control room is shown in the table below. The decrease in both the number of calls received and the number of incidents attended, when compared to the same period last year, is approximately 39% and 32% respectively. Further incident data can be found in Appendix A.

Date	Calls taken by Control	Incidents attended
1 <sup>st</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2007	2,153	1,122
1 <sup>st</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2008	1,316	761

- 3.2 The number of ASB fires and the number of bonfires by local authority area are shown in the table below. The percentage decrease in the number of these incidents, when compared against the same time period in 2007, is approximately 46% and 24% respectively.

Date	No of ASB fires in 2007	No of ASB fires in 2008	No of bonfires 2007	No of bonfires 2008
Newcastle	164	97	32	45
Sunderland	208	108	69	42
Gateshead	96	38	25	11
N. Tyneside	85	51	28	17
S. Tyneside	78	44	18	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>130</b>

- 3.3 The Chief Fire Officer welcomes the reduction in the number of calls and incidents attended and will consider the preventative initiatives required to maintain these reducing trends.

#### **4 ATTACKS ON FIREFIGHTERS**

- 4.1 Attacks on firefighters are, unfortunately, an all too frequent occurrence and they tend to increase in frequency during the bonfire period. The figures for attacks on firefighters are shown in the table below and they show an approximate 50% increase on the previous year.

Date	No of Attacks	Date	No of Attacks
1/11/07	0	1/11/08	1
2/11/07	0	2/11/08	1
3/11/07	3	3/11/08	3
4/11/07	3	4/11/08	2
5/11/07	7	5/11/08	9
6/11/07	1	6/11/08	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>

- 4.2 It can be seen from the table above that the attacks on firefighters peaked on 5<sup>th</sup> November with 9 attacks being reported, some of which are highlighted below;

- Gartland Road, Grindon – Youths threw stones and other missiles at fire crews, one firefighter sustained a cut to the lower jaw.

- Eden House Road, Sunderland – A youth approached a firefighter with a lighter and attempted to set fire to his fire tunic.
- Greendyke Court, West Denton – Youths threw sticks and stones at crews who were attempting to extinguish a bonfire. One member of personnel was struck by a missile but was not injured.

- 4.3 Unfortunately, one firefighter sustained an injury at the incident in Grindon, Sunderland. The firefighter was struck in the face when the crew were stoned and suffered a minor cut to the lower jaw. CCTV footage from the appliance has been passed to Northumbria Police for action.
- 4.4 Powers now exist to prosecute those responsible for attacks on firefighters under the Emergency Workers Obstruction Act 2006. This gives protection to emergency workers, making it a specific offence to obstruct or hinder emergency workers whilst they are carrying out their duties. TWFRS are liaising closely with Northumbria Police to identify and prosecute those who have attacked or obstructed firefighters in the process of carrying out their duties.

## 5 INJURY STATISTICS

- 5.1 Initial indications from the North East Strategic Health Authority reported a total of 8 fireworks/bonfire-related injuries for this period, against a total of 10 in 2007. This represents a further reduction of 20%, following on from the 80% reduction from 2006 to 2007 as the table below indicates.

Organisation/hospital	2005	2006	2007	2008
Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	5 – all fireworks	10 – all fireworks	6 – fireworks 2 - bonfire	3 – fireworks 2 – bonfire
Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust:	36 – all fireworks	37 – all fireworks	1 - firework	0
Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust:	Not recorded	2	Not recorded	1 - firework
South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust:	3 – all fireworks	1 – firework	1- firework	1- firework
City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust:	Not recorded			1 - bonfire

- 5.2 A full evaluation of the preventative campaign is progressing in conjunction with our partner organisations and the outcomes of the 'Fireworks and bonfires ruin lives in a flash' campaign will be subject to a separate Authority report early in 2009.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Whilst the reductions in injuries, anti-social fires and bonfires are to be welcomed, the increase in the number of attacks on firefighters is a worrying factor. The number of bonfire uplifts prevented many more incidents and further reduced the risk to members of the community and firefighters. The assistance

given by Local Authorities is to be applauded.

- 6.2 The increase in attacks on firefighters is extremely concerning and, whilst the culture of reporting these incidents is now firmly embedded within the Service and may explain the increase in reported incidents, the upward trend of such incidents is not acceptable. Officers of the Service are liaising closely with Northumbria Police in order to identify and prosecute the person/s responsible for the attacks.

## **7 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 This campaign has been equality impact assessed. A copy of the assessment is available upon request.

## **8 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Health and safety of our staff is a primary concern of this Authority and the attacks on firefighters are to be condemned.

## **9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no financial implications in respect of this report.

## **10 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no risk management implications in respect of this report.

## **11 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 The Authority is recommended to:

- a) Write to all partners involved in the 'Fireworks and bonfires ruin lives in a flash' campaign to thank them for their assistance and seek support for similar initiatives in the future;
- b) Receive further reports as appropriate

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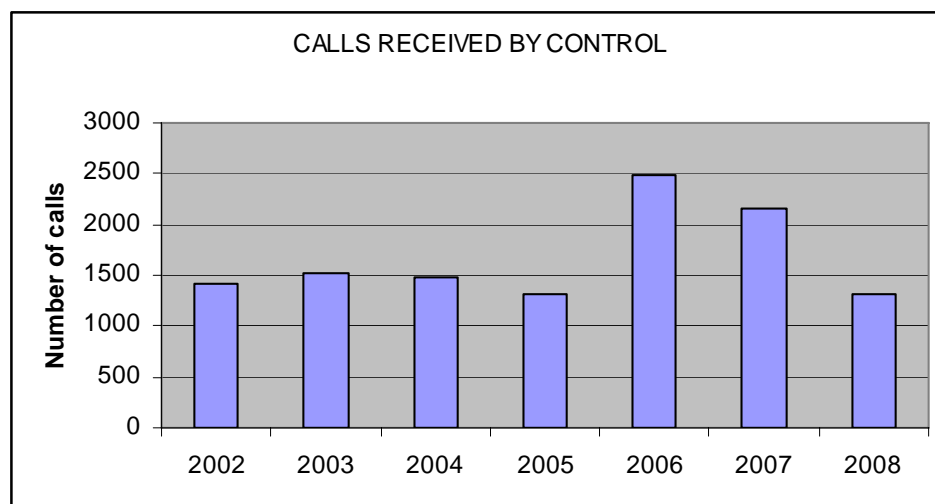
## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The under mentioned background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- Fireworks and bonfires ruin lives in a flash 2007 campaign report

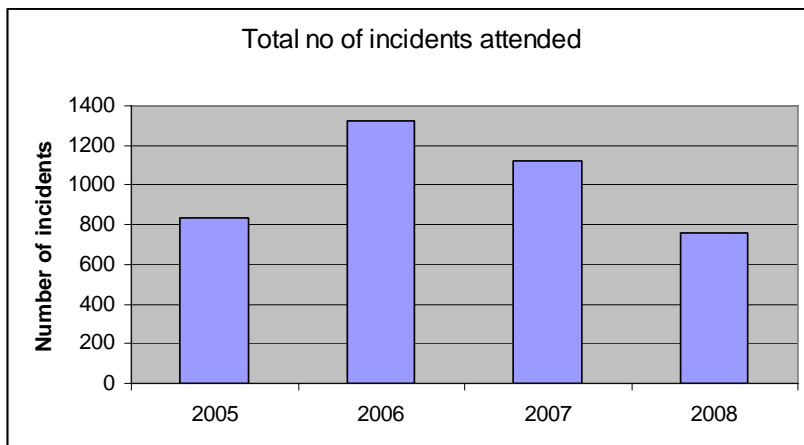
**APPENDIX A****INCIDENT STATISTICS**

Number of calls taken by Control 1st November to 6th November		
Year	Total	% Change on previous year
2002	1,415	-
2003	1,512	+7%
2004	1,479	-2%
2005	1,309	-11%
2006	2,480	+89%
2007	2,153	-13%
2008	1,316	-39%

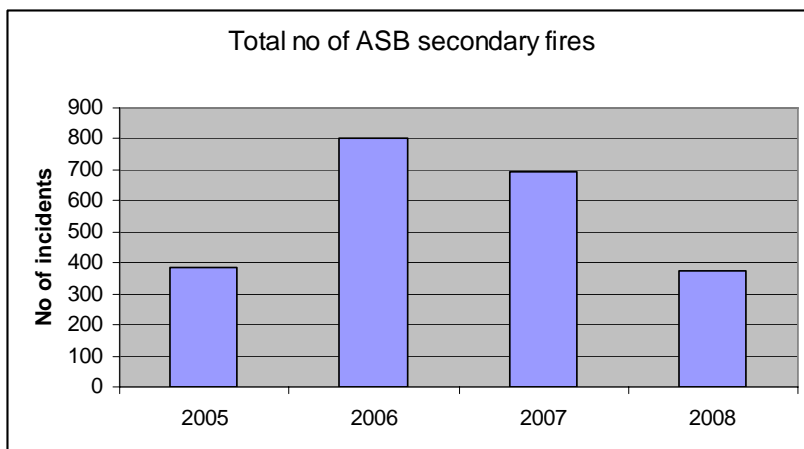


**All Incidents Attended**

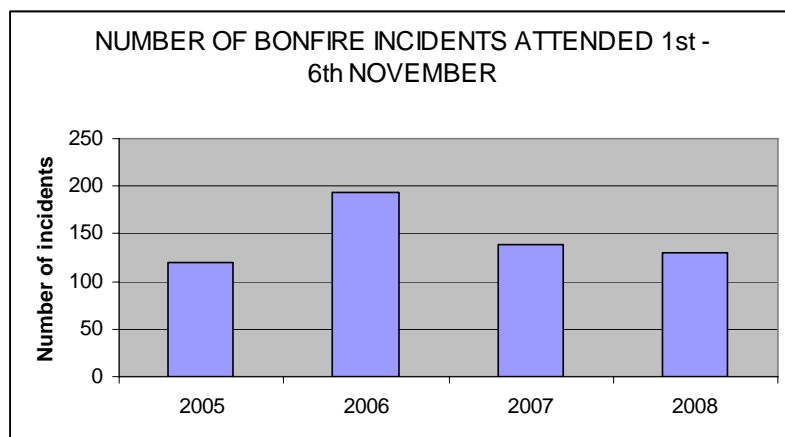
Year	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total	838	1,323	1,122	761

**Total no of ASB Secondary Fires**

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total	387	804	693	376



Secondary Fires involving bonfires				
Year	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total	120	194	138	130



Attacks on Firefighters				
Year	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total	9	23	14	21

