



# Fire Service NEWS

ISSUE 7: Winter 2012

## In this edition:

### Control merger

Three months in and the Combined Fire Control is going from strength to strength.

**Page 2**

.....

### Stack fires

Several high profile fires have sent thousands of tonnes of straw up in smoke and kept firefighters busy.

**Page 3**

.....

### Kitchen safety

Firefighters were out in force to ask residents: "How safe is your kitchen?"

**Page 3**

.....

### Not just fires

Everyone knows we put out fires and attend road collisions, but what else have we been up to that you might not know about?

**Page 4**

.....

### Community Champions

We're looking for volunteers who want to help keep their communities safe.

**Page 5**

## Welcome to Fire Service News

Welcome to the first edition of 2012, which we have packed full of interesting stories to help you out of your January blues (there's even a page full of pictures if reading feels like too much effort at this time of year).

As this edition is published it will be around the time when we are looking back at our well intentioned resolutions from just a few weeks ago with disbelief, and slipping back into our old habits. If you're wondering why you ever decided to start going to the gym at the crack of dawn every morning, I have a suggestion for a resolution which is much easier to keep and could save your life: pledge to test your smoke alarm once a week to ensure it will work when you need it most. Don't wait until it's too late. As ever we have a good mix of stories for you, to give you a taste of the varied work that goes on at CFRS, starting with an update on the Combined Fire Control, which was launched the new Control in October last year. I am delighted to say that it has been a real success story - and a positive example of collaboration between fire services.

Firefighters spent a lot of time attending stack fires in December - as well as looking dramatic these fires can burn for days, cause hazards to nearby buildings and road users and tie up firefighters' time. That's why we've joined forces with the police to tackle rural arson.

As well as tackling fires we've been working hard to prevent them - kitchen fire safety week saw our firefighters out in their local communities to deliver important safety messages about the most dangerous room in the house, and we are looking for volunteers to help spread the fire safety message. If you think you've got what it takes to be a Community Champion, see page 5 for details on how to apply.

Finally, our new picture gallery gives you an idea of everything else we've been up to that you might not have thought of. It includes a coach on its side, Father Christmas, and a charity moustache 'shave off'.

Thanks for reading and please let us know what you think by emailing [feedback@cambsfire.gov.uk](mailto:feedback@cambsfire.gov.uk)



**Chief Fire Officer  
Graham Stagg**



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**

# Combined Fire Control

**THE UK's first Combined Fire Control continues to deliver an effective and resilient service for those working and living in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, while achieving improved value for money.**

That was the message from Neil Newberry (Assistant Chief Fire Officer for Cambridgeshire) and Mark Sanderson (Assistant Chief Fire Officer for Suffolk) at a media event for the Combined Fire Control on January 16, following nearly three months in operation.

At noon on October 25 last year, control operators based at Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue (CFRS) Headquarters in Huntingdon, started answering and managing Suffolk's 999 calls and mobilising Suffolk fire engines. A total of 32 operators now work as a single team in the Combined Fire Control, including six former Suffolk-based operators.

So far 3,614 emergency calls have been handled by the Combined Fire Control, including 2,169 in Cambridgeshire and 1,445 in Suffolk. This includes times when there have been larger incidents and lots of 999 calls handled in both counties simultaneously.

Neil Newberry said: "When the Regional Control Centres (RCCs) were abandoned, it encouraged fire and rescue services up and down the UK to think about the alternatives.

"Many, like ourselves and Suffolk, agreed with the concept of merged controls and could see the obvious benefits. By using tried and tested technology and involving all levels of staff - from fire control operators to managers - we have been the first in the UK to create a Combined Fire Control and are now leading the way."

The Combined Fire Control covers an area of 2,800 square miles, making it one of the largest areas in the UK. To ensure that operators are able to deploy fire engines to the right location, all operators are experienced in call handling (asking a series of questions to verify the location with the caller) and have completed extensive training to ensure they had a good working knowledge of the Suffolk and Cambridgeshire areas, their appliances and crews. In addition to this, as seven control staff transferred from Suffolk (one currently on maternity leave), there is still a good mix of local knowledge from both counties available.

Rachel Band is a control operator in the Combined Fire Control, having previously worked in the Cambridgeshire control for just over a year. She says that the merger has been challenging, but is working: "Once we get a 999 call, it's all about working together, staying calm, getting all the information we need and mobilising the right people to be in the right place.

"It's complex, but we have great support in our team and there's always help available."

Roy Pegram, Chairman of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority said: "I am extremely pleased with the way that this initiative has been adopted and accepted by both Cambridgeshire and Suffolk fire and rescue services. It demonstrates a level of co-operation and collaboration that prior to this project we could only aspire to."



# Stack fires keep crews busy

**FIREFIGHTERS** have been kept busy over the winter with some high profile and challenging stack fires, including two incidents in East Cambs that saw over 60,000 tonnes of straw set alight.

Crews were first called to these fires, which were along the A142 between Witcham Toll and Mepal, at around 11.30pm on Tuesday, December 13.

The fires could be seen from several miles away and burned for over a week. Firefighters remained at the scene for several days in very challenging conditions, monitoring the fires and making sure they did not spread to nearby stacks.

A fire investigation into the fires determined that the cause was deliberate.

Firefighters concluded the incident on Wednesday, December 21 when both fires had burnt out.

This incident followed another large deliberate stack fire in Ramsey (*above*).

A crew from Ramsey was called to the fire in Ramsey St Mary on Sunday, December 4. This was two stacks containing approximately 1,600 tonnes of baled straw each.

Firefighters remained at the scene all day before leaving and returning regularly to reinspect the incident as it burnt itself out.

Station Manager Martin Boome, who is also Arson Liaison Officer for the Cambridgeshire Arson Partnership said: "The consequences of this type of deliberate fire are huge. People don't realise the amount of resources that the fire service have to put in place to tackle fires such as these, which are likely to burn for several days."

The Service is working in partnership with the police as part of Operation Armitage, which aims to reduce the number of deliberate stack fires.



## How safe is your kitchen?

**CREWS** around the county were out in force in November challenging members of the public to consider how safe their kitchen really is from fire.

Firefighters from Peterborough, Cambridge, Huntingdon Wisbech and Ely were out and about in city centres and shopping centres with chip pan demos, informative talks and leaflets as part of Kitchen Fire Safety Week from November 14 – 20.

This was supported throughout the week with a social media campaign, reminding residents on Facebook and Twitter to stay safe in the kitchen during high risk times of the week, such as Sunday lunchtimes. There was also a kitchen fire safety quiz on the website to encourage people to think about how safe they are in the kitchen.

Risk Manager Andy Tucker said: "We all know in the Service that the kitchen poses a real risk of fire, and this week was aimed at reminding residents of this. Chip pan demos are an explosive reminder of the danger of chip pans - especially of the danger of putting water onto such a fire, and it's good to get out into the community and give advice to people who might not otherwise have thought about how safe they are in the kitchen."



# I didn't know you did that...

REGULAR readers of *Fire Service News* will know that we don't spend all of our time responding to incidents. We also aim to prevent fires and road traffic collisions from happening in the first place, and we work with businesses and property developers to make sure people are protected too.

But there's even more than goes on behind the scenes when we are not preventing, protecting and responding, and here's just a few examples:



**Crash course:** At the end of October CFRS organised a multi-agency exercise at Alconbury Airfield, which simulated a major road traffic collision involving a car, a van, a lorry and a coach. Volunteers in make up played the role of casualties for added realism.

## Helping Santa

Firefighters from Yaxley and Thorney teamed up with Father Christmas for the annual Santa Express, which raises money for local good causes and gives residents advice on staying safe over Christmas.



## Fundraising

Staff across the Service were sporting some rather unusual facial hair in November as part of Movember, which raises money and awareness of men's health. Altogether firefighters and support staff raised well over £1,000.



## New recruits

The Recruitment team has been working hard to encourage more retained firefighters to join the Service over recent months. In December the Service welcomed seven new retained recruits who will be stationed around the county. They are now fully qualified to attend incidents, and are already looking forward to their breathing apparatus training in six month's time.

## Staff

Senior Managers, including the Chief Fire Officer and Directors had the chance to go back to the frontline in October when they each spent the day at a station, getting involved with drills and attending shouts. It was a an interesting and enjoyable day for all involved.



---

# Could **you** be a community champion?

**THE Service has launched a pilot Community Champion scheme in South Cambs to encourage residents to carry out safety checks on their homes.**

Community Champions will be recruited to speak to local communities about home fire safety and escape plans, as well as referring those people who don't feel confident about undertaking a check of their own home. They may also be asked to complement the service already being delivered by attending community events and providing support, as well as being part of our consultation community.

Community Champions will participate in training that will enable them to develop interpersonal skills, enhance their CVs, make new friends and improve their knowledge of the work undertaken by the CFRS.

No previous qualifications or specific skills are necessary.

CFRS is working in association with Cambridgeshire ACRE, a local community development charity, to deliver the new scheme. Cambridgeshire ACRE has experience of using community volunteers in its work and can bring this expertise to the partnership.

Launching the scheme, Graham Stagg Chief Fire Officer said: "Having Community Champions from the local population gives us an ideal opportunity to reach into local communities and increase fire safety awareness. Community Champions will help to spread the message about the importance of completing a home fire safety check and of having an escape plan that the whole family know how to follow in the event of an emergency.

"By recruiting local people who know the area where they live, we are aiming to reach all of the community and particularly those people who would not normally think about fire safety."