

LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

Meeting to be held on 14 December 2020

FIRE PROTECTION REPORTS

Contact for further information:

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ben Norman – Tel. 01772 866801

Executive Summary

This report updates the Authority with respect to significant fire safety prosecutions, arson convictions and relevant changes to Fire Protection policy and delivery.

Recommendation

The Authority is asked to note the report.

FIRE SAFETY CONVICTIONS

Prosecutions

Sentencing of the Plaza Beach Hotel, Albert Road Blackpool at Preston Crown Court was due to take place on 23/10/2020 however was adjourned due to ill health of the defendant. Sentencing is due to be rescheduled in 2021. Prosecution case files continue to be prepared for five further premises.

FIRE PROTECTION & BUSINESS SUPPORT INFORMATION

Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP)

Throughout the Coronavirus pandemic, as government, Public Health England (PHE) and National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) guidance continued to change and evolve, fire safety staff have been applying a modified inspection programme. The programme focusses on the types of premises still trading under the different phases of restrictions and as well as the usual range of fire hazards also considers new risks which have emerged due to changes premises continually make to manage their unique Covid circumstances.

In a separate piece of work, development continues on a refined Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) which will be used when Protection activities return to business as usual. The new RBIP will use a range of data including building use, height, incident history, proximity to fire station etc and, based on the potential for harm to occur as a consequence of fire, will present this in a dashboard which will enable fire safety inspectors to pre-plan their inspection activity effectively. The approach remains sufficiently flexible to enable specific inspections to be planned based on known or emerging risk (eg premises with cladding).

Business Safety

Business Safety Advisors continue to undertake a range of activities including Unwanted Fire Signal reduction and Post Fire incident analysis.

Throughout Covid the LFRS Business Safety webpage has continually been refined as government, PHE and NFCC guidance developed. Although government guidance focusses on how to manage Covid risk, the measures advocated often have knock-on effects which can increase the risk from fire if suitable control measures are not considered and introduced. The web page is intended to highlight these impacts and help businesses to meet their Covid Secure requirements without reducing fire safety standards. The web page signposts readers to an e-mail address which is monitored continually during office hours and Business Safety Advisors have been responding to the resultant requests for advice.

The page can be viewed at www.lancsfirerescue.org.uk/safety/business-safety/business-fire-safety-during-coronavirus-outbreak/

Specific sectors including schools, hospitals and care homes have been written to individually as significant issues relating to their sector arose.

Primary Authority Scheme

Primary Authority advice continue to be provided to support businesses as they continue to adapt to Covid hazards and navigate the challenging commercial circumstances created by lockdown restrictions.

A process has commenced to review all existing LFRS partnerships to ensure Primary Authority Scheme (PAS) principles are being adhered to.

Due to use of software like MS Teams and webinar approaches fire sector and business representatives have continued to network and progress PAS benefits including workshop events hosted by NFCC and the Office of Products and Safety Standards (OPSS) considering:

- The regulatory framework after Covid, looking at innovation and flexibility.
- Fire safety in specialised housing.
- The establishment of Expert Panels

Protection Transformation Team

The transformation team has been concentrating on the Building Risk Review Programme and has identified 72 High Rise premises in Lancashire (upper floors over 18m in height) which are in scope. These premises are being inspected to facilitate detailed returns on External Wall System to the NFCC Protection Policy & Reform Unit. In addition to gathering this information Inspectors are ensuring all matters within the current scope of LFRS regulation are being complied with. To date 22 premises have been inspected and the Service is on track to complete all audits by next Summer, well ahead of the Dec 2021 project completion date. The process has been accompanied by a suite of letters to Responsible Persons (including building owners, managing agents, tenants associations etc) to ensure the process is as transparent as possible. Prior to the review, letters were sent highlighting how to access Government remediation funding before the application window closed.

Work continues to develop the Services new 'Operational Fire Safety Check' capability which in future will enable operational crews to undertake fire safety checks in certain types of commercial premises. This approach will enable a greater number of businesses to be checked / supported and allow fully trained inspectors to focus their attention on higher risk and more complex premises. Although Coronavirus restrictions have caused the pilot phase to be suspended, work continues to develop the iPad based form which will be used to underpin the approach which will relaunch when a suitable recovery phase is reached.

ARSON RISK REDUCTION

R v Kevin FRAZER and 2 others not named.

2 Glenmore Clayton Le Woods PR6 7TA.
Incident – 1808007330.

Date and Time of call – 18/08/2018 23:00.

This Incident involved a domestic property where the front door glass had been smashed and a bottle of what appeared to contain petrol had been set alight, on the floor next to the front door, spreading to the house.

Kevin FRAZER and 2 others were charged.

One male who carried out the attack pleaded guilty, and received a suspended sentence. One male who planned the attack pleaded not guilty, he was later found guilty and received a 6 1/2 year prison sentence.

R v Lewis CLOUGH and Thomas BANK

104 ROTHESAY ROAD BLACKBURN BB1 2ER.
Incident – 1911008145

Date and Time of call – 21/11/2019 06:23.

This Incident involved a fire in a 1st floor flat which was believed to have been started deliberately. The Tenant escaped through the front bedroom window. The Tenant stated that somebody had thrown a petrol bomb through the front door of the side entrance to the property. Male casualty received precautionary check up by North West Ambulance Service.

CLOUGH and BANK attended Burnley Crown Court to be sentenced on 14TH February 2020. Both pleaded guilty.

Lewis Clough was sentenced to 6 years and Thomas Bank 4 1/2 years imprisonment.

R v Paul HOWORTH.

30 Coulthurst Gardens, Darwen BB3 3FB
Incident- 2003006493

Date and Time of call - 21/03/2020 00:48.

This Incident involved the rescue of 3 occupants by fire service personnel. At the scene a male was arrested for causing the fire. The male lived at the property with the 3 occupants and deliberately set fire to a fur jacket and rucksack located at the bottom of the stairs.

The guilty plea of simple arson was accepted. Paul HOWARTH was given a community-based sentence, therefore released from custody. He was convicted of arson and an assault. His sentence was a community order for two years, programme requirement and 25 days of rehabilitation activity requirement.

All outstanding court hearings have been delayed until 2021, partly due to Covid 19.

Business Risk

Moderate – Members need to be aware of prosecutions related to fire safety activity and/or arson within Lancashire in order to satisfy themselves that the required robust approach is being pursued.

Environmental Impact

None

Equality and Diversity Implications

None

HR Implications

None

Financial Implications

None

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate:		