

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Meeting to be held on 26 June 2023

Fire Protection Report

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Executive Summary

This report summarises Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) prosecutions pertaining to fire safety offences, in addition to convictions resulting from arson incidents which have been progressed via the criminal justice process.

Given the rapidly evolving regulatory change in building fire safety, an update on Fire Protection and Business Support is also provided, detailing how the Service is adapting delivery whilst developing our workforce, to ensure that we keep pace with the changes and improve public and firefighter safety within the built environment.

Recommendation

The Authority is asked to note the report.

FIRE SAFETY CONVICTIONS

Prosecutions

One case is currently within the court system for offences under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Provisionally set for trial 8 September 2023.

Fire safety teams continue to investigate and build files in relation to ten further cases wherein offences are believed to have been committed under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005, involving the following types of premises:

- Specialised Housing / Supported Living Scheme
- Care & Nursing Home
- House in Multiple Occupation used as Student Accommodation
- Mixed commercial and Residential (akeaway with sleeping above) x2
- Residential Flats x3
- Commercial car repair garage
- Mixed commercial and Residential (in-dining restaurant with sleeping above)

FIRE PROTECTION & BUSINESS SUPPORT INFORMATION

Business Fire Safety Checks (BFSC)

To date, (end of May 2023) circa 3131 BFSCs have been undertaken across Lancashire with 532 identifying significant fire safety concerns resulting in follow up action by Fire safety teams. This follow-up action has resulted in both enforcement and prohibition activity highlighting the significant value of this service.

Legislation Changes Update

The new Fire Safety England Regulations 2022 came into effect on the 23 January 2023. These regulations have been introduced under Article 24 of the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order 2005, which will now be enforced by LFRS protection officers. To support the introduction of the regulations, LFRS Built Environment Team has written to all building owners affected by the legislative changes and hosted engagement sessions with owners of tall buildings, housing authorities and managing agents to discuss the changes and how LFRS will approach these changes from an enforcement perspective.

The LFRS website has been updated to ensure premises' responsible persons can digitally report critical fire safety defects under the new regulations. This information is then used to update operational risk information for crews.

From April 2023 all residential buildings at least 18m or 7 storeys and above must legally be registered with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR). Failure to do so may result in prosecution by the BSR.

LFRS continue to engage with responsible persons to ensure registration is completed and the relevant information is available. The deadline for registration is 1st October 2023.

ARSON RISK REDUCTION

R v James PURCELL

Banks Street, Blackpool

Date and Time of call – 19/11/2021, 07:07

This incident involved the deliberate ignition of three fires within a flat at a two-storey premises.

The fire caused severe damage by direct burning to the entrance door, kitchen appliances, clothing, and furniture. The entire flat also suffered severe damage by smoke. The first-floor communal area suffered light damage by smoke.

Following a guilty plea to arson reckless as to whether life was endangered the defendant was sentenced to 45 months imprisonment.

R v Christopher HARRISON

Mill Close, Thornton Cleveleys

Date and Time of call – 11/11/2021, 19:57 and 02/12/2021, 22:29

Both these incidents involved petrol attacks at two neighbouring domestic properties, the second of which was a mistaken address next door to the intended target.

The first incident involved petrol being introduced through the front door letterbox and caused severe damage by direct burning and heat to the door, hallway and landing area. The entire property also suffered severe smoke damage. The house was occupied at the time of the attack but thankfully the occupants managed to escape unhurt through the rear of the property.

The second attack occurred at the neighbouring property and involved petrol being introduced through the ground floor living room window. The fire caused severe damage by direct burning and heat to the living room and severe smoke damage to the entire house and contents. Thankfully the occupier was out at the time of the attack.

The defendant appeared at Preston Crown Court and following a guilty plea was sentenced to 8 years for GBH, 5 years and 7 months for arson with intent to endanger life for the first arson attack, 4 years for arson with intent to endanger life at the neighbour's house (mistaken address targeted) and 12 months for possession of a bladed article, to run concurrently. He will serve 2/3 of the 8-year total sentence before serving the remainder on licence.

R v Sarah MCRUDDEN

Clifton Street, Darwen

Date and Time of call - 02/11/2021, 00:07

This incident involved the deliberate ignition of a bed within the bedroom of mid terraced property. The room of origin suffered severe damage by fire, heat and smoke. The remainder of the property and contents suffered moderate smoke damage. The neighbouring property suffered light damage by smoke.

The defendant was sentenced to 22 months imprisonment having entered a guilty plea for arson reckless as to whether life was endangered.

Business Risk

Moderate – Members are made aware of prosecutions related to fire safety activity and/or arson within Lancashire 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 2 if appropriate: N/A