

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

Meeting	People Board
Meeting Date	6 September 2022
Report of	Paul Heffernan, Head of Service Delivery Support (Operational Training / Health & Safety / Operational Risk)
Subject	Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee Update Report

Health & Safety

1. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee took place on Monday 15 August 2022. Attendance from representative bodies was poor. Therefore, the Chair deemed the meeting not to be quorate in line with the current terms of reference. It was agreed the meeting would continue.
2. The 'Terms of Reference' (TOR) for the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee have been reviewed to generate an inclusive health, safety and wellbeing forum. The TOR were discussed and circulated with all stakeholders in June 2022 and feedback has been considered and included in the final version. These will be presented to the People Board for ratification on the 6 September 2022.
3. The committee received an update on a Level 2 accident investigation which is currently taking place following the heatwave event in July 2022. The investigation is considering the common factors involved in 5 individual accidents which resulted in medical intervention. It was confirmed that medical intervention was provided as a precautionary measure to 2 individuals at scene and 3 were taken to hospital and released on the same day. Lines of enquiry include issues such as welfare provision, workload, rest periods and resource management.
4. During the heatwave period in July 2022, it was confirmed that there were a total of 14 reported accidents, 4 reported near misses, 10 reported undesired circumstances, 2 reported incidents of asset damage and 4 reported Asbestos exposures. Those incidents which did not result in medical intervention are being investigated at level 1 to identify future preventative measures. It was confirmed that any operational learning was being considered as part of the wider operational debriefing process.
5. The Committee received an update on fire contaminants work being undertaken by the SYFR Personal Protective Equipment Contaminants (PPEC) Group. The Group met on the 2 August 2022 to discuss current progress.
6. It was confirmed that a draft 'Fire Contaminants Policy' is to be circulated for consultation. The policy will initially include information on:
 - Operational Contamination – Management & Control
 - Personal Hygiene Considerations
 - Appliance Crew Cab Cleanliness
 - Fire Kit Decontamination Procedures
 - Contaminated Firefighting Equipment
 - Station Cross Contamination

7. 'Decon Wipes' have already been provided to all front line appliances and training school to enable improved personal hygiene for firefighters. It is planned that all appliances and training school will receive 'Fire Contaminants Cleaning & Decontamination Packs' which will be used for decontamination of firefighters exposed to fire contaminants. These will consist on:

- Decon wipes – 3 packs per appliance
- Nitrile gloves - 1 box medium, large and extra Large
- Equipment wipes -2 packs per appliance
- Blue roll – 2 per appliance
- Bio-guard wipes – 1 tub per appliance
- Roll of waste bags – 2 per appliance
- Contents list
- Plastic torte box 600 x 400 x 364 high with lid

Total projected costs are £128.01 per appliance with a total initial layout of £3,968.31.

8. Work has taken place to map out a 'Fire Contaminants Communications Plan' for the provision of information on fire contaminants. This will include general awareness of the dangers from fire contaminants, information on incident ground and return to station procedures, and more targeted information on topics such as appliance clean cabs, personal hygiene and the importance of hydration in preventing absorption.
9. Discussions took place about the implementation of ABEK Gas filters for use on Sundstrom Half Mask respirators to provide improved respiratory protection during incidents, decontamination/cleaning, salvage operations and turning over. There are plans to meet with Sundstrom to discuss some technical aspects relating to protection factors prior to a business case being presented to the Operational Research and Development Board on the 31st October 2022.
10. A prototype clean and dirty kit bin has been sourced from a company in Doncaster. A trial is planned at Edlington Fire Station after which all stations will receive a bin to ensure all contaminated kit remains external to the buildings whilst gassing off or laundry collection. Cost implications are being managed within current budgets.
11. Future actions are currently being drawn up and these include Welfare Unit arrangements, producing suitable and sufficient risk assessments, improving laundry arrangements for PPE, establishing 'zone' areas on stations to prevent cross contamination, implementing consistent equipment/cab/station cleaning regimes and specific arrangements for BA training facilities at TDC.
12. A recent increase in water delivery failures affecting front line appliances has prompted analysis of reported incidents from 2017 to present day. A presentation was provided to the Committee by the Health & Safety Team. This identified the reported incidents were broadly split into two distinct categories; those which relate to a failure of the 'Power Take Off' (PTO) to engage on arrival at an incident, and those which can be attributed to another cause, unrelated to the PTO. Of the 64 occurrences reported since 2017, 40 (62.5%) relate to an initial failure of the PTO to engage and describe remarkably similar factors. The evidence extracted from undesired circumstance and near miss reports submitted to Health & Safety since July 2018 suggests that the 'most likely' cause of some 62% of pump failure is an inadvertent error by the driver/pump operator.

Built in safety functions on the E-pump will prevent the PTO from engaging if the correct sequence has not been followed however, it appears that this correct sequencing or the importance of it has never been disseminated to operational personnel. It has been recommended that immediate instruction is issued to all driver/pump operators ensuring that they are fully aware of the sequence to be followed on arrival at an incident and in order to correctly engage the PTO. It is planned that an instructional video will be produced and made available to all operational personnel.

Wellbeing

13. Throughout the current reporting period that has been a total of 73 calls logged from employees utilising the Health Assured 24 hour contact line. Counselling calls account for 89.0% (65) of the usage with low mood being the most common reason for contact, followed by anxiety and partner related issues. The additional 11% (8) were advice calls. Employment was the most common reason for advice and guidance, accounting for 50.0% of overall advice engagement. This was followed by motoring, landlord and tenant related issues. In addition the online portal has received a total of 234 hits within the current reporting period.
14. As of August 2022 there are 71 employees who have a savings account with Transave. The total number of savings collectively being £216,610, with £10,610 granted in loans. For comparison as of January 2022 there were 47 members with a savings total of £67,141.62 and £3,927.63 issued in loans.
15. The men's health initiative officially launched on 31st May, since that date 48 people in total have attended the weekly walking group at Graves Park. This also includes a number of retired firefighters.
16. The Charity have also developed a case study of good practice showcasing the initiative as an effective workplace health intervention.
<https://www.mind.org.uk/media/13480/walk-talk-999-walking-for-wellbeing.pdf> The initiative has been really well received locally and nationally and has received support from The Firefighter's Charity, Women in the Fire Service, Joe Wicks (The Body Coach) and Dr Alex George who included the walks within his recent documentary about men's mental health and the need for more avenues of support to be made available.
17. A new pilot study has been developed by PHD students at Loughborough University and University of Sheffield whereby large organisations across Yorkshire and the Humber have been invited to take part with a view to improving the return to work process provided to employees on long-term sick leave due to mental health and following their return to work. The study is based on the latest evidence and research from leading workplace health experts across the UK. Organisations joining will be placed into two cohorts- either receiving an insight into their return to work process or a set of best-practice resources to use as interventions over a two year period. Being a participant of the project comes with a number of benefits including the opportunity to proactively improve our absence management process whilst demonstrating our clear commitment to supporting employee health and wellbeing. The project is currently awaiting final ethics approval with a view to going live towards the end of September.

18. The updated Fire Investigation Professional Standards have outline a need for fire and rescue services to 'provide post-incident mental and physical health and wellbeing support to its fire investigators'. The view has been taken by members of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee that any interventions put in place to support FI Officers welfare should be extended further to include all operational middle managers.
19. Learning from other areas shows a clear process in place to support officer welfare by scheduling regular mandatory psychological wellbeing group sessions with officers facilitated by a trained psychotherapist. The sessions operate under a reflective group practice model looking at the psychological impact of decision making and risk assessment.