Annual Health & Safety Report 2023/24

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service

Compiled by GM Ged Knock
Health & Safety Manager

MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Annual Health & Safety (H&S) report for the period of 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024. This report provides detailed data of the Health, Safety & Welfare (HS&W) performance of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS) against it's pre-determined Local Performance Indicators (LPI's).

This report ensures that the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) and the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (MFRA) are informed of the current HS&W performance and provides assurance that the Service complies with its corporate policy, legal obligations and overall H&S performance requirements.

This report has been prepared using data from the Authority's HS&W Management System, 'OSHENS', and data from the Business Intelligence Department. The data is presented in detailed charts/graphs and covers LPI's, which are either performance led or are monitoring only.

LPI figures are set by the H&S Manager on behalf of the Authority and in line with the MFRS Service Plan. The figures are drawn from empirical data/statistics and are approved and governed through the Performance Management Group (PMG). LPI's are reviewed annually.

"MFRA, the Chief Fire Officer, and the Strategic Leadership Team, through visible leadership, ensure that Health, Safety and Welfare is a priority."

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority Health, Safety & Welfare Management Arrangements

MFRA and the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) are fully committed to ensuring the Health Safety and Welfare of all MFRS employees and the communities MFRS serve to deliver Our Purpose; '*Here to serve. Here to protect. Here to keep you safe'.*

The Authority achieves this by ensuring that duties under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 are met, in order to prevent injury or illness to employees, contractors and members of the public who may be affected by MFRS work activities.

MFRA are fully committed to compliance with all relevant Health and Safety legislation, Statute, Regulations, Directives and Approved Codes of Practice and regard compliance as the basic minimum standard. MFRA recognise that a 'positive safety culture' in the workplace only exists when Health and Safety is understood and accepted as a high priority.

MFRA and the CFO are responsible for ensuring that the HS&W policy is implemented and that responsibilities are assigned, accepted and fulfilled at all levels within MFRS.

The MFRA, CFO and the Strategic Leadership Team, through visible leadership, ensure that Health, Safety and Welfare is a priority and, in doing so, encourage shared beliefs, practices, values and attitudes within the organisation to promote a positive safety culture.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) maintains overall responsibility for MFRS Health and Safety Management on behalf of the CFO. The H&S Manager and the Occupational Health (OH) Manager are responsible for the day-to-day management of HS&W on behalf of the MFRA and the CFO.

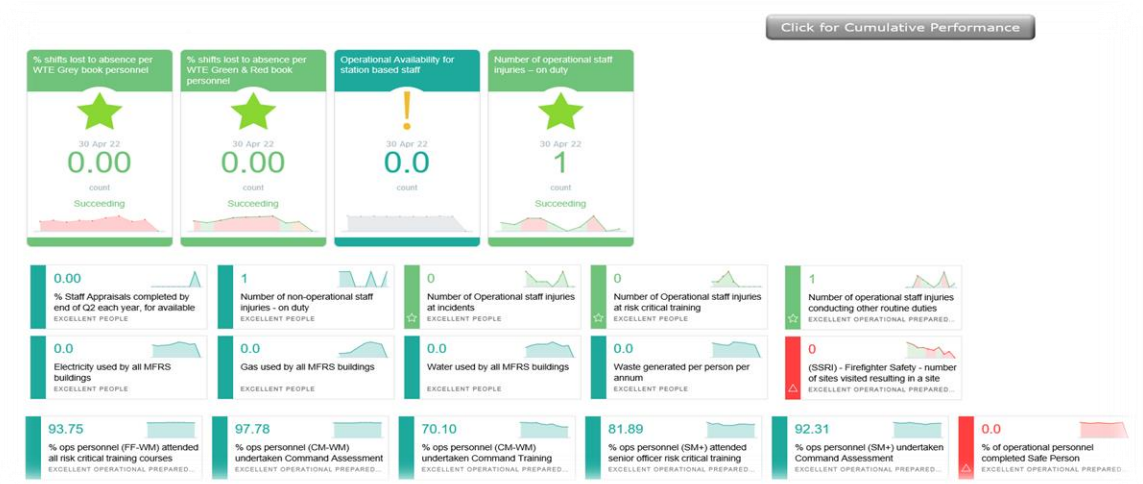
Health & Safety Performance

Workplace

Workplace performance monitors accidents and injuries in the workplace and is managed via six key LPI's. Four of the LPI's are performance managed and the remaining two are for monitoring only. The governance for Workplace is managed via the Workplace Review Group (WPRG) which has cross departmental membership. The performance led LPI's are broken down into the following four areas:

LPI Performance

- Number of operational staff injuries on-duty **(LPI WR13)**
- Number of operational staff injuries at incidents **(LPI WR33)**
- Number of operational staff injuries at risk critical training **(LPI WR34)**
- Number of operational staff injuries conducting other routine activities **(LPI WR22)**



LPI Monitoring

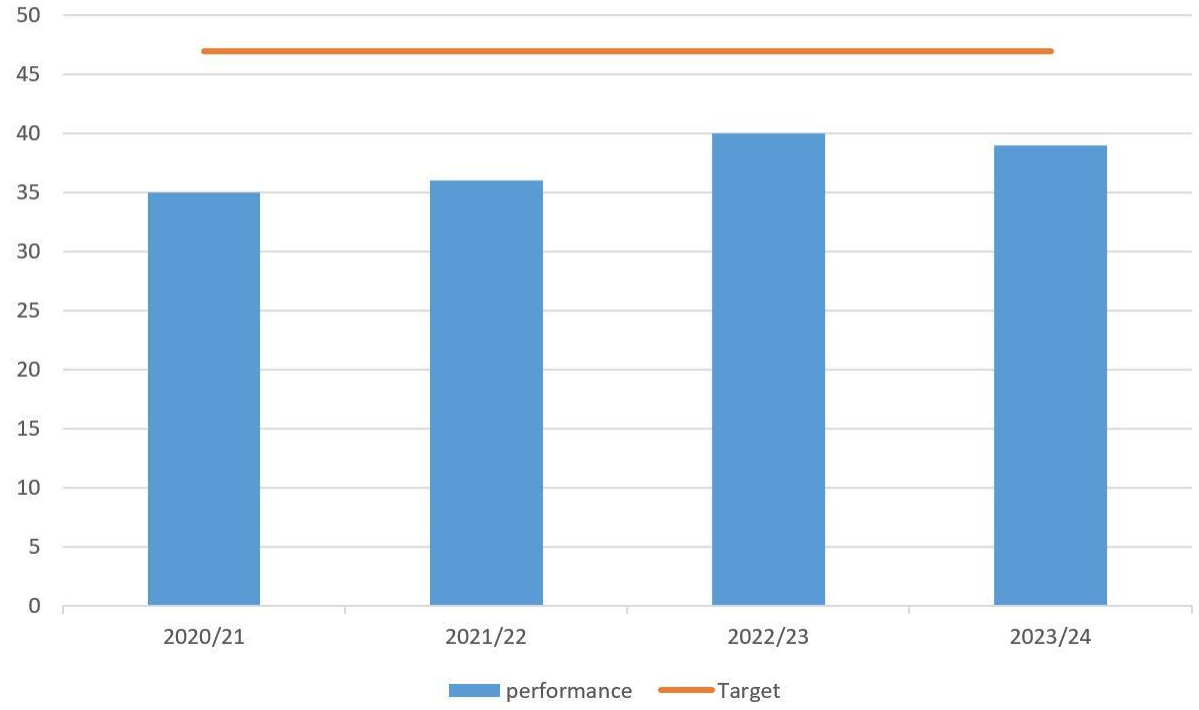
- Number of non-operational staff injuries on-duty **(LPI WR32)**
- Reporting of the levels of Near Miss reports recorded by the Service **(LPI WR31)**

The Health and Safety Department also monitor and manage additional areas of performance and H&S compliance during the year, delivered via audit, inspection, and active monitoring; the details of this are also contained within this report.

Overall Number of Operational Staff Injuries On-duty

During 2023/24 there were a total of 39 injuries to operational staff, which is a decrease of 1 on the previous year. A total of 28 of the 39 members of staff injured remained on duty and of those who went off duty, 4 returned to work within 7 days.

WR13		
Number of Operational Staff Injuries - on duty		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
40	47	39

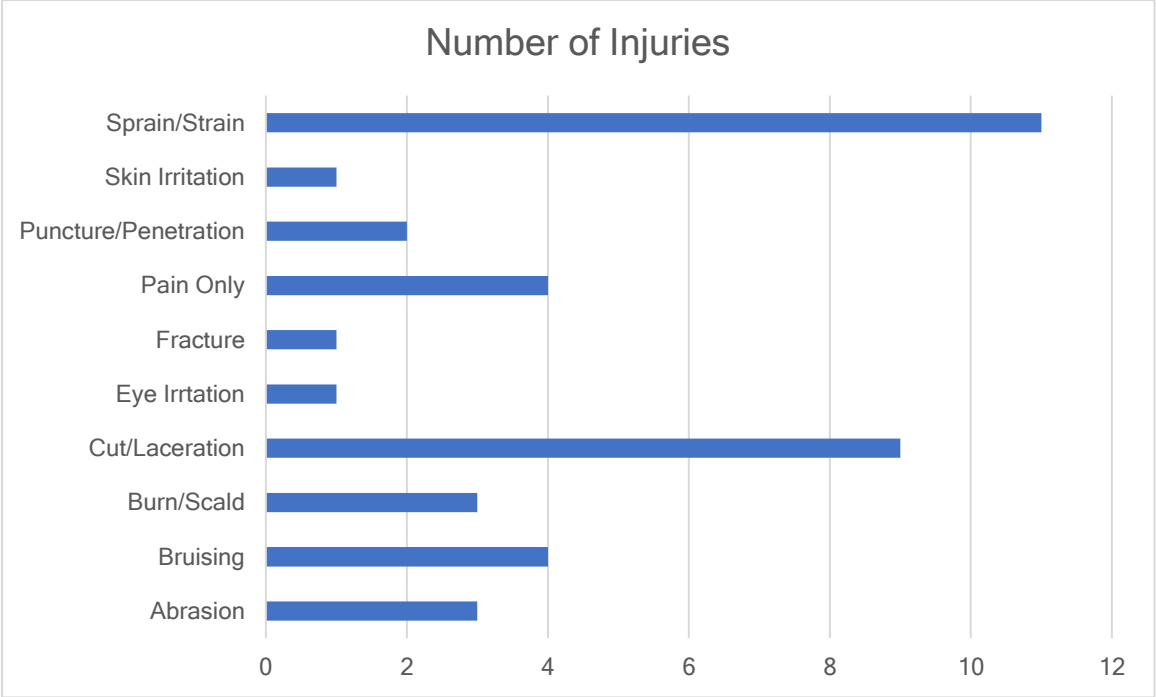


A total of 327 duty days were lost through staff injuries, which is a decrease of 28 on the previous year, with 317 of the days lost were related to 6 members of staff absent through long term sickness and the remaining 10 days related to 4 other members of staff.

Trend analysis shows that all age ranges were similarly affected, and that 11 of the 39 injuries (28%) were due to sprain or strain, which is the most common recorded injury. There is no identifiable age range amongst these injuries, with the lowest age recorded being 24 and the highest 51.

The full break down of injury type amongst operational staff for 2023/24 is detailed below:

Injuries



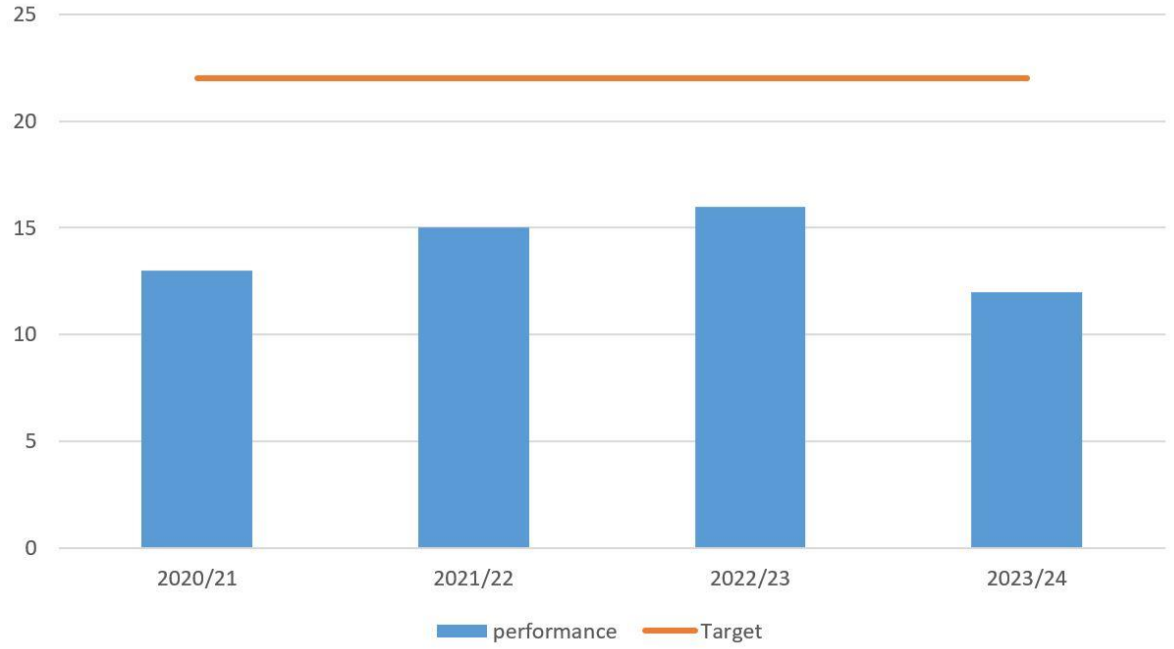
MFRS has an established positive reporting culture, with staff comfortable and confident in reporting injuries without reprisal, even when minor in nature. For example, 4 members of staff reported 'Pain Only' injuries. These primarily related to a muscular discomfort during the course of their duties. All remained on duty and did not suffer any long-lasting effects. Historically, this is something that may not have been reported.

The breakdown of injuries into the individual Workplace LPI's, both performance-led and monitoring only, are displayed on the following pages.

Number of Operational Staff Injuries at Incidents

Of the total 39 operational staff injuries whilst on-duty, 12 occurred at operational incidents. This is a decrease of 4 from the previous year. However, this amount remains significantly below the predicted target of 22.

WR33		
Number of Operational Staff at Incidents		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
16	22	12



MFRS attended 17,345 operational incidents in 2023/24, which incurred 36,240 appliance movements. Of the total 12 operational injuries, 8 remained in work, which indicates the injury was minor in nature and further highlights the positive reporting culture amongst staff. Of the 4 who went off duty, 3 returned to work within 12 days and the remaining 1 member of staff is absent through long term sickness.

The total duty days lost for operational staff incurring injuries whilst at incidents was 200 days; an increase of 25 on the previous year. Of the 200 days, 148 relate to one staff member.

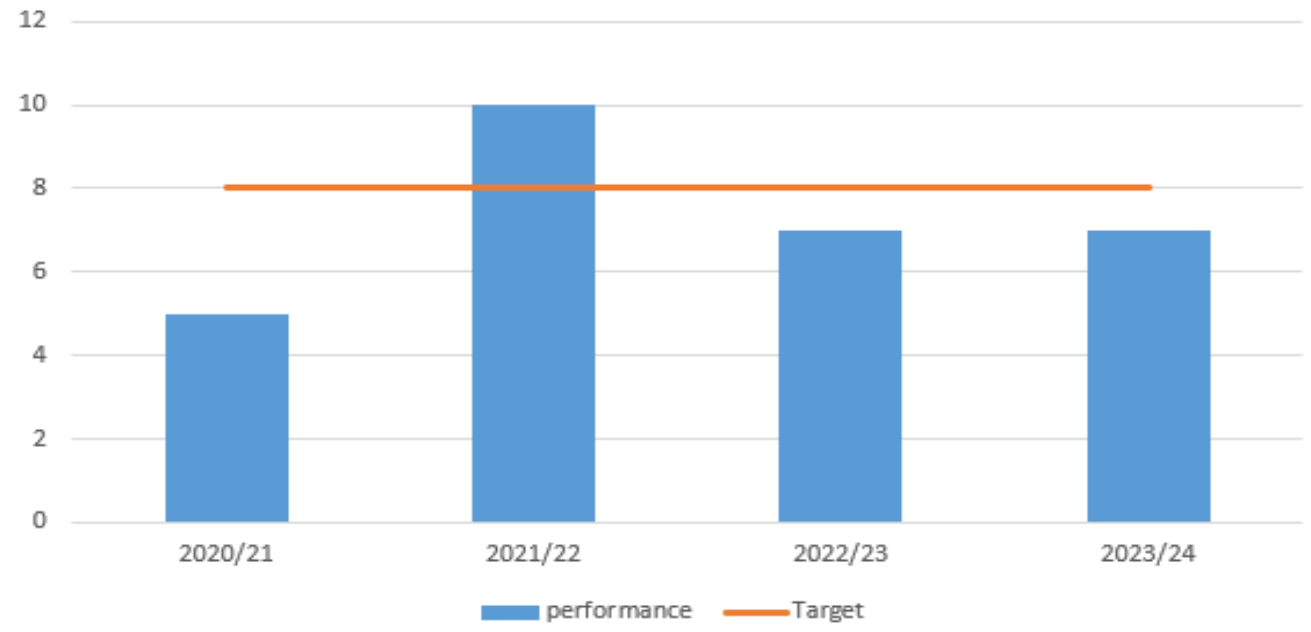
Number of Operational Staff Injuries at Risk Critical Training

The Health and Safety Department have monitored injuries at risk critical training as a standalone LPI since 2018/19. Prior to this, it was included in the operational injuries at incidents LPI.

During this reporting period, 7 individuals were injured during risk critical training, 2 of whom went off duty.

The figures indicate that the majority of injuries were minor in nature and that the training environment is being managed well through risk assessment and by operational managers.

WR34		
Number of Operational Staff Injuries at Risk Critical Training		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
7	8	7



MFRS is fully committed to its vision, *"to be the best Fire and Rescue Service in the UK"* and as such, devotes a substantial amount of time to risk critical training, ensuring firefighters and commanders can perform to the best of their ability. This ensures staff are safe and effective whilst at work, improving attendance and increasing overall wellbeing.

Operational Training

In 2023/24, the following training took place:

A total of 343 core training courses were completed in the year 2023/24 which is a 10% increase on the previous year. These consist of:

- 42 Breathing Apparatus (BA) courses with 8-10 attendees per course
- 21 Compartment Fire Behaviour Training (CFBT) courses with approx. 8-10 attendees per course
- 64 Road Traffic Collision (RTC) courses with approx. 5 attendees per course
- 60 Safe Working at Height (SWAH) courses with approx. 5 attendees per course.
- 73 Hazardous Materials Response courses with approx. 10 attendees per course
- 65 Water courses with approx. 5 attendees per course
- 18 FREC courses with approx. 10 attendees per course

In 2023/24 MFRS completed 237 realistic training / exercising events which is 35 more than the previous year. This continues the trend of improving the number and quality of training and exercising since the pandemic:

- 74 Off-site station exercises
- 35 Tactical exercises, organised by stations
- 2 ‘Control of Major Accident Hazards’ (COMAH) live exercises
- 27 Cross Border exercises with our regional FRS colleagues
- 54 Specialist Station Training exercises (Marine, HazMat, MTA and Command)
- 45 Saturday exercises (RTC/HazMat and High Rise)

Multi Agency training with H.M. Coastguard

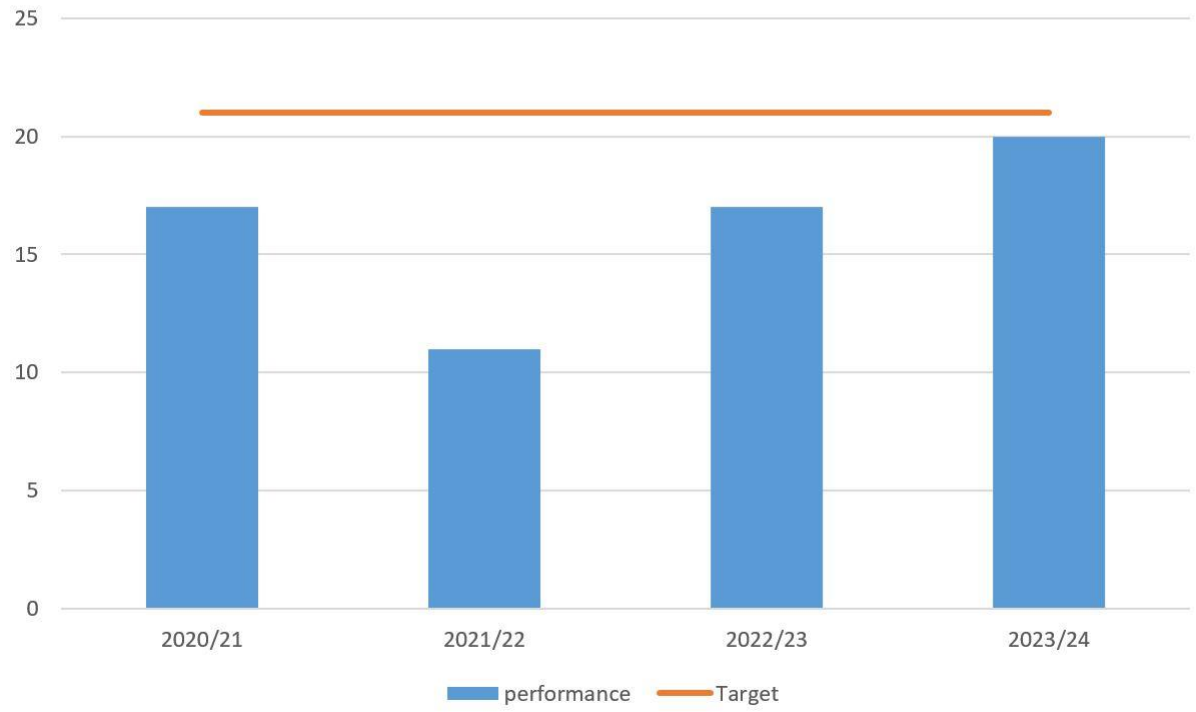
Off Station Exercises working with local partners to improve Operational Response.

During the year we have welcomed 42 Apprentice Firefighters and 11 Apprentice Firefighter Control staff into the Service. They completed recruit courses of 16 weeks and 10 weeks respectively. Individual training blocks are aligned to the daily training planner across all stations and equate to approximately 8,000 x 2-hour 45 minute training periods per year.

Number of Operational Staff Injuries Conducting Other Routine Activities

During routine activity in 2023/24 20 injuries occurred which sees an increase of 18% (or 3 injuries) on the previous year. This area has seen an increase in the last two years; however, it remains below the Service Plan target.

WR22		
Number of Operational Staff Injuries conducting other routine duties		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
17	21	20



Of the 20 individuals who were injured, 16 remained on duty, highlighting that their injuries were minor in nature. The remaining 4 individuals went off duty.

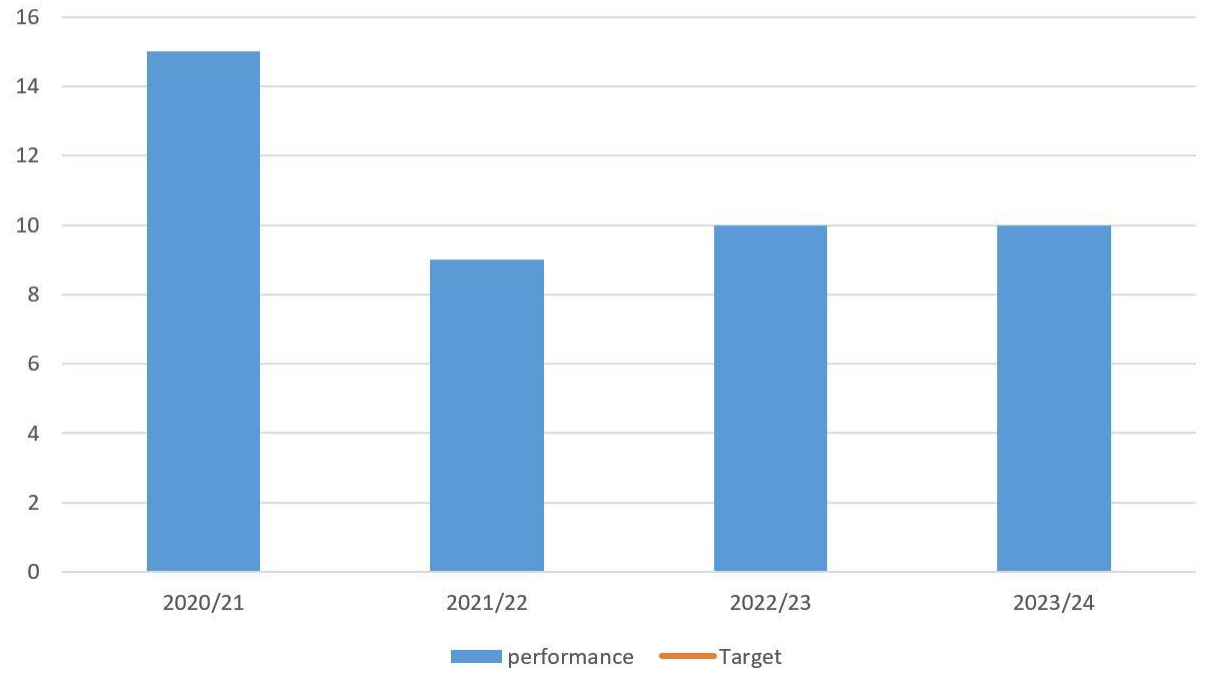
The 4 injuries, when individuals went off-duty, resulted in 21 duty days lost. As MFRS policy defines 28 days sickness as long term for one individual, it is clear to observe that no long-term absences were attributed to this indicator. The indicator shows an overall decrease of 123 days lost in comparison to the previous year. MFRS operate and support a positive reporting culture which contributes to the reduction of injury through raising awareness.

There are a variety of age ranges amongst the individuals. There is no significant trend identified amongst this area.

Number of Non-operational Staff Injuries On-duty

There was a total of 10 non-operational staff injuries in 2023/24, this is the same amount as last year. The 10 individuals involved remained on duty.

WR32		
Number of Non-Operational Staff Injuries On-Duty		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
10	Monitoring	10

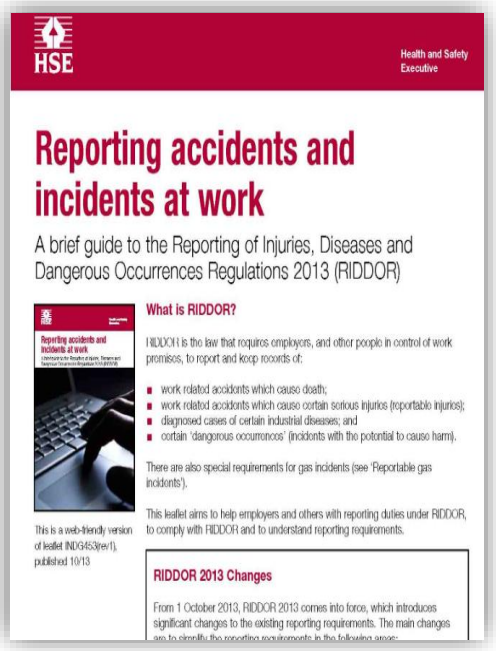


Specific age ranges for this category were varied with no significant trend identified.

There were a variety of minor injuries recorded. These include abrasions, bruising, sprain/strain, cuts, scalds, eye irritation and a dog bite. The positive reporting of near miss events substantially reduces the potential for injuries as staff are encouraged to submit observations as part of the overall Health and Safety culture.

Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations - RIDDOR

RIDDOR puts duties on employers, the self-employed and people in control of work premises (the Responsible Person) to report certain serious workplace accidents, occupational diseases and 'specified' dangerous occurrences (near misses).



HSE

Health and Safety Executive

Reporting accidents and incidents at work

A brief guide to the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)

What is RIDDOR?

RIDDOR is the law that requires employers, and other people in control of work premises, to report and keep records of:

- work related accidents which cause death;
- work related accidents which cause certain serious injuries (reportable injuries);
- diagnosed cases of certain industrial diseases; and
- certain 'dangerous occurrences' (incidents with the potential to cause harm).

There are also special requirements for gas incidents (see 'Reportable gas incidents').

This leaflet aims to help employers and others with reporting duties under RIDDOR, to comply with RIDDOR and to understand reporting requirements.

This is a web-friendly version of leaflet INDG453(rev1), published 10/13

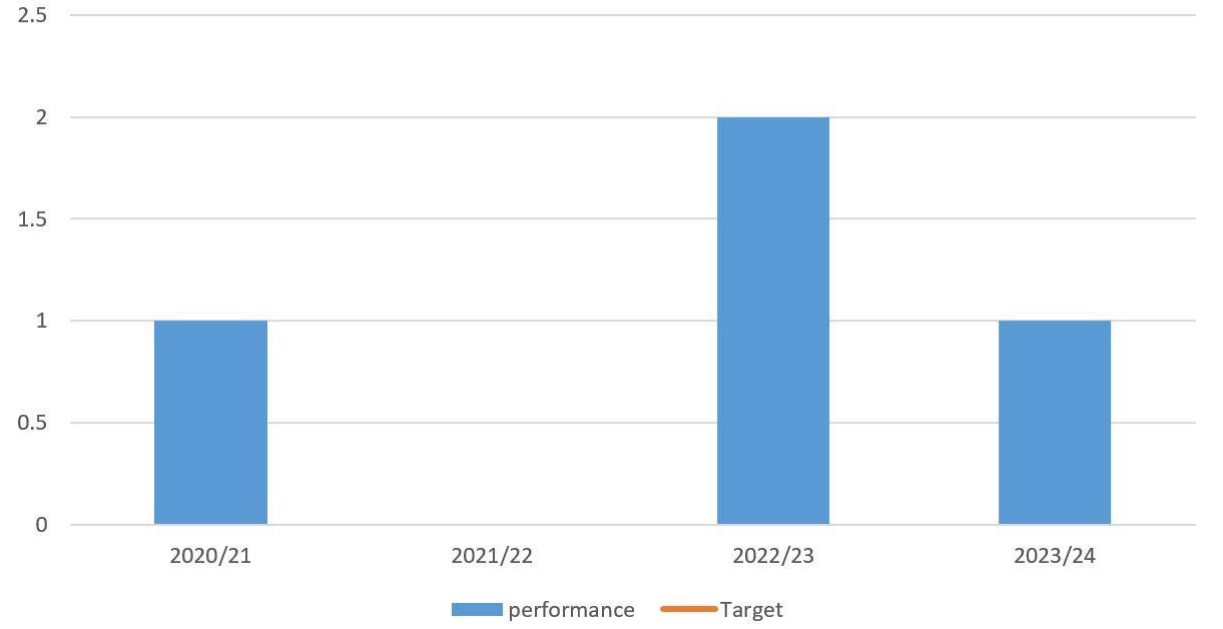
RIDDOR 2013 Changes

From 1 October 2013, RIDDOR 2013 comes into force, which introduces significant changes to the existing reporting requirements. The main changes are to simplify the reporting requirements in the following areas:

Under RIDDOR, MFRA must report the specific categories under **'Major Injury'** to the enforcing Authorities, where occurrences happen 'out of or in connection with work'. The Health & Safety Department reports these occurrences to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE), on behalf of MFRA.

There was one reportable **Major** injury during 2023/24, which is one less than last year.

RIDDOR - Major Injuries		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
2	Monitoring/QA	1

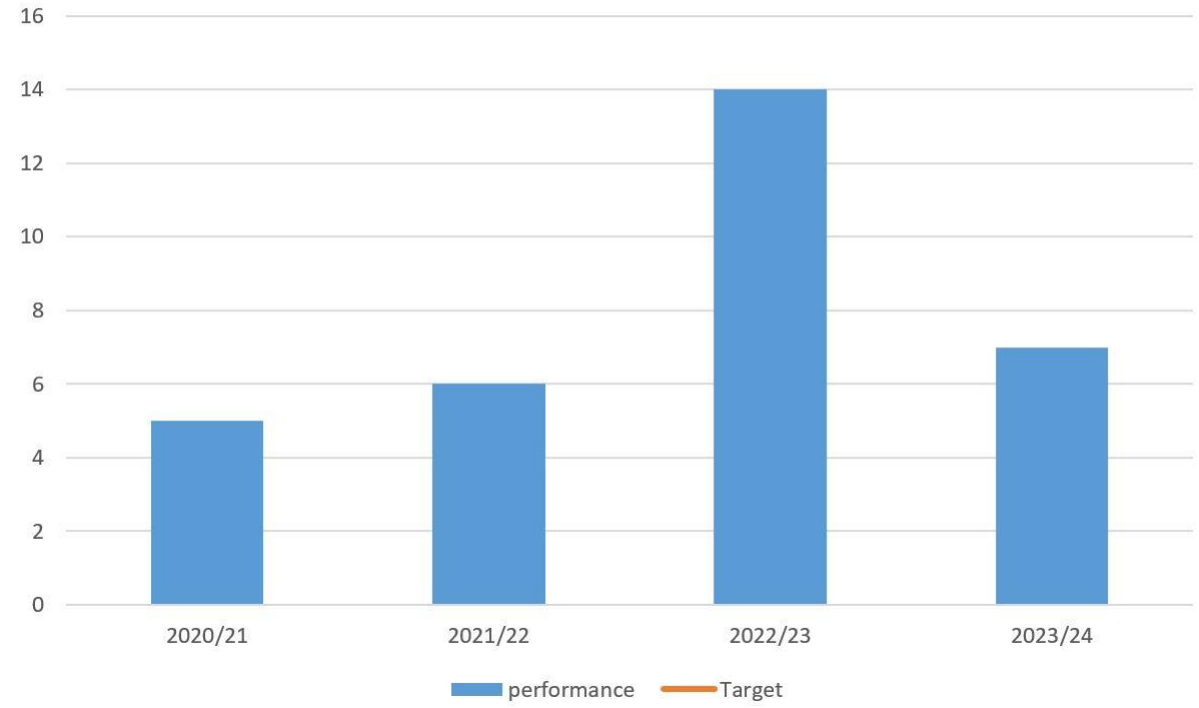


Under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations 2013, MFRA must report specific categories where an **'over 7-day absence'** occurs when the cause is 'out of or in connection with work'. The Health & Safety Department reports the occurrences to the HSE on behalf of MFRA.

There were 7 **minor** injuries affecting MFRS staff reported to the HSE during 2023/24, a decrease of 7 on the previous year. 5 were sprain or strain injuries, 1 was bruising and 1 minor burn. Additionally, we also had an injury to an NWAS member of staff (fractured finger) based at Croxteth Community Fire Station.

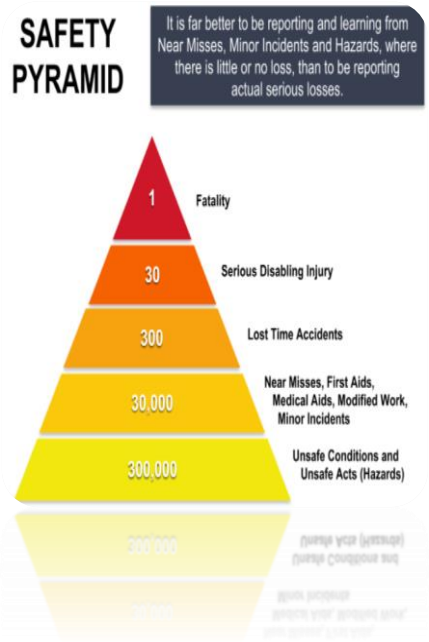
MFRA reported one Dangerous Occurrence which was a loss of BA Telemetry at an Operational Incident. No injuries were incurred in relation to this event. The cause has been investigated and further control measures have been put in place to minimise the chance of this issue reoccurring.

RIDDOR - Minor Injuries (MFRS Staff)		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
14	Monitoring/QA	7



Reporting of the Levels of Near Miss Reports Recorded by the Service

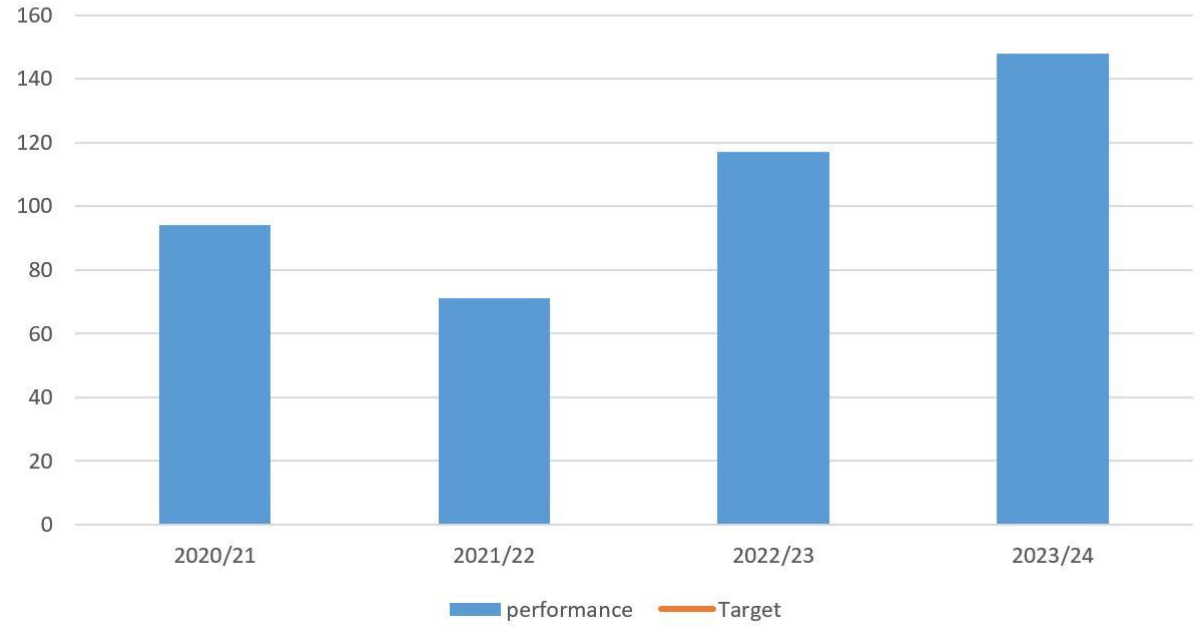
A near miss is an incident that would have resulted in a loss, such as an injury or property damage, under only slightly different circumstances.



Near Misses in MFRS are recorded through the OSHENS system and can be accessed by any member of staff. They help highlight safety issues when injury does not occur, helping prevent any future occurrence. Near Miss reporting is actively encouraged by the H&S Department, as it contributes to a positive H&S culture within the Service.

A total of 148 Near Misses were recorded during 2023/24. This is an increase of 27% (or 31 reports) when compared to previous year. MFRS Health and Safety department promote positive reporting as part of workplace culture and respond to all submissions. MFRS continues to monitor Near Misses for any potential trends that arise.

WR31		
Near Miss Reports Recorded by the Service		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
117	Monitoring	148



Road Risk

Road Risk performance monitors all vehicle collisions and is managed via six key LPI's. Four of the LPI's are performance led and the remaining two are for monitoring only. The governance for road risk is managed via the Road Risk Review Group (RRRG) which has cross departmental membership. LPI's are broken down into:

<u>LPI Performance</u>

- The number of Road Traffic Collisions (RTC's) where a Fire Appliance hit other vehicle or object whilst responding to an operational incident **(RR31)**
- The number of RTC's where a Fire Appliance hit other vehicle or object whilst engaged in routine activity **(RR32)**
- The number of RTC's where a light vehicle hit another vehicle or object whilst responding to an operational incident **(RR33)**
- The number of RTC's where a light vehicle hit other vehicle or object whilst engaged in routine activity **(RR34)**

<u>LPI Monitoring</u>

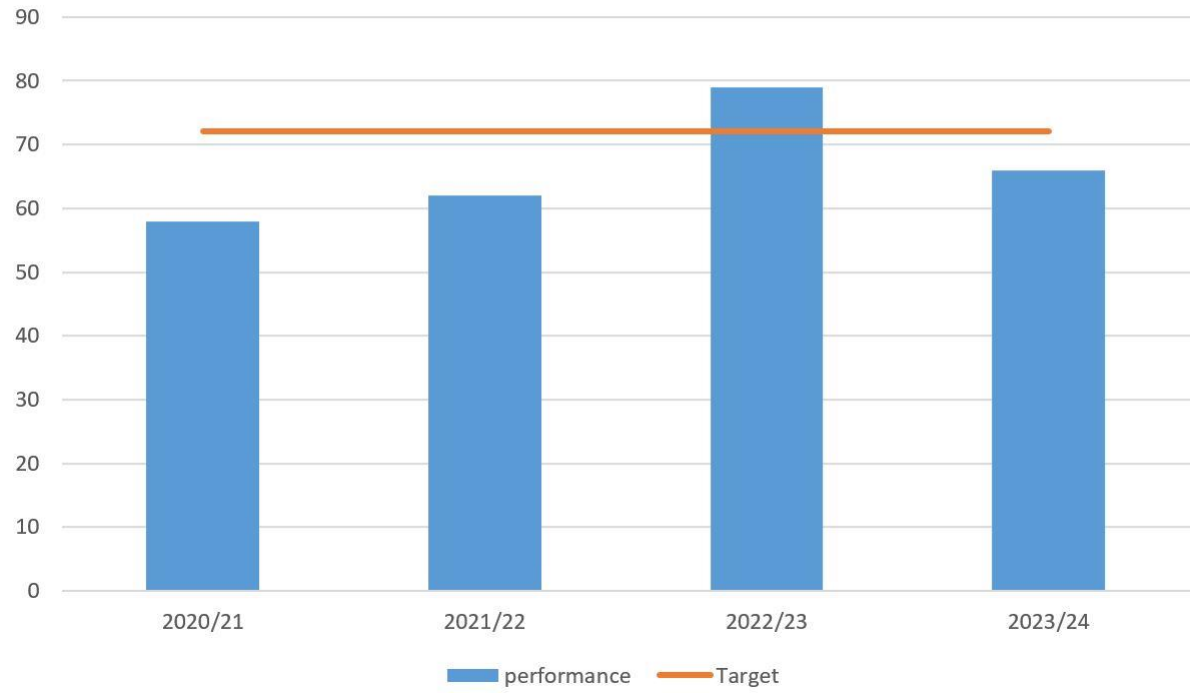
- Other vehicle damage caused whilst any vehicle is stationary during response or routine activity **(RR35)**
- Service vehicle hit by other 3rd party vehicle **(HBOV)**

Total Number of RTC's Involving Service Vehicles

MFRA operate over 150 vehicles from light vehicle types/vans through to emergency fire appliances, specialist vehicles and combined platform ladders (CPL) with individual capability of 28m, 34m and 45m reach. The vehicle fleet is maintained by Workshops who ensure readiness for routine and emergency activity.

The total number of RTC's involving all types of Service vehicles was 66 in 2023/24, this is a reduction of 19.6% (or 13) compared to last year's data.

RR23		
RTC's Involving Fire Service Vehicles		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
79	72	66

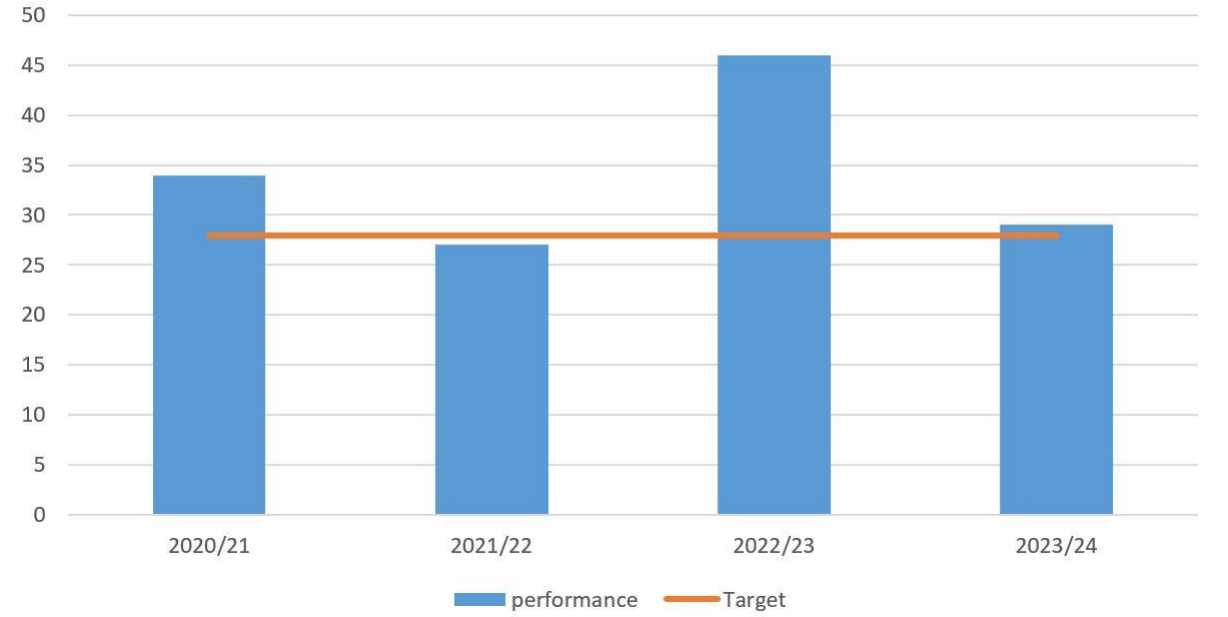


All road traffic collisions are reviewed at the RRRG which is chaired by the H&S Manager. The group, in conjunction with line management, determine the appropriate course of action for each incident, if required. This may result in support/development put in place for the individuals involved in the collisions. Mitigating factors such as responding under pressure, third party actions and driving conditions are always considered. This is with the aim of preventing further occurrence.

Fire Appliance Hit Other Vehicle/Object Whilst Responding to Operational Incidents

MFRA fire appliances responded on 36,240 occasions to 17,354 incidents in 2023/24, with this activity deemed as the Services most risk critical driving category. The following figures relating to RTC's involving fire appliances should be read in the context of a 10% increase in appliance movements in this category. Although appliance movements have increased, collisions have significantly reduced by 36.94% (46 down to 29) during the year.

RR31		
Fire Appliance hit other Vehicle/Object whilst responding to Operational Incident		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
46	28	29



There were 29 collisions involving appliances responding under blue lights, a reduction of 17 on the previous year. This reduction is despite an overall 10% increase in appliance movements.

RRRG feedback, actions and support have contributed to this reduction, complementing improved communications on vehicle driving and training packages. Options such as parking sensors or improving vehicle visibility through marking are considered during meetings. The group continually seek to improve against this indicator and are investigating other teaching methods including visual aids/videos to support all learning styles.

When reviewing the 29 blue light collisions it was identified that the overwhelming trend for this LPI is moving forward under 10 mph, as 22 of the collisions (75%) were in this category. We had 4 collisions that occurred when travelling forward over 10 mph, 3 collisions occurred whilst moving forward with the speed unknown, due to CCTV reporting anomalies.

MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Safety Flash

9m Ladder - Retaining Bolt Failure

A recent near miss has been reported: During the morning check of an appliance it was noted that the black pin on the securing mechanism of the 9m ladder gantry was damaged (see photo below).

All stations are required to check the securing mechanisms on appliances, ensuring that the securing pins are free from defects. If any major concerns are found, please contact Transport/Workshops on extension 6750.

OIC's are requested to communicate this Safety Flash to crews, display on H&S Noticeboard and endorse the Risk Critical Handover Book when completed. **Please complete an email return to the Health & Safety Department to confirm checks have been carried out**.

Email: Health&SafetyDept@merseyfire.gov.uk

Telephone: 0151 296 4862

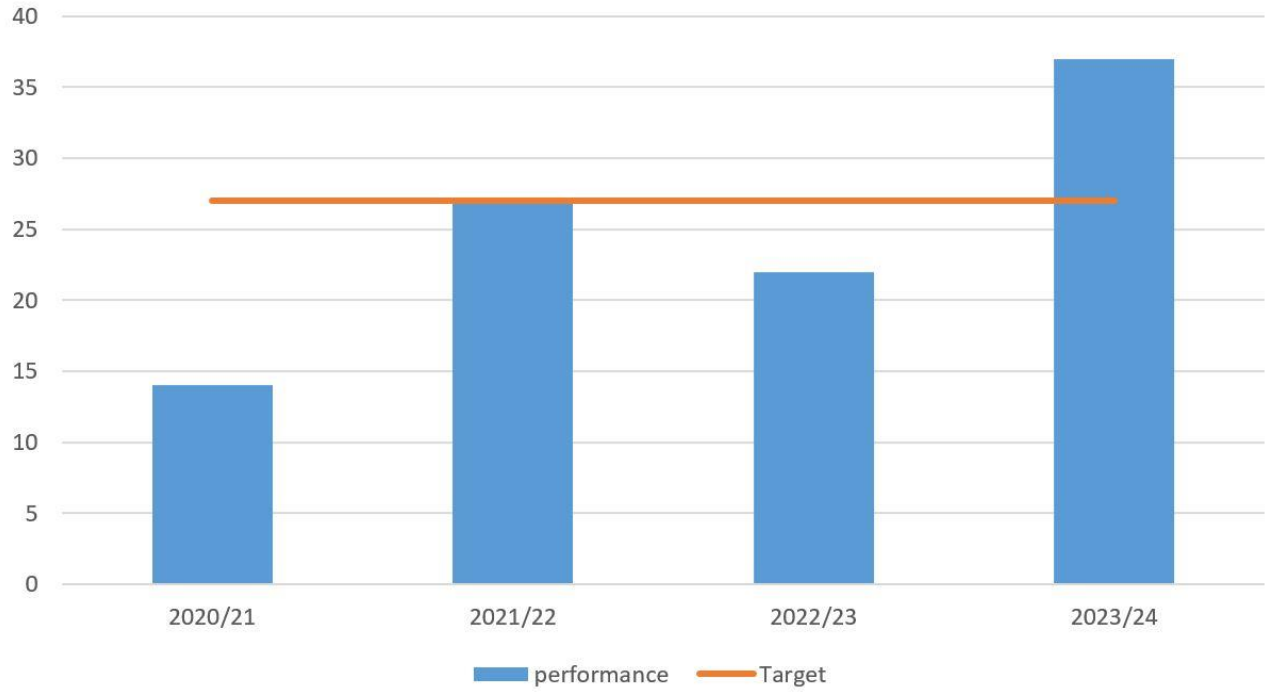
The Service introduced 23 newly qualified Emergency Fire Appliance Drivers (EFAD) in 2023/24.

Frequent communications from the Health and Safety department are circulated, highlighting the identified trends and areas of learning with the aim of reducing the number of incidents.

Station-based Station Managers (SM's) work closely with supervisory managers and staff to help educate and monitor Service drivers. Findings are discussed via monthly standardisation meetings and actioned through the RRRG. Improved working relationships and a culture of trust, support and education have been recognised as the key factor in reducing collisions. Staff are offered supportive goals and monitoring which will aim to reduce the causes of collisions while improving overall driving standards. This has been one of the primary objectives of the Health and Safety department and we are proud to report the overall reductions in collisions for the financial year.

Fire Appliance Hit Other Vehicle/Object Whilst Engaged in Routine Activities

RR32		
Fire Appliance hit other Vehicle/Objects whilst engaged in Routine Activities		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
22	27	37



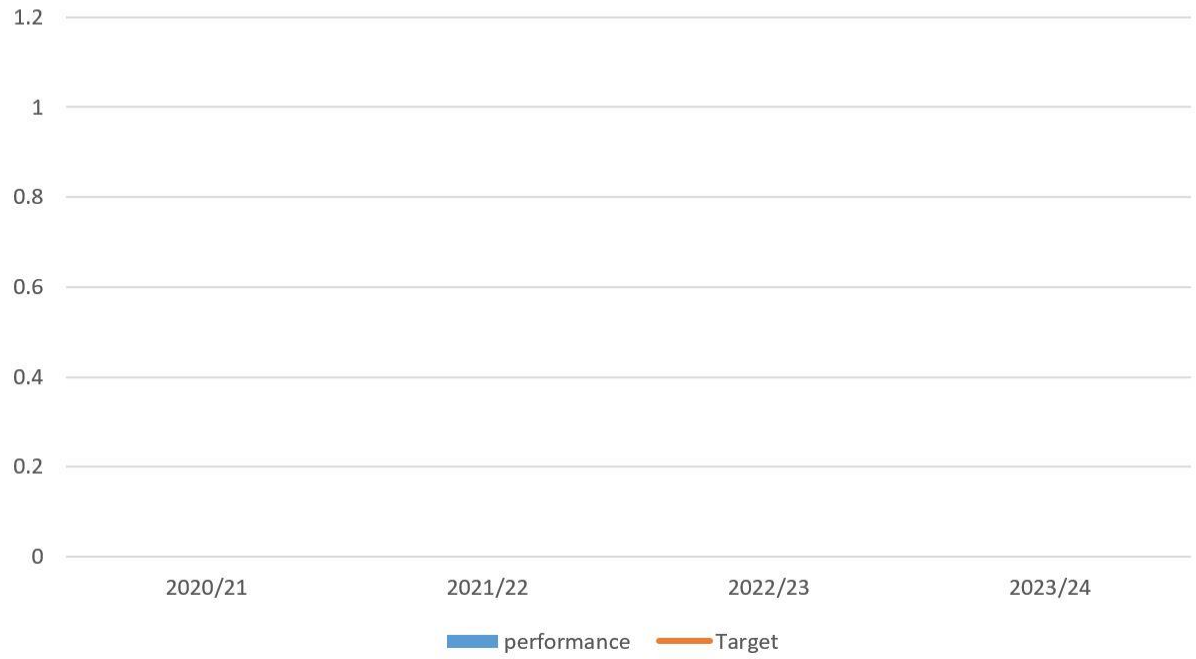
MFRA fire appliances were involved in 61,222 routine movements in 2023/24. The total number of appliance collisions whilst engaged in routine activities was 37. This is an increase of 15 in comparison to last year and 8 above the predicted target.

Similar to blue light collisions, the trend for this LPI is moving forward at a low speed with 22 (59%) of the collisions occurring under 10 mph whilst moving forward. The Service had 5 collisions, which occurred at speeds above 10 mph and 3 occurred whilst travelling forward at an unknown speed. The other 7 collisions all occurred whilst reversing under 10 mph. The RRRG review all incidents of collision for this indicator and provide support to line managers and drivers through support plans, progress reports and evidence supplied via the Health and Safety Management monitoring system.

The Service has progressed 38 new LGV drivers into the operational environment during the 2023/24 period. There is no significant indication that the new driver cohort have disproportionately contributed to the overall reported figure, as the collisions are spread in equal measures across drivers with a range of experience.

Light Vehicle Hit Other Vehicle/Object Whilst Responding to Operational Incident

RR33		
Light Vehicle hit other Vehicle/Objects whilst responding to an Operational Incident.		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
0	Quality Assurance	0



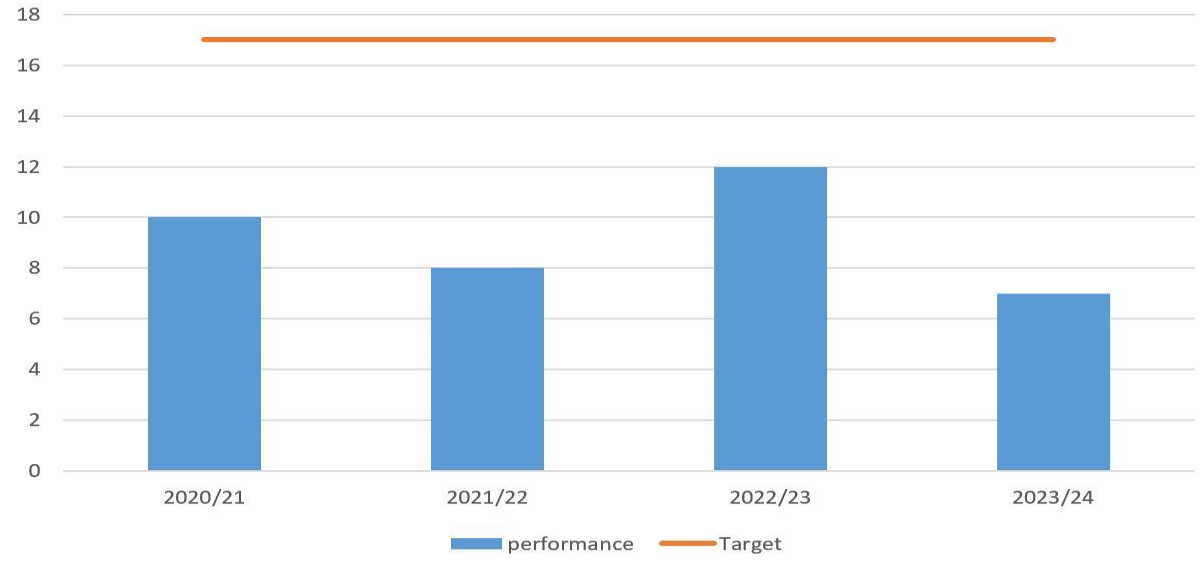
This category covers the blue light response by the Service in light vehicles, which is generally the Senior Officer group during emergency response activity. This category is not aligned to a target but is monitored for trends.

Senior Officers mobilised to operational incidents on 4,641 occasions in 2023/24. A 15% increase on last year and for the eighth year in succession, there have been no collisions recorded in this category. All senior officers attend Emergency Light Vehicle Driving (ELVD) training refresher days once every two years.

Light Vehicle Hit Other Vehicle/Object Whilst Engaged in Routine Activity

The number of vehicle collisions involving light fleet vehicles was 7, a decrease of 5 on the previous year.

RR34		
Light Vehicle hit other Vehicle/Objects whilst engaged in Routine Activity		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
12	17	7

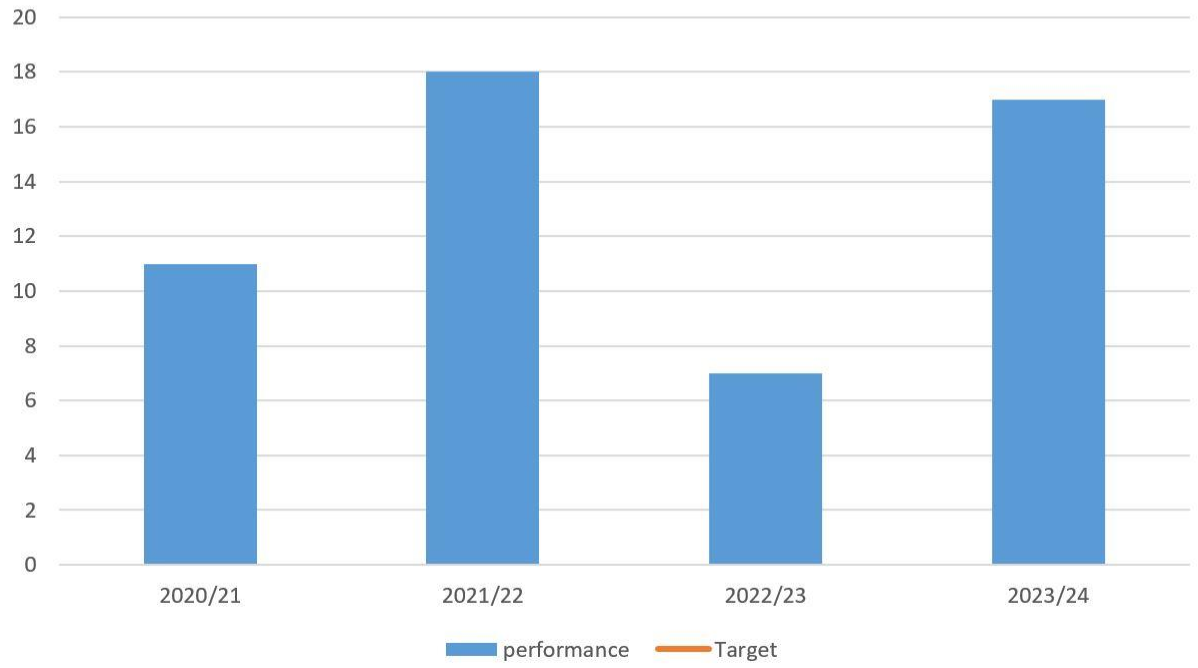


In analysing the data for trends, 3 of the 7 collisions (43%) occurred whilst moving forwards, while 4 (57%) occurred whilst reversing. All collisions in this category occurred at speeds below 10 mph. To qualify to drive a Service vehicle, staff must have a full and valid UK licence which is recorded via MFRS training driving school staff. In addition to training and validation, they must also complete Service medicals and be of sufficient capability to operate vehicles.

This category has been consistently under target for the previous 5 years.

Other Vehicle Damage Caused Whilst Any Vehicle is Stationary during Response or Routine Activity

RR35		
Other Vehicle Damage Caused Whilst Any Vehicle is Stationary During Response or Routine Activity		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
7	Quality Assurance	17



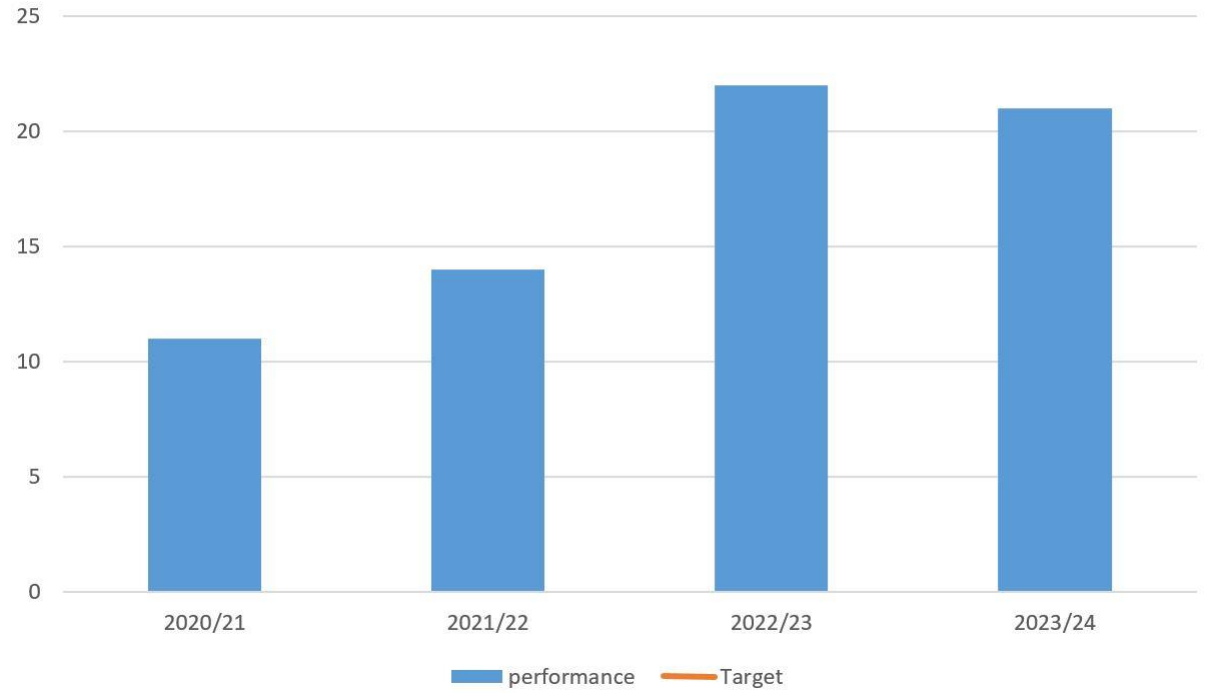
This category was introduced in April 2019 to capture vehicle damage which was not caused by a collision, for both fire appliances and light vehicles. This category is not given a target but is monitored for trends.

There have been 17 reports of vehicle damage whilst the vehicle is stationary during 2023/24. Investigative evidence such as Service or local CCTV, driver statements, logbooks and vehicle inspections are used to determine root causes where possible. Whilst often difficult to establish a cause, the H&S Department proactively investigate all vehicle damage.

This type of vehicle damage is often only picked up at the time of taking ownership of vehicle, when conducting an 'A' routine inspection or when the vehicle attends Workshops.

Service Vehicle Hit by Other 3rd Party Vehicle

Hit by Other Vehicles		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
22	Quality Assurance	21



The RRRG monitors all collisions involving Service vehicles where a 3rd party has been at fault. There were 21 collisions during 2023/24 which is decrease of 1 from last year.

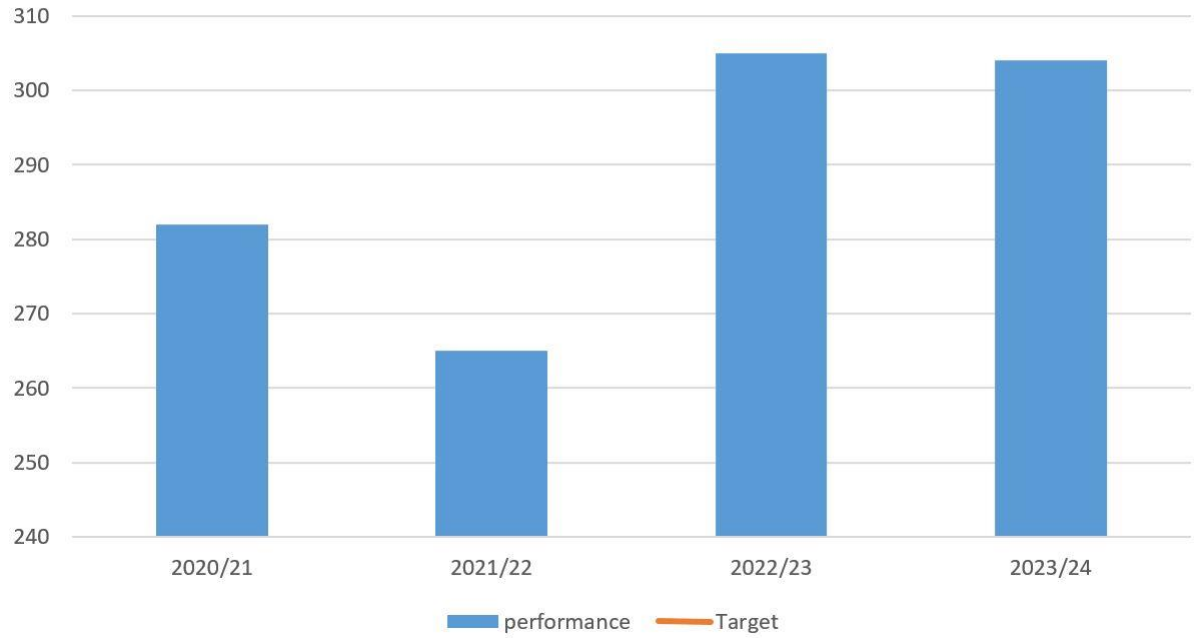
3rd party collisions are closely monitored by the H&S Department to ensure the welfare of staff members involved is looked after.

Collisions where a Service vehicle is hit by a 3rd party are discussed during each RRRG meeting.

Number of Station Manager Monthly H&S Inspections

The Station Manager's Monthly Health & Safety Inspection monitors station records, operational readiness, station accommodation and preparedness of appliances and equipment. The Inspection is recorded as a management audit on the OSHENS software and monitored by the Health and Safety department. There is no target for this indicator it is quality assurance only.

Number of Station Manager Monthly H&S Inspections		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
305	Quality Assurance	304

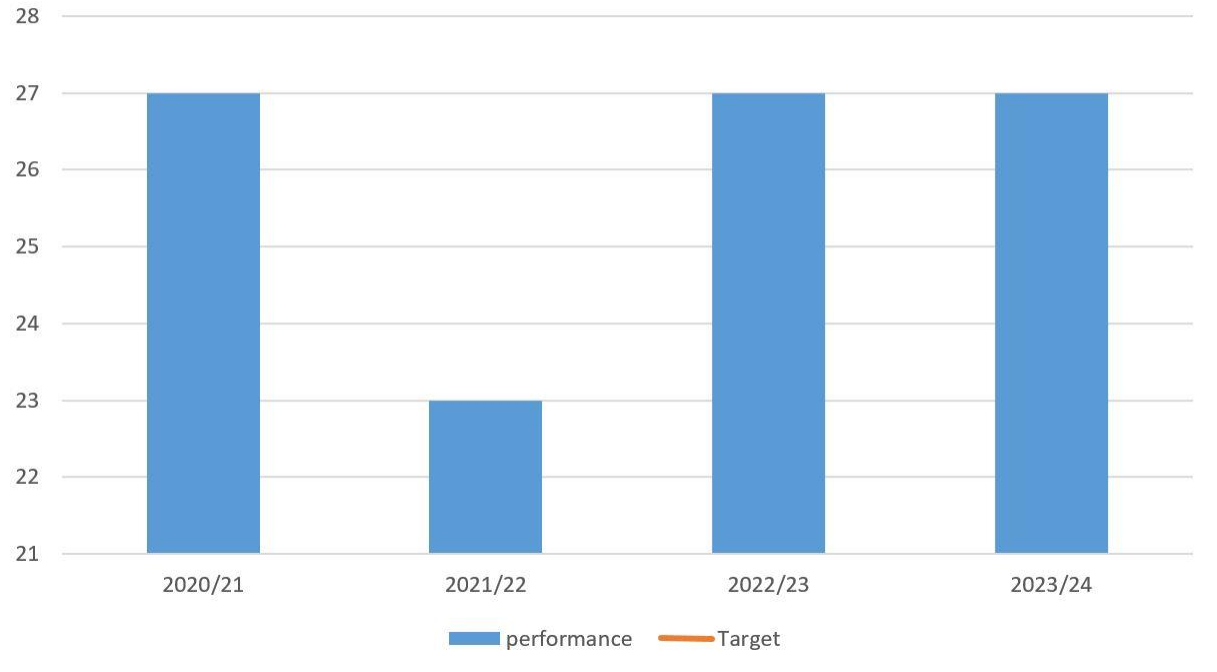


For the period of 2023/24, there have been 304 Station Manager H&S Inspections. No significant trends were identified from the inspections. The fact that no significant trends were identified is a positive. However, it is important to continue with regular inspections to ensure that the required safety standards are maintained.

Number of Annual General H&S Audits

The Health and Safety department have the responsibility of carrying out General H&S Audits annually across the 27 MFRS sites. All locations were audited in 2023/24. There is no target for this indicator it is quality assurance only.

Number of Annual General H&S Audits		
Previous Year Performance	2023/24 Service Plan Target	2023/24
27	Quality Assurance	27



Findings from all audits are logged through the normal fault reporting process to the relevant facilities management company and staff are encouraged to report issues with immediate safety implications through the OSHENS near miss/safety observation software. All findings are then considered and reported through the Workplace Review Group for discussion on a six-weekly basis.

Welfare Performance

The Health and Safety department work closely in conjunction with Occupational Health to support the robust welfare arrangements that are in place for members of staff. MFRS staff operate in diverse roles and not only are required to maintain high levels of fitness but will occasionally be exposed to traumatic situations. Occupational Health provide mental and physical health support and have the expertise to refer staff to specialist care when appropriate. MFRS utilise Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) trained officers to defuse and debrief staff following operational exposure to traumatic or difficult experiences and can request further counselling through Occupational Health Services.

As an overview for the period 2023/24, MFRS have completed the following:

Occupational Health Appointments:

There were a total of 2476 Occupational Health medical appointments undertaken in the financial year 2023-2024. These can be broken down into:

Health Screenings (Operational Staff)	132
LGV medicals	57
Driver Validation/Non-Uniform Health Screening	102
Early Intervention	322
Management Referrals	68
Uniformed pre-employments	39
Non uniformed pre-employments	70
Other (Long term sick review/Clinical Check/Other duties reviews etc)	1686
Total medical appointments	**2476**

Additionally, through Occupational Health, referrals for the following were made:

MRI/Scan Referrals	29
Physiotherapy appointments	487
Fitness Tests	421
Nutritionist appointments	73
Safety Glasses issued	9
Eyesight vouchers issued	3
Ill Health Retirements	3

As referenced above, the CISM mechanism has resulted in the following:

Critical Incidents (CI) declared	99
CI Defusing sessions	191
CI Debriefs (elevated support)	18

The Occupational Health team provide professionally trained counsellors. During 2023/24, the following sessions were provided by the staff below:

Kelly Patterson (Internal Counsellor)	221 appointments
Vicky Moore (External Counsellor)	187 appointments
Janine Unwin (External CBT)	174 appointments
Total therapy appointments	**582**

The welfare support offered by MFRA, contributes to overall staff wellbeing in the workplace and provides an encompassing level and range of services to ensure that the physical and mental health of employees is sustained.

Reducing Exposure to Contaminants Project:

MFRA recognise the reported findings of recent years in relation to firefighting being deemed a “carcinogenic” risk. The Health and Safety department have a dedicated Station Manager project lead who has, in conjunction with the Health and Safety Manager, made significant progress in this area. Highlights of progress include:

- Specific decontamination measures for the incident ground and methods of safely containing and storing kit on return to station and prior to laundry.
- Enhanced education, products, and training on exposure to “fire effluents”, including self-care, hygiene, and improved discipline both at the incident and post incident, to remove surface products and reduce overall exposure.
- Signage, instruction, and education for contaminant identification.
- Enhanced Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) provision, in particular, an increase in flash hood supplies.
- Appliance cleaning routines with key understanding for staff.

The project is monitored through a strategic gap analysis in accordance with academic reports and NFCC guidance. The present gap analysis for MFRA is managed via the H&S team and project lead. Areas to explore for 2024/25 include:

- Zoning of fire stations, workshops and training facilities to further reduce any residual risk of exposure to contaminants by prohibiting internal wearing/use of fire kit.
- Training and competence packages for staff in accordance with local, regional and national guidance.
- Additional guidance for staff who may come into contact with fire kit/equipment but who do not fulfill operational roles.
- The design of a specific operational assurance programme to embed compliance of service policies and procedures in reducing potential exposure to contaminants.

We will continue to work with internal and external stakeholders including, Representative Bodies and the NFCC North West contaminants working group, in our response to reducing exposure. The North West region, as part of the NFCC project into contaminants will focus specifically on training and competence.

A Look Forward to 2024/25

The Health and Safety department will use the findings of this report to continue to effectively manage performance and strengthen the positive H&S culture that already exists within the organisation.

We will:

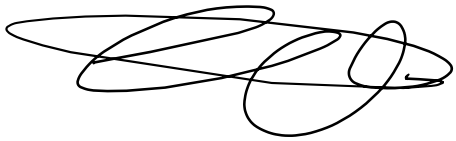
- Look to further reduce the number of work-related accident & injuries, and any associated absence.
- Continue to maintain the positive culture of Near Miss reporting.
- Use an intelligence led approach and data analysis to help minimise appliance collisions, with a real focus on collisions during blue light response.
- Produce a Low-Speed Manoeuvre (LSM) video and associated mandatory Mersey Learn modules to increase awareness of responsibilities to raise standards.
- We will trial the use of parking sensors on a number of appliances based on 3 years of collision data.
- We will continue to engage and support H&S representatives at Service locations, and those of Trade Unions, to achieve Organisational and Departmental objectives and common H&S goals.
- Ensure learning identified through H&S related incidents is used to improve the safety of staff.
- Work closely with H&S practitioners through established NFCC Regional and National structures, ensuring shared learning and understanding of H&S matters.
- Implement Zoning Plans and signage on our Community Fire Stations to further reduce the potential exposure to contaminants.
- Ops Assurance will monitor compliance and adherence to policies and procedure for reducing exposure to fire contaminants.
- Work with colleagues from the Command Department to fully embed Command validations during Off Station Exercises.

Furthermore, and in line with the Operational Response Functional Plan, we will work to achieve in the following areas:

- **Reduce Exposure:** Continue our work on reducing firefighter contamination, enhancing our procedures to provide the most current information, instruction, and training for reducing exposure to firefighter contamination from toxic fire effluents. As a part of the NFCC North West Contaminants working group which reports to the North West Operational Resilience Committee, we will continue to work together with our North West regional colleagues in this area.
- **OSHENS System:** Review the functionality of the MFRS H&S management software system (OSHENS) to inform on long term suitability. In support of this we will, explore applications available for Health and Safety management to improve or replace the current Health and Safety recording system.
- **Subsurface Incidents:** Support our colleagues from Operational Preparedness to explore the expansion of our Operational Response to subsurface incidents.

Finally, the team will continue to deliver against the H&S commitments made within the Operational Response Functional Plan for 2024/25.

GM Ged Knock – Health and Safety Manager



SM Kev Hollis – Health and Safety Team

K. Hollis