

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority



Statement of Assurance 2013/14

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1 Statement of Assurance

This Statement of Assurance details the financial, governance and operational arrangements that Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority had in place for the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014. The Statement is written in accordance with the [guidance](#) published by the Department for Communities and Local Government on 'Statements of Assurance for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England'.

I am satisfied that Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority ensured that its business was conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money was properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. I am further satisfied that the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England have been met.

I am proud of the fire and rescue service we provide and of the people who work so hard to make all of our communities safer.

On behalf of the Fire and Rescue Authority, I will continue to progress the matters identified under 'Future Improvements' and ensure full public consultation on relevant matters arising from the Authority's dynamic Integrated Risk Management Plan. I am committed to continually developing the organisation to best provide a resilient and effective fire and rescue service to serve the citizens of Suffolk and its visitors.

Signed:



Councillor Colin Spence
Cabinet Member for Public Protection
Suffolk County Council



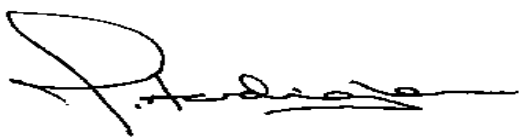
2 Introduction

As Chief Fire Officer of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service I am pleased to introduce our Statement of Assurance for 2013/14.

The statement is a requirement of the 2012 [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#) and reinforces my commitment to provide you, the members of our communities, with clear information about how we manage public funds and assure the effectiveness of our financial, governance and operational fire service arrangements.

Suffolk's Fire and Rescue Service provides a 24/7 emergency response service to deal with fires, road traffic collisions and a wide range of other emergencies. Our firefighters and officers deliver activities aimed at reducing fires, increasing community safety and enforcing fire safety legislation. The service we provide helps ensure Suffolk is a safe county. This means that deaths and injuries from fires and road traffic collisions are at the lowest level possible; fire-related crime is low; businesses are aware of their responsibilities regarding fire safety and people feel safe in their homes.

Signed:



Mark Hardingham
Chief Fire Officer



3 Scope of Responsibility

Fire authorities carry out their functions within a defined statutory and policy framework. The key legislation and acts defining these requirements are:

- i. Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- ii. Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- iii. Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- iv. Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007
- v. Localism Act 2011
- vi. Fire and Rescue National Framework for England
- vii. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is the statutory fire and rescue service for Suffolk. It is part of Suffolk County Council (SCC), whose councillor elected members form the fire authority.

This annual Statement of Assurance must provide clear and accessible information. The Statement must enable communities, local authorities, central government and other partners to make an informed assessment of their fire service's performance. The Statement is used as a source of information for the Secretary of State's biennial report, required by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

The Act is the principal legislation for fire and rescue services in England and Wales. The Act imposes upon every fire authority a duty to provide a fire and rescue service that is: equipped to extinguish fires; protect life and property from fires; rescue people from road traffic collisions and respond to other emergencies. Services must also be able to receive and respond to calls for assistance; ensure that staff are properly trained and equipped and gather information to deliver a safe and effective service.

The Act also requires the Fire Authority to provide communities with fire safety education and advice to reduce deaths and injuries from fire. The Secretary of State is permitted by the Act to publish National Framework requirements that set central government's priorities for authorities; fire authorities are required to pay due regard to the Framework.

4 Financial Statement

SFRS has duties under the Local Government Act 1999 to ensure that public money is properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Service follows the council's financial procedures for budget setting, budget monitoring, and the production of final accounts.

The county council's Chief Finance Officer prepares the annual Statement of Accounts, which includes the fire and rescue service. The accounts detail the council's financial performance in accordance with the practices set out in the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) code of practice. The final accounts are submitted to the Audit Committee for approval.

CIPFA is the professional body for people in public finance. It has members throughout public services, national audit agencies, major accountancy firms and in other bodies where public money must be effectively and efficiently managed. The organisation champions high performance in public services, using experience and insight to give clear and practical advice.

Suffolk County Council's annual Statement of Accounts is examined by external auditors. The auditors provide independent assessment that the statement presents a true and fair view, and that appropriate accounting and financial systems are in place. Their report includes a review of arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

The council's financial statement for the year ending 31 March 2014 has been audited externally in line with Audit Commission Act (1998) guidance. External audit agreed the accounts presented an accurate view of the financial position of Suffolk County Council at 31 March 2014 and true record of expenditure and income for the financial year 2013/14. The [Statement of Accounts](#) for 2013/14 and external auditor's report are published on Suffolk County Council's website.

The council's internal audit department provides an independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the council's system of internal control, which informs the annual Governance Statement. The head of internal audit has provided substantial assurance of both financial and non-financial systems. This provides confidence in the effectiveness of internal control arrangements of the council.



CIPFA publish annual financial performance data for all English authorities, enabling comparison between fire authorities. Data for 2013/14 shows Suffolk is performing well in comparison to other fire and rescue services in England.

Statistics show Suffolk as the lowest cost-per-head of population of any fire service in England, with an expenditure of £26.95 per head, compared to the average cost of £36.66. The figure for Suffolk represents 73% of the average cost nationally and 55% of the most costly fire and rescue service.

Suffolk compares favourably to other authorities in all areas. For example, the Service is in the lowest quartile in:

- i. Cost per head of population
- ii. Cost per hectare
- iii. Cost per incident
- iv. Cost per fire station, fire appliance and incident
- v. Ratio of uniformed officers per fire station

The Suffolk Fire Service budget for 2013/14 was £23.954m (including £2m corporate overheads) with a confirmed full-year spend of £23.956m. The budget for 13/14 was reduced 3.5% from the previous year as a range of efficiencies were introduced to manage the continuing outcome of the comprehensive spending review. Throughout the year the Service maintained its efficiency agenda and a small overspend of £2,332 was realised: this overspend represents 0.001% of the overall budget.

In addition to normal activity, revenue funding continued to support issues such as increasing blue-light collaboration, revisions to the full-time firefighter shift system, improvements to rescue capabilities and enhanced fleet, equipment and property provision.

As of 1 April 2013, £694,671 was held as reserve funding and this was increased slightly at year-end with a reserve of £730,181. Capital spend of £2.9m, predominantly for provision of vehicle fleet and premises, was realised over the financial year. Residual capital finance of £3.7m, largely committed to fleet and premises replacement, was available as of 31 March 2014.

The fire service budget has been reduced by approximately £3.3m since 2010/11, with further savings anticipated in future years. This is due to government grant reductions. To make this reduction, significant changes to service delivery and back office support have been made and work continues to identify further areas where changes can be made. The service seeks to meet statutory, legal and moral obligations in the most cost-effective way and will continue to explore and implement further innovative opportunities to do so.

5 Governance

The fire authority for Suffolk is the Suffolk County Council Full Council, which has 75 councillors. Most of the fire authority's daily business is discharged through the council's Cabinet. The Cabinet Member for Public Protection, which includes the fire and rescue service, is Councillor Colin Spence and the Assistant Cabinet Member for Public Protection is Councillor Andrew Reid.

Suffolk County Council (as the fire authority) is responsible for ensuring it operates in accordance with the law. It must ensure public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and is used economically, efficiently and effectively. The fire authority also has a legal duty to continually improve the way its functions are carried out.

Governance principles adopted by the council follow those set out in the document: 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' produced by CIPFA and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives. The Suffolk County Council constitution sets out commitment to good governance and describes the council's governance framework and processes.

[Suffolk's constitution](#) is published on the council's website. The Scheme of Delegation for the council has been recently updated as part of a wider county council revision.

The council publishes an annual Governance Statement through the Audit Committee. The statement sets out the council's governance arrangements, which include the fire and rescue service. The statement for 2013/14 was approved on 30 September 2014 and is available on the council's website.

Policy development for the fire and rescue service is managed through a cross-party Public Protection Policy Development Panel. Other committees are established for Audit, Scrutiny and associated functions.

The Chief Fire Officer is a member of the council's Corporate Management Team and reports to the Chief Executive. The Chief Fire Officer has additional responsibility for Trading Standards, Community Safety and Emergency Planning. There are monthly 'leadership team' meetings between the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet, where policy development is discussed in advance of Cabinet and Full Council meetings.

There is a close working relationship between the Chief Fire Officer, senior management team and Cabinet Member. Outside of informal day-to-day arrangements, this is conducted through weekly one-to-one meetings between the Cabinet Member and Chief Fire Officer. In addition there are monthly formal written briefings for the Cabinet Member and Assistant Cabinet Member, supported by the Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

Opposition party members are involved in fire service business through their representation at the Public Protection Policy Development Panel, through monthly written briefings and meetings with the lead member of the opposition party and regular informal briefings to the remaining parties.

There is a golden thread to the county council and fire and rescue service meeting structures:

- i. SCC Leadership Team (Corporate Management Team and Cabinet) – CFO attendee
- ii. SCC Corporate Management Team – CFO attendee
- iii. Public Protection Directorate Management Team (SFRS, Trading Standards) – CFO Chairman
- iv. SFRS Fire Strategy Group (Brigade Managers, Area Commanders and equivalent) – CFO Chairman
- v. SFRS Budget meeting, Directorate meeting, Department meetings, Individual Performance Agreements.

Leadership of the Service is supported by a wide range of communication channels. These include senior officer face-to-face visits and presentations, regular manager forums, weekly information bulletin, quarterly CFO Managers' brief, senior manager key messages and a regular CFO Blog. In June and July 2013 every member of staff was afforded the opportunity to attend and engage with a presentation and discussion about the financial and potential service delivery challenges of the next four years.

Political engagement with fire service representative bodies (Fire Brigades Union, Fire Officers Association and Retained Firefighters Union) is managed through a Fire Service Joint Forum. This is a cross-party councillor group supported by the Chief Fire Officer and senior staff. It is chaired alternately by the Cabinet Member and a representative body chairman. The group consider issues associated with fire and rescue service employee relations and policy

development. The forum complements the comprehensive arrangements that support effective industrial relations management across the Service.

6 Performance Management

The fire service monitors and manages different areas of performance to ensure the best possible service is provided to the people of Suffolk. An important part of the performance management system is key performance indicators. These are set out in our 2013/14 Performance Outturn Report and are routinely monitored by senior management and the Cabinet Member, providing opportunity to consider the fire service's performance. Some key areas of performance from the 2013/14 Outturn Report are set out below:

Fires

During 2013/14 there was a slight increase of just over 5% in the number of primary fires attended (fires in buildings, vehicles and outdoor structures, or any fire involving casualties, rescues, or fires attended by five or more fire engines). The overall trend remains down, with primary fires at only 67% of the 2009/10 figure (1,158). Community safety interventions continue to remain effective but targeted interventions will be reviewed during 2014/15.

The number of accidental dwelling fires for 2013/14 is within half of one per cent of that recorded for 2012/13 (265/266). This figure is 74% of that for 2010/11 (360), indicating that Prevention interventions are now embedded and effective and smoke detector ownership common.



Following the increase seen in 2012/13 in fires in commercial premises, the figure recorded for 2013/14 shows a slight downward turn (146/143), in keeping with the longer-term trend. Last year the fire service attended 1,790 false alarms, which is a slight reduction from the 1,800 attended in 2012/13. This figure is relatively low compared to national data and has been achieved by the introduction in 2012 of an Automatic Fire Alarm Attendance policy.

People Killed or Injured in Fires

Compared to national levels, Suffolk has a low annual fire death rate with an average of two deaths per year for the previous two years. This figure increased to three deaths for 2013/14 but remains proportionately very low, reflecting the relative affluence of Suffolk's citizens and the success of education and home fire safety initiatives. Our ambition for 2014/15 and future years remains to achieve zero fire deaths in Suffolk.

During 2013/14, firefighters rescued 14 people from fires and the number of people injured in fires rose by 10 to 26. However, this represents 50% of the 52 injuries recorded in 2011/12. We will continue to strive to reverse this trend in 2014/15 and in the future, with targeted intervention activities and increased delivery of Safer Home Visits.

Road Traffic Collisions

After a significant increase in the number of people killed or seriously injured on Suffolk's roads in 2012/13 (+11% (348)), the figure for 2013/14 shows a marked decrease of over 28% and a reduction of almost 20% from the figure recorded in 2011/12. We rescued 124 people from vehicle collisions, a 37% reduction from the 196 people rescued in 2012/13.

This downward trend is particularly welcome and we believe, is partly linked to the increased volume and effectiveness of the targeted intervention work undertaken by our staff and our partners. Road traffic collision intervention remains a core element of fire and rescue Prevention activity and during 2013/14 we worked closely with stakeholders to successfully resolve and introduce a Fire Bike scheme, aimed at reducing the number of motorcycle accident victims on Suffolk's roads.



Comparison of 2012/13 and 2013/14 incident statistics

Incident type	2012/13 outturn	2013/14 outturn	% difference
Primary fires	737	776	+5.2%
Accidental dwelling fires	266	265	-0.5%
Fire in commercial premises	146	143	-2%
Fire deaths	2	3	+50%
Fire injuries	16	26	+62.5%
Road traffic collision killed and injured	348	250	-28.2%
Automatic fire alarm false alarms attended	1800	1790	-0.5%

On-call Firefighter Availability

Every fire station in Suffolk is crewed by on-call firefighters and they are the only firefighters at the 29 fire stations outside of the main towns of Ipswich, Bury, Lowestoft, Haverhill and Newmarket. The availability of on-call firefighters is therefore very important: overall availability in 2013/14 was 88.34%, reduced from 90.12% in 2012/13. Availability is much improved at nights and weekends, but during the working week it often reduces to approximately 75% due to the primary employment commitments of our on-call firefighters.

Whilst availability remains at a reasonable level, the downward trend reflects previously-identified factors such as: the primary employment commitments of our firefighters; the need for staff to travel further afield to secure employment; changing socio-demographics and a less community-focused society. The continuing economic environment understandably impacts on employers being less able to release staff for firefighting duties and on the self-employed focusing on their primary livelihood.

999 Emergency Response Times

The time it takes us to attend property fires and road traffic collisions (RTCs) has remained broadly consistent for a number of years, with small annual movements up and down depending on the number of emergency calls, the areas where emergencies occur and some changes to service delivery. At a national level there is a trend in an increase in response

times which is attributed in part to increases in traffic volume and congestion in some areas, and other factors.

Performance Standard	Target	2012/13 Outturn	2013/14 Outturn
Performance Standard 1 - Attend 80% of property fires within 11 minutes of alert (1 st fire engine)	80%	84.40%	77.51%
Performance Standard 2 - Attend 80% of property fires within 16 minutes of alert (2 nd fire engine)	80%	76.34%	78.37%
Performance Standard 3 - Attend 80% of RTCs within 13 minutes of alert	80%	77.80%	77.45%

Attendance times for the first fire engine to property fires increased during 2013/14 but the time taken for a second appliance to arrive improved. Both figures are slightly below target. Attendance times to road traffic collisions have improved from 76.34% to 78.37%, which is now less than 2% below our target. Recorded times are influenced heavily by the availability of our firefighters and fire engines.

Service performance against other fire and rescue services is measured primarily through Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountability (CIPFA) benchmarking data. Suffolk is routinely shown as low-cost and high-performing in all areas.

The following charts are drawn from a more comprehensive benchmarking report that compares Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service to 44 fire authorities in England (where current data is available). The data is drawn from the 2013/14 Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounts (CIPFA).

Table 1- Suffolk remains the lowest cost per head of population fire and rescue service in the country. Suffolk's current cost is around £10 below the national average (£36.66 per person) and has increased by 20 pence from the 2012/13 figure (£26.75).





Table 1 - Comparison with all Fire Authorities 2013/14	
Efficiency - £ per head of population (avg £36.66)	
Upper Quartile - HIGHEST £ COST 	£40.38 - £48.61
Mid to Upper Quartile 	£36.19 - £39.92
Mid to Lower Quartile 	£33.45 - £35.79
Lower Quartile - LOWEST £ COST 	£26.95 - £32.30 SUFFOLK = £26.95

Table 2- The chart shows Suffolk has the lowest cost in England and Wales per full time equivalent member of staff. We have reduced costs in this area by almost £2,000 (or 7%) per FTE from the 2012/13 figure (£28,804.421). The reduced number of firefighters, back office staff and senior managers reflects reductions in government funding and efficiencies in service delivery.








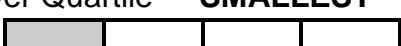
Table 2 - Comparison with all Fire Authorities	
Efficiency - £ per Staff FTE (avg £40,522.49)	
Upper Quartile - HIGHEST £ COST 	£44,068.33 - £55,738.44
Mid to Upper Quartile 	£39,843.85 - £43,874.06
Mid to Lower Quartile 	£36,919.59 - £39,757.59
Lower Quartile - LOWEST £ COST 	£26,862.95 - £36,508.50 SUFFOLK £26,862.95

Table 3 - Suffolk is in the upper quartile in terms of the size of the area it covers. This is an important consideration for the location of fire stations and ensuring that rural communities continue to have a fire station relatively nearby, able to respond quickly to an emergency.

Table 3 - Comparison with all Fire Authorities	
Demographics - Area in Square Miles (avg 1,054)	
Upper Quartile - LARGEST 	1,369 - 3,208 SUFFOLK = 1,467
Mid to Upper Quartile 	980 - 1,358
Mid to Lower Quartile 	634 - 936
Lower Quartile - SMALLEST 	147 - 607

Internal and External Operational Assurance

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has a range of internal and external audit and review arrangements. An officer focuses on audit and review of operational performance at incidents and in fire stations and departments. This includes focus on areas such as operational incident command and completion of risk-critical training records. Fire stations and departments are audited every three years.

Significant 999 emergency incidents are followed by formal debrief at which the main parties and officers are represented. This is an established process to resolve issues and improve standards, procedures and equipment. In 2013/14, eight debriefs were completed and their outcomes used to influence provision of training, equipment and operational protocols. The Service's internal audit and review arrangements are supported by the county council audit team who agree corporate area audits of the fire service.

The Local Government Association (LGA) and Chief Fire Officers' Association work in partnership to provide fire services with opportunity to access external peer challenge. Peer challenge is available once every three years and the most recent review in Suffolk was carried out in December 2013. The Service produced a comprehensive self-assessment document against the review's key assessment areas. The self-assessment was then subject to a four-day on-site scrutiny by an external Chief Fire Officer, an elected member peer, an officer from the LGA and two senior fire service officers.

The [peer challenge report](#) is available on the council's website. An extract from the report summary states that the Service '*is delivering good and cost effective outcomes for the community*' and that it has '*effective leadership from the newly-appointed Chief Fire Officer and the Cabinet Member...*' The outcome of the peer review is being used to inform future Service plans.

7 Operational

In 2013/14, Combined Control staff answered in the region of 8,200 '999' calls and sent firefighters to over 5,000 emergencies. Of these, over 800 were serious fires (including 265 accidental fires in the home) and 324 were road traffic collisions. The highest proportion of calls attended by firefighters was false alarms (1790/5000).

Operational uniformed roles in the fire and rescue service are based on seven nationally-defined roles, these are set out below:

1. Firefighter
2. Crew Commander
3. Watch Commander
4. Station Commander
5. Group Commander
6. Area Commander
7. Brigade Commander



Suffolk has about 180 full-time and 450 on-call (part-time) firefighters. Full-time firefighters are based in Ipswich, Bury, Lowestoft, Haverhill and Newmarket and there are on-call firefighters at each of our 35 fire stations. Given the largely rural nature of the county, the Service is very reliant on on-call firefighters, who are the only firefighters at 29 fire stations and the only firefighters at a further 2 stations at nights and weekends.

Most of the Service's middle and senior managers are uniformed officers (Station Commander to Brigade Commander). They have a dual managerial and operational incident command role. Suffolk has 26 operational officers on a 24/7 rota pattern, up to and including the Chief Fire Officer. A further 30 supervisory uniformed officers (Crew Commander and Watch Commander) work in functional areas of Prevention, Protection, Support Services and Training, but are also trained to attend fires and other emergencies if required.

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

The National Framework was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in July 2012 and sets out central government's priorities and objectives for fire authorities. The framework sets out high-level expectations but does not prescribe operational matters which it considers are best-managed by local authorities in consultation with communities. The priorities in the framework are for authorities to:

- i. Identify and assess foreseeable risks, making provision for prevention and protection activities and for appropriate response to operational incidents.
- ii. Work in partnership with local communities and partners
- iii. Be accountable to local communities

The fire authority has considered the expectations of the National Framework and ensured these are met in an appropriate manner. Many of these expectations are included in this Statement of Assurance.

Integrated Risk Management Plan

In November 2013, SFRS publicised its 2014/17 Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for consultation, setting out a four-year programme to manage risk across Suffolk.

In accordance with requirements of the National Framework, the fire authority reviews and evolves the IRMP annually.

Suffolk's plan details how we effectively manage foreseeable risks such as house fires, road traffic collisions and other incidents. These risks are identified using professional judgement and information about previous incidents we have attended, supported by computer software; mapping information; national intelligence and information from partner organisations. This data is brought together to enable us to determine the best way to deliver our service to manage that risk.

Following formal public consultation, the [2014/17 IRMP](#) was finalised in early 2014 and can be viewed on the county council website.

Mutual Aid Arrangements and Agreements

The authority is a signatory to the National Mutual Aid Protocol. This protocol sets out the terms under which an authority may expect assistance from, or provide assistance to, another authority in the event of a serious national incident such as flooding and terrorist attacks.

The Service also has formal mutual aid arrangements in place with its neighbouring fire services in Essex, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. These provide for regular cross-border support and assistance in the event of a fire or other emergency incident.

The severe flood events witnessed across the UK during the winter of 2013/14 were testament to the effectiveness of mutual aid protocols. Suffolk resources were deployed for extended periods to Somerset and Berkshire and significant national assets were made available to Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex during tidal flooding events during December 2013.



The authority has an agreement with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority for the provision of a Combined 999 Control function based in Cambridgeshire, serving both counties. The arrangement is governed through a formal legal agreement and performance is managed through Executive and Operational Governance Boards.

The Service is an important partner in the Suffolk Local Resilience Forum. The forum is a multi-agency partnership of emergency services and other organisations involved with emergency response in communities. The forum ensures that agencies work together to develop and practice appropriate arrangements to manage community risk in the event of an emergency.

The authority is working closely with the police and ambulance service to make better use of fire, police and ambulance stations. The fire service now shares accommodation with Suffolk Constabulary at four joint fire and police stations in Framlingham, Ixworth, Debenham and Elmswell, with further collaborations planned. The fire service shares accommodation with the East of England Ambulance Service at Brandon and Lowestoft, again with further collaboration planned.

Health, Safety and Risk Management

The authority recognises that fighting fires and responding to other emergency incidents can be dangerous. Health and safety is one of the priority areas in the [Service's annual plan](#), which is available on the council's website.



There is a clear structure in the county council and fire and rescue service to manage health and safety. The Chief Fire Officer represents the fire service at the council's Strategic Health and Wellbeing Board and the Assistant Chief Fire Officer chairs the fire and rescue service Health and Safety Committee. It is through these meetings that the health and safety arrangements for the fire and rescue service are managed.

The Service's health and safety arrangements are based on guidance from the Health and Safety Executive. We have established 'safe systems of work' for operational incidents, training and general work activity and maintain a library of operational procedures containing key risk and control measures and supporting information. These assist firefighters to resolve operational incidents effectively and safely, and underpin firefighter training and development.

All staff are provided with health and safety training that is relevant to their role. For example, all senior managers have attended the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health 'Directing Safely' course and uniformed middle managers complete the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health qualifications.

Training of firefighters takes place at our Wattisham training centre. Recruitment through to becoming a competent firefighter takes a minimum of three years, with competency tests applied throughout this period.

The Service closely manages its health and safety performance. The number of accidents and near misses, and the extent of compliance, is detailed in the Performance Outturn Report. Every near miss and accident is investigated by a Service manager.

In 2013/14, staff reported a total of 68 accidents, an increase of 11% from the 61 recorded in 2012/13. Operational training accounts for 50% of recorded accidents, a marginal increase (8.3%) on the 24 training accidents recorded last year. The main causes of accidents were swift water rescue and compartment fire training, with the resultant injuries being minor abrasions and soft tissue injuries. The increase reflects a continued upturn in the volume of operational training undertaken, where all firefighters are exposed to simulated realistic operational scenarios. Operational activity accounted for 23% of accidents and 22% occurred during routine activities.

Eight accidents requiring report through the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) occurred during operational training. This is an increase of 100% from those reported during 2012/13, but all were of a relatively minor nature.

Quality Safety Audits are used to make improvements to health and safety management. These are carried out internally, and also externally where Suffolk is part of national and regional health and safety groups. The regional group has signed a partnership agreement for regular external Quality Safety Audits of health and safety arrangements in fire and rescue services in this region.

As an emergency service it is important that we have plans in case something happens to interrupt our usual delivery of service; for example, strike action, severe weather or fuel shortage. Suffolk has a range of business continuity plans to meet this requirement. Their development was informed by the council's audit of the fire service business continuity arrangements in 2012.

During 2013/14, the business continuity plan for industrial action was tested on a number of occasions through strike action by members of the Fire Brigades Union. Arrangements initiated by the Service, in accordance with the plan, ensured that in the circumstances an acceptable level of operational cover was maintained throughout strike periods.

Training and Development

Training is an essential part of providing a fire and rescue service. In December 2013 the external Peer Challenge team identified the Service's training and development arrangements as 'excellent'. Training and development programmes for firefighters through to area commanders were identified as notable best practice and shared nationally. The Wattisham training centre provides very realistic fire, road traffic collision, rail, chemical and other incident scenarios.

Realistic training is provided to all firefighters and officers throughout the year. Courses are delivered to improve knowledge, skills and experience so personnel can carry out their roles safely and effectively. Our training plan provides a framework to ensure the training provided links directly to risks faced by firefighters. The framework ensures incidents presenting the greatest risk to safety are mitigated through a greater proportion of training input.



All full-time firefighters complete an annual five day course where their competency is tested in a range of operational scenarios. In 2013/14, this training was delivered to all full time firefighters and officers.

The nature of the on-call firefighter role means that training cannot be delivered in the same way. However, as breathing apparatus training is considered to be the most critical aspect of training and safety, all on-call firefighters were provided with a one-day training course at Wattisham in 2013/14, and this is repeated each year.

Further on-going training is provided to firefighters and officers at their place of work. This is managed and delivered either through their supervisory officers or by instructors from the training centre. Every on-call firefighter is provided with two hours training time each week, with additional training provided as needs arise.

All fire engine and emergency vehicle drivers are regularly trained to the latest nationally-recognised Emergency Response Driver Training standards.

8 Prevention and Protection

Prevention is about reducing risk by preventing deaths, injuries and damage to property and the environment from fire and other emergencies.

The Service delivers many different programmes that enhance community safety, including:

- i. Road safety education, including a new 'Firebike' safety scheme
- ii. Working with disaffected young people
- iii. Working with young people in education
- iv. Promoting healthier lifestyles with young people
- v. Helping older people to live independently
- vi. Thatch fire safety



Community Fire Volunteers, Prevention staff and firefighters carry out free Safer Home Visits for vulnerable people in Suffolk. They fit safety features such as smoke detectors and security devices, and provide advice on safety, security and wellbeing. Where appropriate, people are referred to partner agencies such as Social Services and the Benefits Agency.

The delivery of Safer Home Visits in 2013/14 is 18% lower than the level in 2012/13 (1,415 vs 1,732) and on a par with the performance achieved in 2011/12. This is primarily due to less availability of Community Fire Volunteers and other competing requirements such as delivery of Compliance Checks by firefighters. The demand for the checks and support delivered to vulnerable people remains high and enhanced collaboration with partner agencies, charitable organisations and social housing providers will be utilised to increase performance delivery during 2014/15.

Protection is primarily about enforcement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Officers enforce the Order by undertaking an annual inspection programme of business premises, auditing their fire safety arrangements.

Premises are included in this programme on the basis of the risk they may present to those who work in or visit them. Buildings where people sleep, such as hotels and residential care homes, are considered higher risk and are inspected most frequently. Premises are also inspected on receipt of information regarding poor fire safety conditions or where there has been a fire.

The completion of planned audits under the Order through our Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) continued to improve as Protection staff gained greater competency in role. Delivery in 2013/14 (1,314) improved by 14% from the 2012/13 figure (1,150), which itself represented a 56% increase of planned audits completed in 2011/12.

Compliance Checks by firefighters which commenced on 1 April 2013 were expected to have a minor adverse impact on RBIP performance in the first year, but this was not realised. Performance has improved the targeting of Protection services and the education of commercial premises occupiers.

9 Achievements in 2013/14

Shift Review

The Service continued the review of the wholetime firefighter shift system through an extended trial, ensuring the resulting system would provide the right number of firefighters, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time. Formal implementation of the new system is expected early in the 2014/15 financial year.

Fire Appliance and Vehicle Fleet Strategy

Plans for long-term fire appliance and specialist vehicle replacement were progressed with an order placed for six innovative compact fire engines. The vehicles are less costly than a traditional fire engine (c £35k less per vehicle) but carry sufficient equipment and crew to meet response standards and operational requirements. Replacement water carriers and operational support units were ordered and resilience for officer response in inclement weather and to rural incidents was enhanced with the phased introduction of four wheel drive vehicles.

A new aerial ladder platform was procured in 2013. The vehicle replaced the 20 year old turntable ladder at Ipswich East fire station. The vehicle went into use from September 2013 and has provided a reliable and versatile addition to our operational fleet.

Property Collaboration

The Service continued to collaborate with Suffolk Constabulary and the East of England Ambulance Service following the development of fire and police facilities at our on-call fire stations in Ixworth, Elmswell, Framlingham and Debenham. The success of these projects led to the development of extensive bids by both SFRS and Suffolk police for DCLG and Home Office Transformation Funding to develop further joint sites across Suffolk. If successful, funding will provide the opportunity to substantially improve property and service collaboration.

Combined 999 Fire Control

Using the £3.6m DCLG grant, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Services improved the resilience and technology of 999 Fire Control arrangements. In 2013/14 more efficient communications technology was introduced, enabling 999 control staff to more accurately and effectively transmit operational information. New mobilising systems and equipment, including automatic vehicle location and dynamic mobilising, have enabled control staff to accurately track the location of fire engines and mobilise the nearest to any emergency, improving the accuracy and response times of responding fire engines.

Southwold Fire Station

A new fire station at Reydon was built to replace the existing facility in nearby Southwold. The new building replaced an outdated fire station that was in need of significant investment. It is a 'green' building that will realise financial benefits from reduced running and maintenance costs.

Crewing Arrangements at Felixstowe fire station

The review of crewing arrangements at Felixstowe fire station was completed. Following public consultation, recommendations were prepared for the Fire Authority's consideration and crewing arrangements changed from nucleus-crewed to on-call only. The change resulted in removal of four full-time firefighter posts as part of the fire service efficiency agenda.

Service Training Centre - Wattisham

The Service's Training Centre, based at Wattisham Flying Station, was further enhanced with improved welfare, fire investigation and realistic fire training facilities.

Sprinklers

Progress was made in promoting the installation of sprinklers in residential, educational, industrial and commercial premises throughout Suffolk. Working closely with the County Council's Adult Social Care teams, agreement was secured to provide fire sprinklers in 10 new care homes across Suffolk. The Service supported the 2014 National Fire Sprinkler Week with an event at Lowestoft fire station, attended by Peter Aldous, MP.



New Equipment

A range of new equipment to support operational response arrangements and enhance firefighter safety was evaluated. Work began to introduce positive pressure ventilation to enhance firefighting tactics and defibrillators were placed on all fire engines. These are a significant enhancement to the first aid capability for both our own firefighters and the public.

Review our Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)

The Authority published its Integrated Risk Management Plan 2014/17 for consultation. The Plan meets the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework and sets out how the Service identifies, plans for and mitigates risk. The outcome of the consultation will be considered by the Authority in early 2014/15 and the IRMP published shortly thereafter.

Development of Management System Software

The Service continued to enhance IT systems and, in particular, the use of Microsoft SharePoint. Established arrangements will be further developed in 2014/17. The comprehensive training requirements for full-time and on-call firefighters were supported by new IT-based training records used by firefighters across Suffolk. The system will ensure that the quality assurance of training will be much improved with consequent benefits for firefighter safety.

Bridging the Funding Gap – Spending Review and Capacity Review

Officers reviewed the services obligations and resources in response to future government grant reductions. The review reflected historical and predicted demand, current and future infrastructure, demographics and budget profiling and evidenced options for the redistribution of resources. This work will continue in 2014/15 and will be fundamental to the management of any further reductions in Government funding.

10 Future Improvements

The Service produces an annual [Service Plan](#) covering a three-year period. The plan sets out a range of tasks that will be delivered or started in 2014 and is available on the Council's website. The plan is based on an assessment of the council's corporate priorities, the fire service's national priorities and other matters that are specific to risk management in Suffolk.

Blue Light Integration

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service will continue to maximise opportunities to work collaboratively with other blue light services and, where appropriate, seek to integrate the services delivered. This project forms one of the County Council's 10 Transformation Programmes.

A comprehensive bid for funding from DCLG and Home Office Transformation funds to support the continued development of sharing fire and police stations will be made with partner organisations. Where appropriate to do so, tri-service sites will be developed with the police and East of England Ambulance Service. Initial focus in 2014 will be at Woodbridge fire station. We will also continue our work to support the Mildenhall hub development.

Work will continue with the East of England Ambulance Service to evaluate options for establishing co-responder schemes.

Note: Suffolk County Council has been notified Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service will be awarded £4.94m grant funding in 2015/16 to support a programme of further property sharing.

On Call Improvement Programme

We will continue work to support on-call firefighters, looking specifically at contractual arrangements, recruitment and retention, and improved opportunity to access training. We are committed to provide innovative arrangements to improve firefighter and fire engine availability in more rural areas and will make this a priority during 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Community Safety Review

During 2014/15, staff will engage a wide range of partners to better deliver integrated community safety initiatives to a wider range of Suffolk's citizens. Partners such as Suffolk Police, Trading Standards, the Health and Voluntary sectors have similar aims and believe a more effective and targeted delivery mechanism will benefit a greater number of people.

11 Links to documents

[Fire and Rescue National Framework](#)

[Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan 2014/17](#)

[The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)

[Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999](#)

[Audit Commission Act 1998](#)

[Regulation 11 of the Accounts and Audit \(England\) Regulations 2011](#)

[The Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)

[The Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)

[The Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#)

[The Localism Act 2011](#)

[The Health and Safety Act at Work, etc. Act 1974](#)

[Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Peer Challenge Report 2013](#)

[Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service emergency response standards](#)

[Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2014/17](#)