

Firefighters attend hundreds of needless fires across country last summer



The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service fought hundreds of needless fires across the country last summer, latest figures reveal.

Firefighters worked throughout the hot summer months of 2015 battling blazes at homes, vehicles, grassland, refuse and derelict buildings.

And the majority of those fires were deliberate and reckless – putting pressure on firefighters when genuine emergencies arose and placing lives at risk.

Assistant Chief Officer Robert Scott is the SFRS Director of Prevention and Protection.

He spoke out ahead of summer 2016 to warn that firefighters will work closely with our colleagues in Police Scotland to identify those responsible for deliberately setting fires.

The ACO also appealed to parents, carers and young people to Join Scotland's fight against fire as the school holidays kick off – a traditionally busy time of year for firefighters.

He said: "The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has a zero tolerance approach to deliberate fire raising because it puts our communities at great risk.

"We will continue to work very closely with our police and local authority partners to ensure that those responsible are identified and dealt with accordingly.

“Deliberate fires, in particular at areas of grassland and refuse, waste our time and resources and have the potential to delay us from reaching real emergencies – where every single minute counts.”

He added: “It absolutely goes without saying that we prefer to prevent fires – not fight fires.

“As a result, our firefighters work extremely hard to engage with the public and promote safety messages in order to keep our communities as safe as possible.

“We would ask parents and carers to help us also by discussing summer fire safety with young people. Together we can work towards a fire free summer.”

Figures show that between 29 June and 31 August, 2015 there were:

- 494 deliberate primary fires at homes and buildings– a rise of 30 from summer 2014. The greatest number was in Edinburgh city, which had 75, followed by 68 in Glasgow city and 49 in North Lanarkshire. In comparison, the Orkney Islands had just one report with five in Dumfries.
- 1,905 deliberate secondary fires in fields, refuse and countryside locations. The greatest number were in Glasgow City which saw 393 with Edinburgh City reporting 238 and East Ayrshire recording 229.
- 600 fires at grassland and woodland. The majority were recorded in Ayrshire which had 75, followed by Edinburgh city and Falkirk which each recorded 68 and Glasgow City which had 58.
- 1,368 fires, both deliberate and accidental, involving refuse. Glasgow City recorded 300 with 247 in Edinburgh City and 120 in Ayrshire.
- 102 fires at derelict buildings – 20 more than summer 2014. The majority were in Glasgow City at 25 with 11 in

- Ayrshire and nine in both the East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire area, and in Falkirk.
- 67 fires in unoccupied buildings – up from 44 in summer 2014. There were 20 in Falkirk, followed by 12 in the East Lothian, Midlothian and Scottish Borders area and eight in Aberdeenshire and Moray.

SFRS is urging those with information about any deliberate fires at buildings, grassland and areas of refuse to report it straightaway.

ACO Scott added: “Every deliberate fire has victims, costs – and consequences. We need our communities to work with us in helping stamp out this reckless behaviour.”

Anyone with information about deliberate fire-raising should contact the free and confidential Crimestoppers helpline on 0800 555 111.

Meanwhile, members of the public can also flag up any illegal rubbish dumps at www.dumbdumpers.org / or by calling 08452 30 40 90.

Not all fires are deliberate with others linked to barbeques and camping. There are, on average, almost 100 caravan fires in Scotland every year.

ACO Scott said: “A fire in a caravan or mobile home can be devastating as it can spread much more quickly than it would in a house or flat.

“We want holidaymakers to take extra care and think about fire safety when they are away from home. We cannot stress enough the importance of working smoke alarms in a caravan.”

Here are some top safety tips:

- Do not smoke or light candles inside tents
- Avoid alcohol if you are in charge of a barbeque
- Never use petrol or paraffin to light your barbeque

- Only dispose of ashes from camp fires or barbeques when they are cold to the touch
- Keep gas cylinders outside. Never store petrol, diesel or gas containers under your caravan
- Don't discard lit cigarette ends in countryside – make sure they are completely extinguished
- Never take a portable barbeque into an enclosed space like a tent or caravan
- Make sure recreational fires are made in a fire-safe pit and completely extinguished before leaving
- For further safety information:
www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/barbecue-safety.aspx