

Firefighters warn of zero tolerance approach to deliberate fires this autumn



Firefighters were drafted to more than two thousand deliberate fires during last year's Bonfire season, latest figures reveal.

The statistics show that crews responded to 1214 secondary fires – such as bonfires – as well as 748 refuse fires between October 13 and November 6, 2017.

This is an overall reduction of 421 from 2016 but Assistant Chief Officer David McGown branded those responsible as “reckless” and told how they put communities at risk.

He spoke out to warn that firefighters will work closely with Police Scotland and Crimestoppers.

But he also appealed to parents, carers and young people to

follow advice to stay safe this Bonfire season including attending organised fireworks displays.

ACO McGown is the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's Director of Prevention and Protection.

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.

"It presents a danger to life, property and the environment – indeed, it is reckless in the extreme because we see all too clearly the loss and the devastation that can result from fire.

"I am pleased to note a reduction in the amount of deliberate incidents we attended last year but we can never be complacent and we will always work to prevent them from happening in the first place by outlining the very real dangers and the stark consequences.

"We will continue to work closely with our police and local authority partners to ensure that those responsible are identified and dealt with accordingly. This behaviour from a very small minority within our communities cannot and indeed will not be tolerated."

The experienced firefighter also reached out to communities to follow safety advice.

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 people of all ages and equip them with the knowledge and the awareness of how to stay safe and this includes around bonfires and fireworks – but we would prefer everyone to attend organised displays."

Anyone with information about deliberate fire-raising should

contact the free and confidential Crimestoppers helpline on 0800 555 111.

For advice on how to stay safe during Bonfire Night, visit – <https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/bonfire-safety.aspx> and on fireworks safety visit – <https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/fireworks-safety.aspx>

For organised displays visit: https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/media/1326540/organised_fireworks_events_2018_v1_20181008.pdf