

Emergency services launch campaign against bonfire night attacks

In Craigmillar emergency services were called together by charity Crimestoppers on Thursday to join their campaign against attacks on emergency personnel or vehicles this Bonfire Night.

Representatives from Police Scotland Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Scottish Ambulance Service attended with their own response vehicles. Last year in Craigmillar there were several attacks with fireworks and other devices thrown at vehicles, including an ambulance which was standing by in case it was required.

Two officers in Edinburgh were treated in hospital for head injuries after youths threw bricks at their vehicle.

In another incident in the capital 100 youths threw fireworks at members of the public and vehicles.

Crimestoppers reminded the public that they can report any information about planned attacks or indeed any which are carried out against police, fire service and ambulance crews. The 0800 555 111 telephone number and website crimestoppers-uk.org gives people the power to speak up and pass on information about crime 100% anonymously.

Angela Parker National Manager of Crimestoppers in Scotland

said: "Our charity believes everyone has the right to feel safe, no more so than Scotland's emergency services who risk their lives to keep us safe. Bonfire night should be safe and fun for everyone, but unfortunately, last year we saw serious attacks on crews. That's why we are asking anyone with information on those planning attacks to get in touch with our charity 100% anonymously. No-one will ever know you contacted us, and your information could be preventing serious injury or harm or even loss of life for emergency workers."



Police Scotland will be deploying Public Order officers in support of community policing teams throughout the Hallowe'en and Bonfire Night period.

Since 2018, specialist resources have supported local officers across the country as part of Operation Moonbeam, following significant disorder and antisocial behaviour in 2017, which saw members of the emergency services, including police officers, attacked.

In 2022, parts of the country were subjected to unacceptable

levels of firework-related criminality, which caused considerable distress to communities and resulted in high-value damage to property.

In response to this, an enhanced level of Public Order resource is being deployed during Operation Moonbeam 2023 to provide further support and protection to police officers, other emergency service workers and the general public.

In October last year, new legislation was introduced under the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Act. This legislation makes the proxy purchasing of fireworks for anyone under the age of 18 a criminal offence.

Those in breach of this legislation will be subject to a fine of £5,000, a six-month prison term, or both.

From this year, additional legislation under the Act has been introduced, which prohibits the carriage or use of a pyrotechnic article within a public place and allows officers to conduct stop and search activity on anyone they believe may be in possession of such items.

Operation Moonbeam was today launched at a joint event in Edinburgh, alongside Crimestoppers, who launched their own campaign encouraging the public to report any intelligence they have on potential emergency service attacks, and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Assistant Chief Constable Tim Mairs, Gold Commander for Operation Moonbeam, said: "The overwhelming majority of the public wish to enjoy Bonfire Night safely and responsibly, but it is a small minority who intentionally use the festivities to cause fear and alarm within our communities and commit acts of damage and violence.

"I want to make it abundantly clear that such reckless behaviour, including targeting my officers and other emergency service personnel will not be tolerated and we will use all

the powers at our disposal to bring offenders to justice.

“Last year saw an escalation in incidents in specific parts of the country and we are increasing the level of public order resource available to communities this year to deter and respond to any offences.

“The new powers we have in relation to proxy purchasing and stop and search capabilities for anyone suspected to be in possession of pyrotechnics in a public place are yet another tool at our disposal to address fireworks-related crime.

“We want Bonfire Night to be a safe and enjoyable experience for anyone who chooses to participate in it and a peaceful occasion for those who don't. Please help us achieve this by ensuring your behaviour does not put yourself or others at risk.”

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Assistant Chief Officer Andy Watt said: “Attacks on emergency services are completely unacceptable and are carried out by a small minority.

“It's one of the busiest nights of the year for our staff who are working hard to keep communities safe, and they should be able to carry out their role without being hurt or having appliances and equipment damaged by anti-social behaviour.

“We want to bring any emergency to a safe and swift conclusion, so please respect our staff and all emergency services.”

Scottish Ambulance Service Chief Executive Michael Dickson said: “Those on the frontline should never have to fear for their safety. Despite our best efforts we still have ambulance crews experiencing physical assault and verbal abuse from the public often fuelled by excessive drinking. They deserve respect for their dedication to patient care, often working in the most challenging of situations. We understand the Fireworks season is a chance for people to enjoy themselves

but we ask them to act responsibly."

