

Firefighter scammers quit after bogus payments uncovered

Rogue firefighters were forced to quit the service after a scam involving on-call payments was exposed.

Officers are alleged to have fleeced Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) by colluding to claim bogus on-call allowances at an unnamed fire station before they were uncovered.

In a separate incident in the SFRS 2023/24 annual audit report, a serving officer was also forced to quit after allegedly stealing from a youth volunteer scheme bank account.

The report says: “During 2023/24 management alerted the ARAC [Audit Risk Assurance Committee] to two separate incidents involving alleged fraudulent activity. The first involved collusion by serving officers to fraudulently claim on-call allowances at a station.

“Police Scotland were alerted to the alleged activity and a fraud action plan was developed.”

According to the report, those involved in the scam have since quit.

It says: “The individuals involved in the incident have since resigned from the service. Following the resignations, further investigation into the circumstances surrounding the incident were progressed following consideration of the matter at the

meeting of ARAC.”

The report says the second incident involved “alleged theft from a third-party Youth Volunteer Scheme bank account by a serving officer”.

It says: “Following investigation a disciplinary hearing was recommended. A comprehensive review of all financial arrangements within Youth Volunteer Schemes across SFRS was also advised.

“Police Scotland were alerted to the incident.”

The audit report stresses it is “imperative” that SFRS investigates all incidents of alleged fraudulent activity, adding: “This not only provides assurance to management and the board that internal controls are operating effectively but helps to facilitate improvement through the lessons learned.”

The incidents only came to light as they were highlighted in the audit report. SFRS policy is not to publish details about gross misconduct outcomes involving officers or whether those guilty are sacked or resign before facing disciplinary action.

The fire service said: “As is standard practice, SFRS does not comment on individual employment matters.

“However, we can confirm that internal investigations commenced into both cases of alleged fraud mentioned in the Audit Scotland report as soon as the situations came to light.”

Police Scotland, also a large publicly funded body, say they are “transparent” about their robust approach to “tackling misconduct” by “publishing gross misconduct hearing outcomes as part of its strategic plan focusing on how policing in Scotland reflects, represents and serves communities”.

SFRS have different types of firefighters including wholetime, retained and volunteer. Wholetime firefighters work full-time,

including day and night shifts; retained officers are on call and paid a salary as well as remuneration for each incident attended; and volunteer officers are also remunerated.

SFRS declined to disclose the numbers of officers involved in the on-call allowance scam, the amount of money allegedly defrauded or details about the theft from the Youth Volunteer Scheme.

A Scottish Fire and Rescue Service spokesperson said: “Due to ongoing legal proceedings it would be inappropriate to comment at this stage.”

Police Scotland could not confirm whether an investigation was being or had been conducted.



Scottish Fire has appealed to the public to restrict calls to real emergencies