

Marking five years of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service


 ***Community Safety Minister Annabelle Ewing looks back on the first five years of the single service.***

Today marks the fifth anniversary of Scotland's fire reforms and the creation of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS). It is fair to say that the merger of eight regional bodies into one national service was not a task to be taken lightly. However, this complex process was completed effectively, resulting in an increase in capability, better distribution of resource and protection of frontline services.

The first five years of the SFRS have included many achievements and milestones. It is now the largest service in the UK and fourth largest in the world, with 356 fire stations, 422 pumping appliances and around 8000 personnel. It has invested £44.5m in new fleet across Scotland, £17m in operational equipment and £52.7m in new buildings and refurbishment including new North headquarters in Aberdeen and a state of the art control centre in Dundee.

Incidents like last week's [major fire in Glasgow's Sauchiehall Street](#) remind us of the sheer bravery of fire teams willing to put themselves in danger to assist others. At the same time, it's important to recognise the service's valuable programme of preventative work which includes helping the most vulnerable and elderly members of the community stay safe in their own homes.

Since 2013 the SFRS has responded to more than 350,000 emergencies including over 45,000 non-fire incidents. In the same period the SFRS conducted almost 335,000 home fire safety visits and installed over 270,000 smoke alarms. These figures highlight the considerable support that goes beyond what many would see as the service's traditional 'bread and butter' work.

 Earlier this month I visited the site of the leading edge £12 million training centre in Edinburgh. Scheduled for completion in 2019, it will allow simulation of multi-vehicle road collisions and enable crews to hone specialist skills such as urban search and rescue and rope rescue.

Another area that has been strengthened through reform is the capacity to respond to water-related emergencies. New water rescue units have been established in Oban and Dumfries and there are now 20 water rescue teams across Scotland.

Protecting frontline services is our priority and our 2018-19 budget provides additional spending power of £15.5m to allow the SFRS to invest in service transformation. This is on top of a £21.7m increase in operational budget this year, supporting investment in vital equipment and resources. The SFRS recruited 100 new firefighters in 2017 and is in the process of hiring 300 more across Scotland, helping to ensure the service is prepared to face the new and emerging threats to our communities.

Importantly, the national service has maintained a local focus – with 17 dedicated local senior officers working with councils and other local partners to meet community needs. The SFRS has invested in its services all across Scotland, including a major ICT infrastructure upgrade in the north of the country and state-of-the-art appliances to benefit rural communities.

Any anniversary provides an opportunity to reflect and I would like to take this chance to thank all our firefighters and support staff for their hard work and commitment in responding to the complex and challenging situations they face every day.

This article was originally published in Fire Magazine.

The post [Marking five years of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service](#) appeared first on [Justice and Safety](#).