

Minister for Community Safety thanks fire staff

Minister reflects on the key achievements of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service this year.



Without a doubt, 2018 has shown us the best of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

In March, when a huge fire took hold of Victoria's on Sauchiehall Street in Glasgow, 120 firefighters mobilised to the scene. Crews immediately evacuated occupants of several nearby buildings, ensuring that there were no casualties.

When Glasgow saw again a devastating fire at the School of Art in June, we saw over 120 firefighters, 20 pumps and four high-reach appliances on the scene.

In both instances, the actions of our firefighters ensured that the damage and the danger to life was not more severe. I thank them for their bravery and professionalism in the face of two incredibly complex and large-scale situations.

Among the many other examples of heroism we have seen in the SFRS this year, another stand out response was action taken to tackle wildfires throughout North West Scotland in May. In response to this spate of wildfires over 60 appliances were mobilised across four locations. These impressive efforts demonstrated the skill of our firefighters not only in protecting human life, but also in safeguarding our environment and wildlife.

This year we also marked the fifth anniversary of Scotland's fire reforms and the creation of SFRS. In these first five years investment has included £44.5 million in new fleets across Scotland, including the recent roll out of new Rapid Response Vehicles in rural areas, £17 million in operational equipment and £52.7 million in new buildings and refurbishment, including new training facilities being built at the East Service Delivery Area HQ, Newbridge, Edinburgh.

Minister for Community Safety [@ashtenRD](#) commends [@fire_scot](#) staff for their hard work this year, and thanks them for their continued dedication to keeping our communities safe.

Read more -> [@Chief_SFRS](https://t.co/K95FFRdTQD@Chief_SFRS) [@SFRSChair](#)
[@HumzaYousaf](#) pic.twitter.com/xjY4IODhDT

– ScotGov Justice (@ScotGovJustice) [December 24, 2018](#)

I commend our Fire Service for their excellent preventative work contributing to the continued reduction in the number of fires – down 43% in the last ten years and the second lowest on record in 2017/18. The SFRS Home Fire Safety Visits programme is vital in protecting people and their homes from the risk of fire. SFRS is making these more effective by developing ways to identify individuals most at risk such as older people, those with reduced mobility and those who live alone. This is being achieved by working in partnership, including with health and social care and the voluntary sector. Over 30,000 home fire safety visits have been done since 2013 and 280,000 smoke alarms have been installed.

Of course the SFRS Operations Control Firefighters' knowledge, skills and expertise is integral to the successful and efficient deployment of resources in emergency situations. Based across Edinburgh, Dundee and Johnstone, they respond to countless emergency calls every day from members of the public. These committed Control Firefighters are the unseen frontline, working together to play a critical role in the safety and wellbeing of Scotland's communities. Control Firefighters provide lifesaving and calming survival guidance to people trapped in fires, often saving lives as a result. I would like to thank these key individuals and commend them for the excellent work they do.

Looking ahead, protecting our frontline services remains a key priority and a further uplift for SFRS of £5.5 million was announced in the Scottish Government's draft budget for next year. 263 firefighters have been recruited in 2018. I extend a warm welcome to those who have joined the Service this year, and look forward to further recruitment in 2019.

Next year will see SFRS Chief Officer Alasdair Hay retire in March, and I thank him wholeheartedly for his many years of dedicated service to firefighting. The role will be taken on by Martin Blunden. Martin has demonstrated that he has the right qualities to lead SFRS and I look forward to working with him when he takes up his position in 2019.

To finish, the work that our firefighters do each day to keep our communities safe cannot be underestimated. These men and women put their lives and their own safety on the line to protect us, never knowing what they might face when they go into work on any given day. They are brave and self-sacrificing, and they meet high-risk situations with outstanding professionalism and dedication. So, on behalf of the Scottish Government, and also with my personal best wishes, I thank our firefighters, and all Fire Service staff, for all of their momentous efforts this year and for the hard work they continue to do to keep us safe from harm.

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