

Report title

Civil disturbances in London, August 2011: Brigade response

Agenda item

6

Meeting

Authority

Date

15 September 2011

Report by

Commissioner for Fire and Emergency Planning

Document Number

FEP 1797

Public

Summary

This report summarises the Brigade's response to the civil disturbances that took place in early August 2011.

Recommendation

That the report be received.

Introduction

1. This report outlines the activities of the Brigade during the period of civil disturbances in early August. It reviews the workload of the Brigade, particularly between the evening of Saturday 6 August and the morning of Wednesday 10 August, and sets out details of the tributes and visits including from the Prince of Wales, the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, the Mayor of London and the Secretary of State for Communities.

Brigade response to the civil disturbances

2. All members will know that the Brigade was extremely busy in response to the civil disturbances in London over the period which started at around 2045 hours on Saturday 6 August in Tottenham and extended across London until the early hours on Wednesday 10 August.
3. Planning for potential events in Tottenham began on Friday (5 August) in consultation with Police colleagues. In circumstances where it is anticipated that there might be difficulty in responding to incidents, or where firefighter safety might be compromised, the Brigade has well established procedures and protocols for mobilising which provide for a greater degree of management control than is the norm. Arrangements to use these procedures – forward mobilising procedures – were put in place.
4. The 'forward mobilising' procedure is used when situations (like major civil disturbances or public order events), within a defined area, give rise to an increased level of risk that requires greater control of mobilising and appliance movement within that area. Under the forward mobilising procedure (FMP), decisions for mobilising in response to calls is temporarily delegated within a specific geographical area from Brigade Control to a local mobilising officer. This provides a means for that manager to decide on the most appropriate mobilisation of resources to incidents and thereby exercise a greater degree of command. When calls are passed to the forward control mobilising point, Brigade Control plays no part in the mobilisation of resources but does help the facilitation of the incident¹. In line with these temporary procedures, crews were only sent to attend where the police advised that they could support Brigade attendance. The Brigade's focus during this time was to attend serious fires (where they can be identified) and attendance to secondary fires and automatic fire alarms are given lower priority.

Saturday 6 August (night)

5. The first fires reported to the Brigade at the start of the civil disturbance came in at 2045 hours on Saturday 6 for two police cars alight in Tottenham High Road. In the next 12 hours, the Brigade received 180 civil disturbance related calls to the Tottenham area.
6. More than a kilometre of Tottenham High Road was at the centre of the disturbance spanning from Monument Way at the South to Lordship Lane/Lansdowne Road at the North. In this area of the High Road there were 12 significant sites of fire (affecting a large number of properties). These locations were:
 - Solicitors office and dwellings at 436 High Road
 - William Hill and dwellings at 442 High Road
 - Bus alight and parade of shops at 480 High Road
 - The Post Office and dwellings at 530 High Road
 - Jewellers and dwellings at 536 High Road
 - Neighbourhood Police Office and offices at 560 High Road
 - Aldi supermarket at 570-592 High Road
 - Buildings under construction to rear of Scotland Green
 - Council building at 639 High Road

¹ Production of reliable data about Brigade activity at incidents is complicated by the use of the Forward Mobilising Procedures. These procedures mean that, for a number of calls, detailed data about which calls were attended, what action taken and the resources deployed, was collected manually on Brigade Command Units at forward mobilising locations.

- Carpetright at 636-638 High Road
 - The Job Centre at 640 High Road
 - Shop and dwellings at 662 High Road
7. There were many cars set alight, along with rubbish and other materials in the High Road and on many of the side streets in the area. The details of these fires are still being recorded. All the calls to these incidents were passed to the Forward Control Mobilising Point (FCMP) located at Edmonton Fire Station where senior officers (with guidance from the Metropolitan Police) assigned crews to deal with them. During the course of the night 34 fire engines (including relief crews) were assigned to the FCMP at Edmonton.
 8. Across the Brigade, between 2100 hours on Saturday and 0859 hours on Sunday morning (7 August) around 510 calls to incidents were handled by Brigade Control; this is a high level of activity although calls on bonfire night sometimes exceed these levels although they are spread widely across London rather than in a specific area.

Sunday 7 August (day)

9. On Sunday morning, the Deputy Commissioner formally activated the Brigade's Strategic Response Arrangements (SRA) to assist with the management of the Brigade's resources during this difficult period. These elements included the Commissioner's Group (for strategic oversight meeting as required) and the Planning and Resources/Logistics Cells (located at the Brigade Coordination Centre (BCC) at Stratford).
10. These arrangements ensure a higher level of management direction and co-ordination in response to an unplanned event or major emergency. They also act to enhance the Brigade's inter-agency liaison arrangements
11. During Sunday crews continued work on the High Road searching those buildings where fire had occurred (where it was safe to do so) and engaged in extensive "damping down". Three of the buildings at the main sites of fire remained structurally unsafe which were the Carpetright, Aldi supermarket and the site of the jewellers/Post Office.
12. Eleven further calls to the Tottenham area during this period were passed to the Brigade Command Centre (BCC).

Sunday 7 August (night)

13. The disturbances continued on Sunday night spreading from Tottenham into Enfield. The FCMP at Edmonton remained in place and, after disturbances started in Brixton, a second FCMP was established at Lambeth with eight appliances allocated.
14. The main site of fire on the night caused by the disturbances was in Brixton where there was a six pump fire at Footlocker shop at 419 Brixton Road, Brixton.
15. Despite higher call numbers, where possible, Brigade Control mobilised appliances as usual. Twenty three calls were passed to the Brigade Command Centre/FCMP for mobilising of the appliances at Edmonton and Lambeth FCMP.
16. Between 2100 hours Sunday (7 August) and 0859 hours Monday (8 August), 423 calls were received into Brigade Control (London-wide).

Monday 8 August (day)

17. During Monday 8 August the Brigade maintained its liaison with the Metropolitan Police and other emergency service partners; with CLG and with neighbouring Brigades. It was also in attendance at a London Resilience Partnership meeting. Our objective was to gather intelligence, agree joint strategies and plans, and within the Brigade, to ensure that our resources were ready to respond to emergencies.

I was out of the country on holiday when the civil disturbances began. However, during the course of the disturbances, I was in regular contact with the Chairman and Deputy Commissioner, and on Monday, following a further consultation with the Chairman, I decided that I should end my holiday and return to London at the earliest opportunity.

18. The disturbances that were to spread London-wide started in Hackney at around 1700 hours on Monday afternoon, although the Brigade received no calls to serious fires in this area at the time. At around 1800 hours the Brigade started to receive calls to Peckham, and at 1913 hours were called to a six pump fire at a shop and premises at 193 Rye Lane, Peckham (six pump fire).
19. Also at around 1900 hours the disturbances started in Croydon. The first, of what was to be many building fires along London Road, started at a solicitors offices at 76 London Road, Croydon. The other main sites were:
 - Pawnbrokers and premises at 60-62 London Road, Croydon (four pump fire)
 - Lidl supermarket at 99-101 London Road, Croydon (four pump fire)
 - Shops and dwellings 260-272 London Road [this fire started around 23:00]
20. The disturbances at Croydon spread, and just before 2100 hours the Brigade received the first of many calls to the furniture shop at Reeves Corner, Croydon (ten pump fire).
21. Disturbances were also starting across London that were to continue into the early hours of the following morning.

Monday 8 August (night)

22. In the twelve hours of Monday night between 2100 and 0859 hours, Brigade Control received 1,700 calls – this is more than two and a half times the number of calls received in an average day – and at the peak around 2300 hours, Control staff were answering 91 calls in the hour .
23. The civil disturbances had spread all across London, with the boroughs of Greenwich, Enfield, Wandsworth, Ealing, Merton, Barking & Dagenham and Croydon being the worst effected by fire during the night.
24. The main sites of large fires caused by the disturbances during the night were:
 - The Great Harry public house and premises at Wellington Street, Woolwich
 - Wilkinson's and shops on Woolwich New Road, Woolwich
 - Shop and premises at 47-47 Powis Street, Woolwich
 - Sony warehouse at Solar Way, Enfield (11 pump fire)
 - Shop and dwellings at Lavender Hill, Clapham Junction
 - Budgen supermarket at The Grove, Ealing (six pump fire)
 - Retail units at Priory Retail Park, Colliers Wood (six pump fire)
 - Public House at King Edward Road, Barking (six pump fire)
 - Co-op supermarket and premises at Central Parade, New Addington
25. Between 0900 hours Monday (8 August) and 0859 hours on Tuesday (9 August), an exceptional 2,460 calls were received into Brigade Control (London-wide). A FMCP was established at Forest Hill, Norbury and Wembley, to deal with incidents. The Brigade continued to take part in inter-agency Gold meetings and to respond accordingly.

Tuesday 9 August (day and night)

26. A number of duplicate calls continued to be received during Tuesday day to incident that had occurred the night before, but where smoke could still be seen. There was also a higher number of calls to smaller (secondary) fires than would be usual for a Tuesday but all these calls were dealt with under normal mobilising arrangements and no further calls were passed to Brigade Command Centre/FCMP. The

Prime Minister called an emergency COBR meeting (the Cabinet civil contingencies committee) for Tuesday 9 August where the acting Metropolitan Police Commissioner briefed ministers on the civil disorder; the Director of Operational Resilience and Training attended on behalf of the Brigade.

27. This higher number of calls and smaller incidents continued throughout the night and Brigade Control handled nearly 1,000 calls on the Tuesday night. Whilst the Brigade continued to be busy on Tuesday, there were no significant new fire locations.
28. During Tuesday 9 August London Fire Brigade maintained its liaison with the Metropolitan Police and other emergency service partners; with DCLG and with neighbouring Brigades. The Brigade also attended a GLA Gold cell meeting convened by the Mayor's Office and at a London Resilience Panel sponsored London Regional Co-ordinating Group meeting. The Brigade's objective was to gather intelligence, agree joint strategies and plans and, within the Brigade, to ensure that our resources were ready to respond to emergencies.
29. Plans were put in place for the overnight mobilisation of resources and the continuing protection of firefighters and officers, based upon the intelligence then available. Plans were made to mitigate the effects of potential travel to work difficulties experienced by operational staff, which had been an issue on Monday evening. In the event, there was no need to invoke any forward mobilising procedures in London during the night and there were no significant fires associated with civil disturbance.

Wednesday 10 August

30. After travelling overnight, I returned to work at the Brigade on Wednesday morning (10 August). Wednesday turned out to be more like a normal but busy 24 hour period. The Brigade attended two major fires although neither were associated with the civil disturbances. Crews also remained in attendance at the Sony fire in Enfield that had been started during the disturbances, which proved difficult to conclude and the effects of which, particularly drifting smoke, caused disturbance to local residents. In a message to staff, I thanked them for their hard work over the previous days but emphasised that all the arrangements then in place, that had worked well, would remain in place should they be needed
31. The Prime Minister called a second COBR meeting on 10 August which was attended by other Ministers to consider, amongst other things, the impact of the increased police presence on London Streets the night before. The Director of Operational Resilience and Training again attended this further COBR meeting on behalf of the Brigade.

Damage to appliances and injuries to firefighters

32. The relatively difficult circumstances resulted in nine fire appliances (from Edmonton, Brixton, Ilford, Lambeth, Hammersmith, Kingston, Southgate, Walthamstow, and West Norwood) being damaged during the disturbances (mostly broken windscreens) and, in addition, three Brigade officer's cars were damaged.
33. At the time of writing this report, one injury has been reported associated with the civil disturbances. This injury was sustained due to bricks being thrown at the windscreen of an appliance; a firefighter suffered a cut to his face.
34. Two members of staff were injured on their journeys to and from work although they were not in uniform or identifiable as firefighters at the time; one person was on her way to work (and subsequently advised to return home as a precautionary measure) and the second on his way home from being on duty.

Tributes received for Brigade activity

35. Messages of support and thanks have been received from all over the world in recognition of the Brigade's work during the civil disturbances, including, particularly, a letter of gratitude from the Communities Secretary, Eric Pickles MP. Mr Pickles said *"Fire crews have carried out their duties in the face of shameful criminal behaviour of rioters, who have physically attacked the very people protecting*

their homes and communities from arson. We owe them all a debt of gratitude for their tireless work protecting lives and communities". In addition, the Fire Minister, Bob Neill MP, has contacted the Commissioner to pass on his thanks to staff.

36. On Thursday 11 August, the Prime Minister made a statement in the House of Commons on the public disorder. He described the violence, saying "We have seen houses, offices and shops raided and torched, police officers assaulted and fire crews attacked as they try to put out fires." In his response to the initial statement, the Ed Milliband (Leader of the Opposition) thanked police officers and all emergency service workers, saying "we salute them for their courage, their dedication and their willingness-yet again-to put themselves in harm's way for all of us and all our communities." In response to that, the Prime Minister said "*the right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to praise the emergency services and the work they have done. It is particularly remarkable that in spite of the fact that fires have been started in many cities across our country, there have been no casualties from those fires. That speaks volumes about the professionalism and brilliance of our firefighters nationwide.*"
37. A number of visits have been made to meet staff including visits by Brigade principal officers. In addition the following visits are worth highlighting:
- Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall visited Croydon Fire Station on Wednesday 17 August with LFEPa Chairman Cllr Brian Coleman and Assistant Commissioner Steve Hamm, having earlier been introduced to Brigade staff during a visit to Tottenham and while at police Gold command centre in Lambeth. The Assistant Private Secretary to TRH The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall wrote on 19 August to thank the Brigade for arranging the visit and said "*Their Royal Highness were particularly interested to meet so many Emergency Services staff who were involved in the recent riots. Their Royal Highnesses much appreciated your support and have asked that you convey their heartfelt thanks and warmest good wishes to all who helped to ensure that their visit ran so smoothly.*"
 - The Prime Minister visited staff at Tottenham fire station on Tuesday 16 August, accompanied by Group Manager Richard Mills and LFEPa Chairman Councillor Brian Coleman.
 - Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, was joined by Commissioner Ron Dobson and LFEPa Chairman Cllr Brian Coleman at Stoke Newington fire station on Friday 12 August to thank the white watch who were one of the first crews at the carpet showroom fire in Tottenham on Saturday night.
 - The Home Secretary, Theresa May MP, visited crews at the Sony warehouse fire at Solar Way, Enfield, also on Friday 12 August where she spoke with crews from Enfield and Whitechapel fire stations, Station Manager Dave Robinson and Deputy Assistant Commissioner Dany Cotton.
 - The Commissioner joined the Mayor during a walking tour of the destruction in Ealing Broadway on Thursday 11 August, and gave interviews to the media recognising the hard work of all Brigade staff.
 - Fire Minister Bob Neil visited firefighters at Woolwich fire station again thanking them as representatives for the whole Brigade, with Deputy Assistant Commissioner Dany Cotton on Thursday 11 August.
 - On Wednesday, 10 August, Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), paid a visit to Edmonton Fire Station along with Deputy Commissioner Rita Dexter to personally thank green watch on behalf of all the crews and staff who have been working so hard over the past few days and nights to deal with the incidents arising from the civil disturbances. Whilst he was there, Mr Pickles met crew members who had just returned from dealing with the incident at the two storey Sony warehouse and offices on Solar Way in Enfield.
 - On Tuesday 9 August ITV current affairs crew were allowed access to Brigade Control to film staff taking 999 calls.
38. There was significant media coverage of the disturbances as they occurred, and after the events in relation to how the Brigade and individual members of staff responded. The majority of media reports contained information provided by the communications department, but one news release was issued by the Fire Brigade's Union on Friday 19 August, suggesting the Brigade was "stretched to breaking point". The news release stated "The Brigade did not have enough fire engines, and other Brigades

came in to deal with incidents in Enfield and other places. The control room was overwhelmed with the number of calls, and did not have enough staff to deal with them all".

39. Responding to a media enquiry received as a result of the news release (BBC London News) the following statement was provided: "These claims are blatantly self-serving and untrue. Despite experiencing several of the busiest nights in its history, the London Fire Brigade, its firefighters, control staff and all the other employees involved in our response, coped fantastically well and did an excellent job of keeping London safe. It is unfortunate that the FBU sees fit to use last week's events to try and further its own agenda." The journalist reporting was also advised that the only involvement of another fire and rescue service during the disturbances had been as a result of normal cross border arrangements, based on the location of an incident in Enfield, and not as a result of any reduction in service or need for mutual assistance as claimed by the Union. The Brigade statement was included in the news story broadcast the same evening.

Conclusion

40. I want to place on record my thanks to all of the fire crews, Control staff, staff in the Resource Management Centre, senior officers and all of the FRS staff who worked so hard over the period of the civil disturbances to keep London safe. This was one of the busiest and most unpleasant periods the Brigade has ever experienced; yet throughout, all those involved remained calm, professional and dignified – I cannot praise Brigade staff highly enough. I have visited fire stations and heard first hand accounts of the attacks that our staff suffered during the disturbances. I commend and thank the actions of firefighters and senior officers who stood up to the challenge of saving lives and buildings whilst enduring personal attacks. Brigade Control staff also took record numbers of calls throughout the disruption and worked extremely hard to meet demand.

Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services Comments

41. The Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services has reviewed this report and has no comments.

Director of Finance and Contractual Services Comments

42. As covered in the main body of this report it is still early to assess the full cost of the riots to LFEPA. The majority of additional costs were on overtime, and pending receipt of the relevant overtime forms it is estimated that the cost will be in the region of £100,000.
43. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) wrote on 19 August 2011 to Leaders of local authorities, and fire and rescue authorities, which were affected by the civil disturbances. This letter provided details of a recovery package for communities, including new funding for local authorities and fire and rescue authorities which incurred additional costs because of the disturbances. The funding is available at or below the Bellwin scheme threshold with funds nationally available of £10 million. LFEPA will seek to recover funds through this scheme, which will allow the recovery of full costs as opposed to a claim through the Bellwin Scheme where only a percentage of costs can be recovered. The Authority has notified the DCLG of its intention to apply for this funding; the deadline for the Authority's final return set at the 7 November 2011.
44. A claim under the Bellwin Scheme is being investigated by the GLA who will submit a combined claim for the GLA as a whole. This scheme can return 85 per cent of costs above a threshold set at 0.2 per cent of the total GLA budget. LFEPA's costs can count towards the Bellwin threshold, although they will be recovered under the new scheme.

Environmental Implications

45. There are no specific environmental implications arising from this report.

Staff consultations undertaken

46. No staff consultations have taken place on this report.

Equalities Implications

47. The report specifically deals with the performance of the LFB and not the wider social and economic context of the civil disturbances there are therefore no explicit equalities implications arising from this report.

List of Appendices to this report:

Statistical data about Brigade activity during the civil disturbances, August 2011

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985	
List of background documents Hotwire civil disturbance pages DCLG letter of 19 August 2011 about extra costs	
Proper officer	Ron Dobson, Commissioner for Fire and Emergency Planning
Contact officer	David Wyatt
Telephone	020 8555 1200 x30352
Email	david.wyatt@london-fire.gov.uk

Statistical data

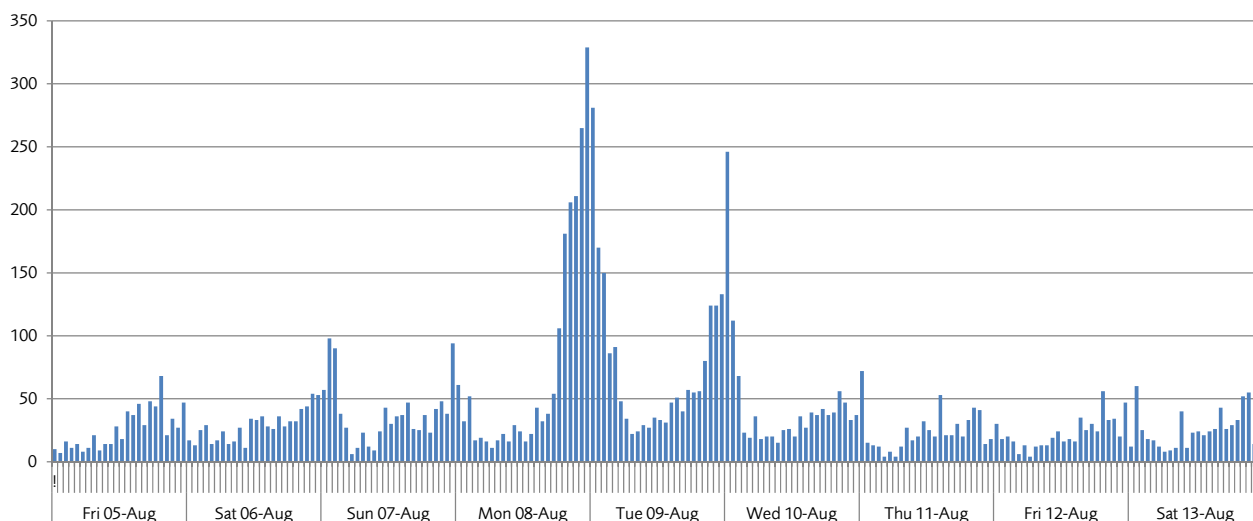
NOTE: Production of reliable data about Brigade activity at incidents is complicated by the use of the Forward Mobilising Procedures. This means that, for a number of calls, detailed data about which calls were attended, what action taken and the resources deployed, was collected manually on Brigade Command Units at forward mobilising locations.

Total calls handled by Control

The table below shows the number of calls received by the Brigade for the nine days to Saturday 13 August. Total calls peaked on Tuesday 9 August and the volume of calls on that day was more than twice the normal rate of activity on the days before and after the disturbances, and when compared to data for the same days in 2010.

	Fri 5 Aug	Sat 6 Aug	Sun 7 Aug	Mon 8 Aug	Tue 9 Aug	Wed 10 Aug	Thu 11 Aug	Fri 12 Aug	Sat 13 Aug
2011	619	678	910	1806	1814	1073	574	535	616
2010	668	744	608	637	763	548	537	513	571

Chart below shows the number of calls received for the same period as the table above and shows the number calls each hour. The two significant peaks in call volumes were (a) between 2300 hours and midnight on Monday 8 August (235 calls in that hour) and (b) between midnight and 0100 hours in Wednesday 10 August (194 calls in that hour). The second peak actually occurred when the main civil disturbances were over.

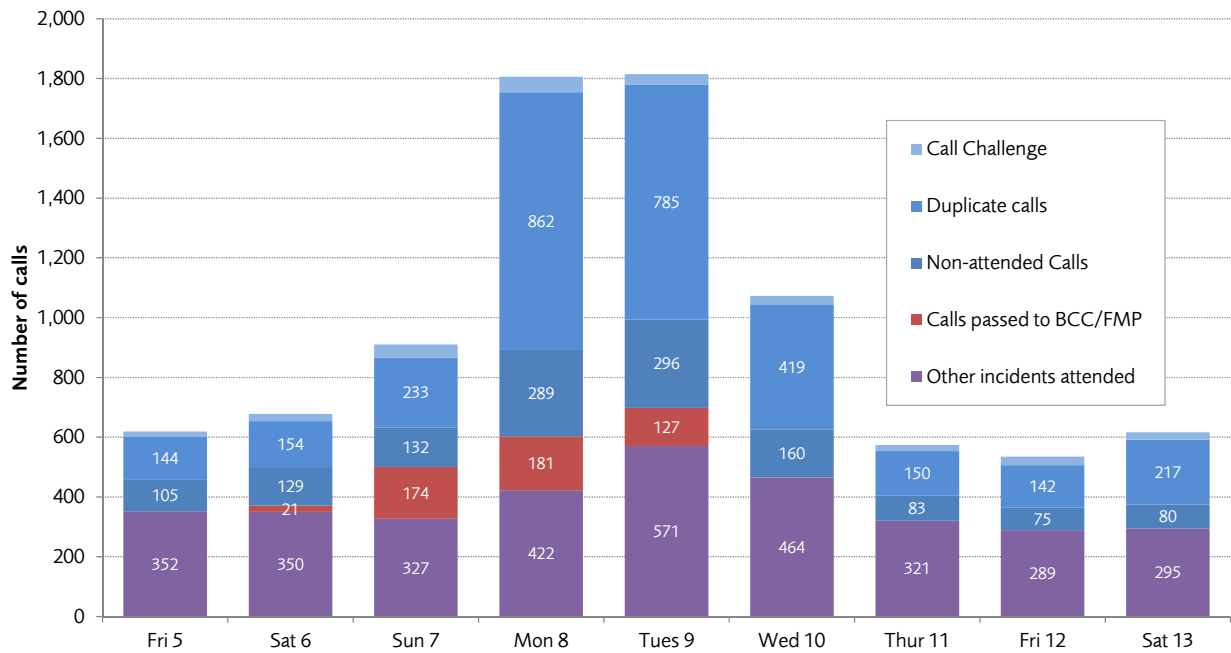


This volume of activity significantly exceeds the Brigade's normal busiest period around bonfire night. For comparison, on bonfire night 2010 – usually the busiest day for the Brigade – the peak hourly volume of call handled by Brigade control was 156 calls between 2000 hours and 2100 hours on 5 November. The volume of calls handled during the civil disturbances exceeded this level for eight consecutive hours on the night of Monday/Tuesday 8/9 August and for an hour on Wednesday 10 August.

Total activity by the Brigade

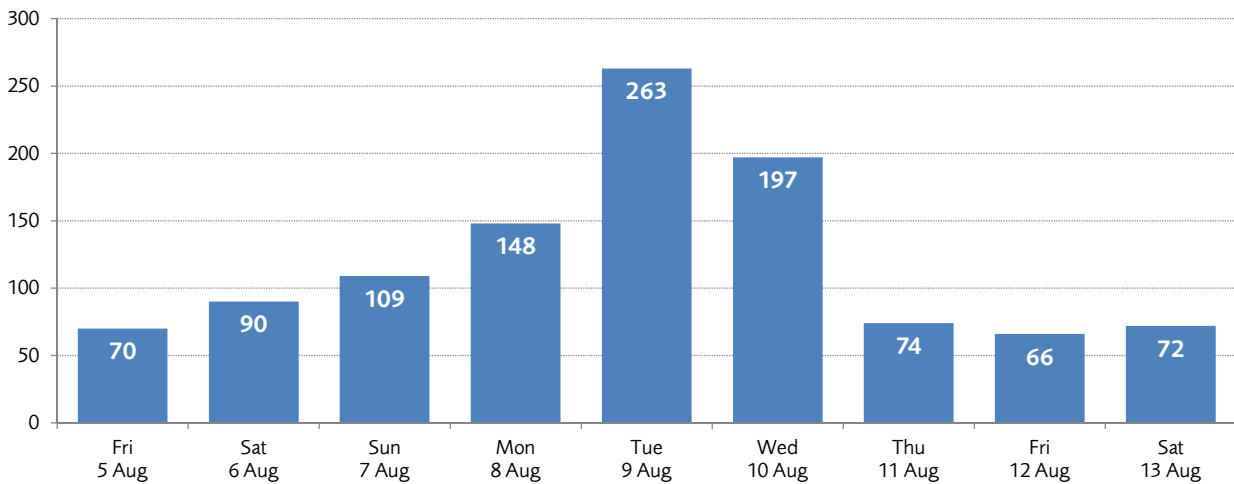
The chart below shows the total number of calls each day translated into Brigade activity and the proportions (a) where an attendance was made [purple]; (b) where 999 calls were received but no attendance was made (this includes any subsequent 'duplicate' calls to incidents already known about) [blue]; and (c) where data is

still being collated because of the Forward Mobilising procedures used [green]. The chart shows the peak in activity on 8 and 9 August. Excluding those calls where data is still be collated, the volume of attended incidents on Tuesday 9 August (605 incidents) was some 92 per cent higher than the average (315 incidents) for the 'normal' days before and after the disturbances².



Fires attended

The chart below shows the number of fires attended as recorded on the Brigade's Incident Management System (IMS) (at the time of preparing this report).



² 5 August, 11 to 13 August 2011

Summary Data

Calls by Day – 21 day comparison

Date	Calls to BCC/FCMP	Other Incidents attended	Duplicate calls	Non-attended calls	Non-attended (Call Challenge)	Total calls Brigade Control
30 July		350	176	104	35	665
31		339	152	120	31	642
1 August		364	240	124	24	752
2		323	145	99	38	605
3		411	194	145	33	783
4		335	103	105	29	572
5		352	144	105	18	619
6	21	350	154	129	24	678
7	174	327	233	132	44	910
8	181	422	862	289	52	1,806
9	127	571	785	296	35	1,814
10	2	464	419	160	28	1,073
11		321	150	83	20	574
12		289	142	75	29	535
13		295	217	80	24	616
14		324	171	96	28	619
15		290	149	92	24	555
16		313	123	105	23	564
17		319	137	105	17	578
18		317	117	93	19	546
19		302	83	91	29	505

Calls by 12 hour periods

12 hour period	Calls to BCC/FCMP	Other Incidents attended	Duplicate calls	Non-attended calls	Non-attended (Call Challenge)	Total calls Brigade Control
Sat Night	179	135	113	70	13	510
Sun Day	11	187	93	57	25	373
Sun Night	23	144	175	69	12	423
Mon Day	50	236	339	110	25	760
Mon Night	239	257	865	298	41	1,700
Tue Day	-	278	150	93	15	536
Tue Night	2	322	479	127	9	939
Brigade Total	504	1,559	2,214	824	140	5,241