

Committee(s)	Dated:
Open Spaces and City Gardens	06062016
Subject: Accidents and Incidents in the Open Spaces Department in 2015	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For Information
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Summary

There has been a slight fall in employee accidents resulting in injuries in 2015 compared with previous years. Overall accident rates are at the lowest they have been in four years. Whilst the severity and causes of accidents vary greatly, the majority were minor injuries resulting in little or no time off work and few accidents to members of the public necessitated going directly to hospital, the exception being a fatality at Hampstead Heath Ponds which has been reported elsewhere.

There has been an increase in incidents involving damage to property which is believed to be due to improved reporting and a reduction in reported incidents of verbal abuse which is believed to be due to additional staff training in managing enforcement duties.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note this report.

Main Report

Background

1. In accordance with Health & Safety legislation, all accidents, incidents and near misses in the workplace must be recorded and investigated. On the presentation of the Annual Audit report in February 2016 your Committee requested further information on accidents statistics.

Current Position

2. There were 82 accidents and incidents recorded in the calendar year 2015 of which 51 resulted in injury. The graph at Figure 1 shows this in relation to the three previous years and it can be seen that the number of accidents resulting in injuries is slightly fewer than in previous years, representing the lowest it has been in four years.

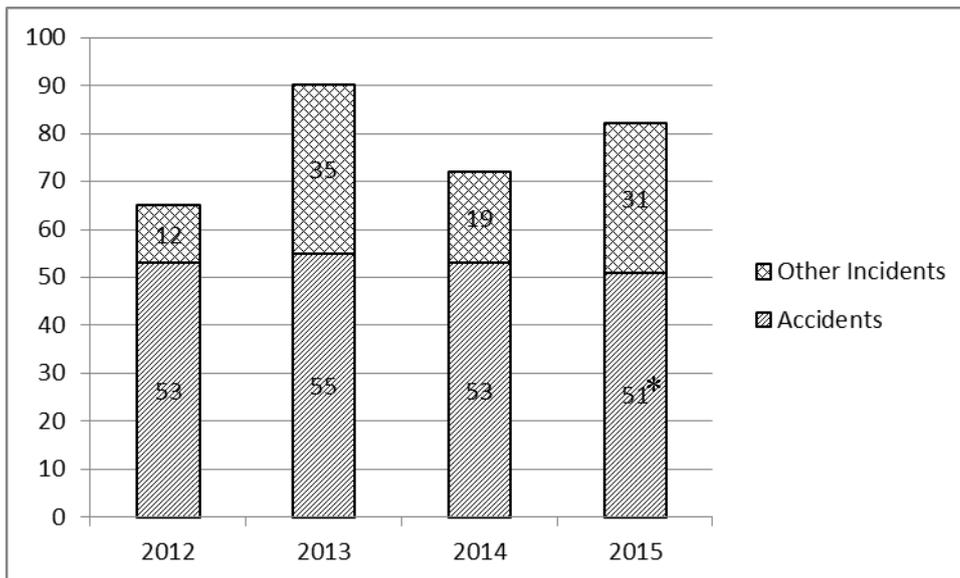


Figure 1 Accidents (resulting in injuries) and Other Incidents (no personal injury), 2012 to 2015. (*Excluding work related diseases)

3. The level of accidents resulting in injuries in Open Spaces is consistent with a large department with high numbers of visitors and a high proportion of manual staff working in the natural environment. The overall level of accidents resulting in injuries has been remarkably stable over the last four years; however there is a slight decrease in the number of injuries to employees in the last year, as can be seen in the breakdown of accidents to employees, members of the public, contractors or volunteers, in Figure 2. The decrease in employee accidents is still apparent when expressed as a percentage of accidents per Full Time Equivalent employees (to compensate for changes in employee numbers over the three years): 11.1% in 2013; 11.7% in 2014; 9.7% in 2015.

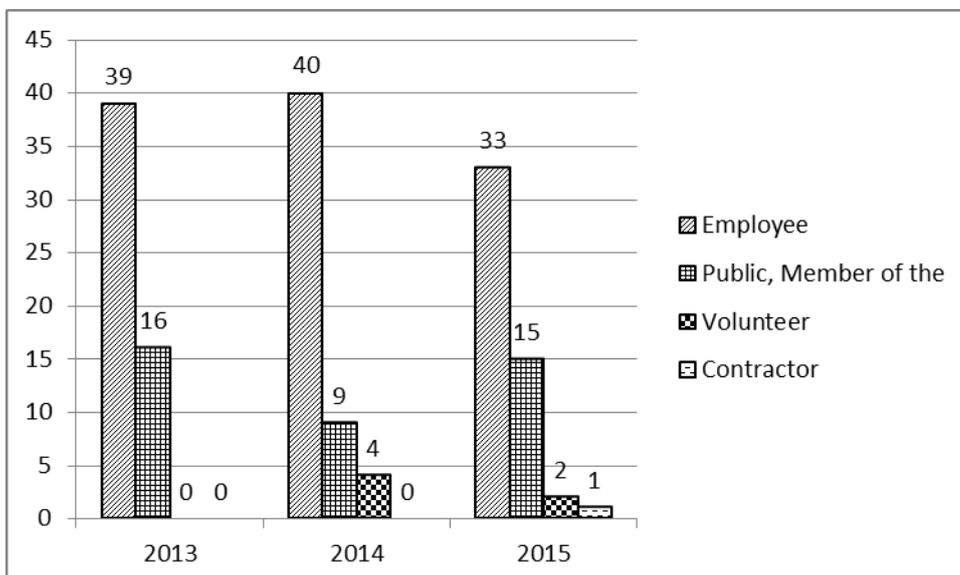


Figure 2 Accidents (resulting in injuries) to Employees, Volunteers, Contractors and Members of the Public.

4. Management focus on H&S is likely to be most effective in reducing employee accidents rather than those involving members of the public, due to having greater levels of control and the ability to provide training, appropriate protective equipment and safe procedures. However major efforts are made to provide a safe environment for the public against everyday hazards. The level of stability of the overall accident levels is possibly a reflection of having robust H&S systems in place which target the most obvious hazards. However we also focus on minor accidents and near miss incidents to reduce the occurrence of more serious accidents.

Severity of accidents

5. Members will be aware that sadly a member of the public drowned at the Highgate Men's Bathing Pond on Hampstead Heath in 2015. This has been the subject of an inquest and appropriate actions have been taken.
6. The majority of accidents in 2015 involved minor injuries (Table 1 in Appendix 1). However three involved members of the public being taken directly from site to a hospital for further treatment.
7. Seven members of staff had injuries or illness arising from work activities which necessitated taking significant time off work, generally involving severe bruising, muscle and ligament damage and one employee had a partial amputation of the tip of a finger while using a tail lift on a lorry. In addition one employee was off work for three weeks as a result of contracting Lyme disease, believed to have been contracted as a result of work activities.
8. Nine incidents/accidents were reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR). These are outlined in Table 2 of Appendix 1. This is an increase from three reportable incidents in 2014.

Types of Accidents and Incidents

9. The types of accidents and incidents vary greatly. Table 3 in Appendix 1 summarises the types of accidents and incidents which occur repeatedly across all groups in 2015.
10. Recording and understanding incidents where injury did not occur is an important part of accident reduction. These events (Table 4 in Appendix 1) include outcomes where there was damage to property, near misses and other incidents such as verbal abuse.
11. The increase in reporting of damage to property between 2014 and 2015 is believed to be related to better reporting since the introduction of the Santia telephone incident reporting system. Many damage to property incidents involved damage to vehicles or damage caused by vehicles. Near Miss reporting involves a variety of causes and all incidents are investigated along with accidents to determine if there were lessons to be learnt from the event and information to be shared across the department.

12. Verbal Abuse incidents have shown a marked decrease between 2014 and 2015. This is believed to be partly as a result of staff training which has taken place with regard to methods of dealing with enforcement incidents.

Performance Indicator (PI)

13. The PI is based on a target of investigating accidents within 14 days. For the year 2015 this worked out as 71% for Open Spaces (compared to 69% for the City Corporation as a whole). Although this is not a poor performance and investigations were generally carried out to a high standard, managers and supervisors are working to improve on this figure and have set a performance target of 80% of accidents to be investigated within 14 days for 2016.

Preventative action

14. As well as an ongoing programme of risk management there has been a programme of department led work to avoid chronic issues, such as hand arm vibration and noise related conditions. The surveillance of noise related conditions has been improved and assessments of equipment likely to cause vibration and procedures for monitoring staff exposure to vibration have been put in place. Improvements to driver assessment, training and driver management guidance are being developed in line with a new corporate driving policy.
15. In 2015 a Health & Wellbeing Survey of staff across the organisation, which had a response rate of 38%, indicated poor mental wellbeing in 44% of respondents. The mental health charity Mind, point out that there is evidence of a link between poor mental health and higher rates of accidents in the workplace. Prolonged absence following an accident may also hide underlying poor mental wellbeing. In April 2016 the CityWell initiative was launched to promote greater awareness and support for improved health and wellbeing across the workforce, including mental health.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

16. Reducing our accident rates is driven by three of our departmental values of 'Quality', 'Inclusion' and 'People' as expressed in the Open Spaces Business Plan. Accident reduction is a key part of the Open Spaces H&S Plan as part of the Corporate H&S Policy.

Conclusion

17. 2015 saw an overall decrease in accident numbers in the Open Spaces Department, now at their lowest levels in four years. The majority of accidents across all groups resulted in minor injuries however nine incidents warranted reporting to the Health & Safety Executive under RIDDOR, including a fatality due to drowning at Hampstead Heath. Accidents and incidents where no injury has occurred, are investigated and lessons learned are shared across Open Spaces.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Tables 1 to 4

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