

Title: Wheelie Bin Arsons in Bensham, Gateshead

Category: Crime and Disorder Reduction

Force: Northumbria

Chief Officer Endorsing: A.C.C. Mr J. D. SCOTT

Contact Person: Sgt Alastair FREEBURN
Community Policing

Address: Gateshead East Area Command
High West Street
Gateshead
Tyne & Wear
NE8 1BN

Telephone: 0191 454 7555 Ext 64035

Fax: 0191 221 9155

E-mail: al.freeburn.1458@northumbria.pnn.police.uk

Tilley Award 2003

Wheelie Bin Arsons in Bensham, Gateshead

Community Policing Sergeant Alastair FREEBURN

Telephone Number: 0191 4547555 ext. 64035

E-mail: al.freeburn.1458@northumbria.pnn.police.uk

Essentially the problem was one of youth disorder on most evenings in Hyde Park in Bensham, Gateshead. Underage youths were gathering to drink alcohol in public, taking Council wheelie bins left in back lanes along to the park and setting fire to the contents thereby destroying the bins, generally causing disorder and causing the attendance of the Fire Brigade.

The most significant evidence of the scale of the problem was the number of calls received by the Fire Brigade the vast majority of which the Police were initially aware of. Similarly the Police were unaware of how many wheelie bins were being reported lost or stolen to Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council.

Critically the CBMs realised the need to liaise with other agencies already mentioned as well as with Youth Outreach Workers, Street Wardens, Trading Standard Officers and the Local Authority regarding CCTV provision. Most important of all they identified the need to liaise with local residents who were leaving their bins in the back lanes and could provide intelligence as to the identity of the youths responsible.

In the short term the traditional Police response of high profile policing was carried out by Community Beat Managers, Bensham Community Action Team officers and late shift Disorder Patrols. A plain clothes operation (KEROSENE) was also carried out resulting in the arrest of one suspected offender.

In the long term GMBC leafleted all residents advising them to take in their bins from the back lanes, the Police and Fire Brigade visited local schools, the Arson Task Force visited the families of suspected offenders and Youth Outreach Workers managed to divert increasing numbers of local youths to existing sports facilities in the area. Funding was also secured for an improved CCTV system.

The theft of and setting fire to wheelie bins in the Bensham area of Gateshead has virtually stopped and has not been displaced to other areas. The number of youth disorder calls to the Hyde Park foot beat over comparative 6 month periods fell from 173 to 146. This is a 16% reduction probably entirely due to the lack of wheelie bin incidents. The residents of Hyde Park Street and Westminster Street adjoining the park have expressed their delight at Community Forums to the response of all agencies involved in dealing with this problem.

Description of project

1. The Objectives

- (a) To reduce the wheelie bin arson crimes and juvenile disorder problem in the Hyde Park Street area of Bensham in Gateshead,
- (b) without displacing it to an adjoining area, and
- (c) before it spreads to other areas or leads to serious fires with risks of injuries or fatalities.

Without a problem solving multi-agency approach the traditional police objectives would simply have been to move all the youths on or ignore the problem altogether as it was not generating any crime reports to the police. It should be borne in mind that Bensham is a generally socially deprived and densely populated area of old terraced houses with open access to all of the back lanes and many of the backyards themselves. It is a relatively high crime area within Gateshead which is one of the best performing area commands in the Northumbria Force which in turn is one of the best in the country at consistently reducing crime.

2. The Problem Defined

Routine Police Crime Pattern Analysis System (also known as PROphesy) computer scans had highlighted the fact that there were a growing number of juvenile disorder calls to the Hyde Park Street area and the park itself in particular between 5.00pm and 10.00pm on dark winter evenings in late 2001 early 2002. The presenting problem and initial police supervisors thoughts were that it was a simple disorder problem.

Fortunately Bensham has two of the most experienced Community Beat Managers (CBMs) in the force who attended one of their regular community meetings on in December 2001 where residents mentioned that the disorder conduct now included bins being set on fire - a fact that had not shown up at all in police data (See Appendix A).

Critically the CBM's realised that the first thing to do was to firm up the police information and scan information from a number of partner agencies so that the actual problem rather than the presenting problem could be identified and then dealt with.

House to house and church to church enquiries by the CBM's and newly formed Community Action Team (four proactive uniform PC's working exclusively in the Bensham area) confirmed that youths were obtaining alcohol from local shops, stealing residents wheelie bins, gathering in the park and setting fires inside the wheelie bins apparently for their own entertainment.

The extent of the problem was only recognised when the officers obtained data (see Appendix B) from the Fire Brigade/Police Arson Task Force based in South Tyneside but covering the Gateshead area. There were 38 reports of 'Secondary Fires' attended by the Fire Service in the general areas of Bensham most of them in November and December with the 'hot-spot' being Hyde Park Street. The Police had been totally unaware of the arsons problem at that time.

Scanning of this problem also included checking with the Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council Environmental Services (Cleansing) Dept, checking of their existing CCTV footage in the area and liaison with their Youth Outreach Workers and Bensham Street Wardens.

GMBC revealed that on 5th November 2001 alone 180 wheelie bins were reported lost or stolen to them throughout the Borough. This compares to 111 lost or stolen on 5th November 2002. The pooling of information from partner agencies paved the way for a multi-agency response to the problem which was defined as underage youths obtaining alcohol from local shops, gathering in the park in Hyde park Street and setting fires in wheelie bins taken there by the youths from surrounding streets.

Key Issues identified from analysis of the problem were:-

- (i) Insufficient out of school activities
- (ii) Poor lighting in the area
- (iii) Inadequate CCTV system in operation
- (iv) Park layout hindered identification and detention of offenders
- (v) Ease of access to the wheelie bins
- (vi) Ease of access to alcohol for underage youths
- (vii) Poor information sharing between agencies affected.

3. Dealing with the Problem

It was realised by all agencies involved that a co-ordinated response was required and the CBM's were agreed as a focal point for communications so that all agencies and the public were kept informed of the timetable and progress of the following responses.

The police, in the short term, carried out high profile patrols by the CBMs, the Community Action Team and dedicated disorder patrols on all late shifts. All off-licences were visited and licensees reminded of their responsibilities regarding the sale of alcohol to young persons. This was followed up by visits from Trading Standard Officers, Street Wardens and Youth Outreach Workers reinforcing the same message. The police response to all calls to such premises was improved by better use of IT systems reminding all officers en route to take positive action against youths or licensees if any offences were revealed on their arrival.

A plain clothes surveillance operation (KEROSENE) resulted in the arrest of one suspected offender but word rapidly spread that all suspected offenders were being targeted.

In the long term police visits to school as part of an education programme highlighted the dangers of fire also reaped dividends. A school watch scheme involving CBMs, pupils, staff and residents adjoining Bensham Road Primary School was also established as a spin off to these visits.

Also in the relatively long term evidence is being gathered by various agencies with a view to obtaining Acceptable Behaviour Agreements and Anti Social Behaviour Orders against key individuals believed responsible for damage and disorder in Bensham generally.

The Arson Task Force - a police officer and fire brigade officer based in South Tyneside - visited the Bensham area and began working with the suspected youths and their families.

This was followed up by Fire Brigade involvement in fire safety projects in local primary schools.

Neighbourhood Watch schemes of which there are several in Bensham and church groups were briefed regarding the problem and provided information regarding suspected offenders.

The Cleansing Dept distributed leaflets advising all householders to keep their wheelie bins in their back yards or risk loosing the use of the wheelie bins facility.

Youth Outreach workers succeeded in engaging and diverting some of the youths to existing sports activities in the area and a new youth shelter was approved and installed.

Last but not least the Local Authority agreed to upgrade and install an improved CCTV system in the area. This has now been installed but significantly the reports of wheelie bin fires stopped 2 months before the CCTV project was completed.

4. Evaluation

By any assessment the success of this co-ordinated problem solving approach to juvenile disorder and wheelie bin arsons in the Hyde Park Street area of Bensham is striking. Not only have there been virtually no reported incidents of wheelie bin arsons in the area to any agency since 1st January 2002 but the Fire Brigade also report a significant reduction to calls of all types of arsons in the Bensham area. In the whole of Bensham for the six month period from 1st October 2002 there have only been 14 wheelie bin fires compared to 38 in the same period the previous year.

The cleansing Dept estimate the reduction in the number of lost/stolen wheelie bins at over a third and the number of disorder calls has also reduced significantly comparing the 6 months from 1st September 2001 to the 6 months from 1st September 2002 - See Appendix A.

It is difficult to quantify what proportion of an increased take up of diversionary activities can be attributed to Youth Outreach Workers (The Avenues Project) as they were operating in the area before this problem was identified and continue to do so today.

Perhaps the most gratifying seal of approval was that expressed by the same community forum held in the same church earlier this year when the residents expressed their delight at the success of this problem solving initiative.

Key actions taken for a sustainable solution to this problem were:-

- (i) Getting the community to play their part by changing their behaviour ie not leaving their bins out in the back lanes and providing information as to suspected offenders.
- (ii) The education activity in the area for schoolchildren and local youths.
- (iii) The Local Authority securing funding for a CCTV system upgrade taking advantage of improvements in technology.

5. How does this project fit into the overall approach to problem solving

This is a good example of trained and professional problem solvers listening to members of the public who identified a problem then enlisting and motivating others to adopt a problem solving approach rather than just move it on.

Perhaps the most important lesson that can be learned from this example is the need for all agencies to ensure we identify and utilise all the data available to accurately identify and address a problem. Finally it must be recognised that problem solving is an ongoing process.

If this potentially dangerous craze had caught on the costs in terms of injuries, possibly even fatalities, criminal damage, wasted resources and the quality of life for residents in Bensham could have been significant.

Appendices

- A Police Data. Number of youth disorder calls to the (I2B1) foot beat in the Bensham area for the periods 01.10.2001 to 31.03.2002 and 01.10.2002 to 31.03.2003 broken down by month, week, day of week and hour of the day.

- B Fire Brigade/Arson Task Force Data

DL: Incidents Workfile
Grid Ref 1 for Analysis
Grid Ref 1 for Polygon Selection

MONTH OF YEAR BARCHART

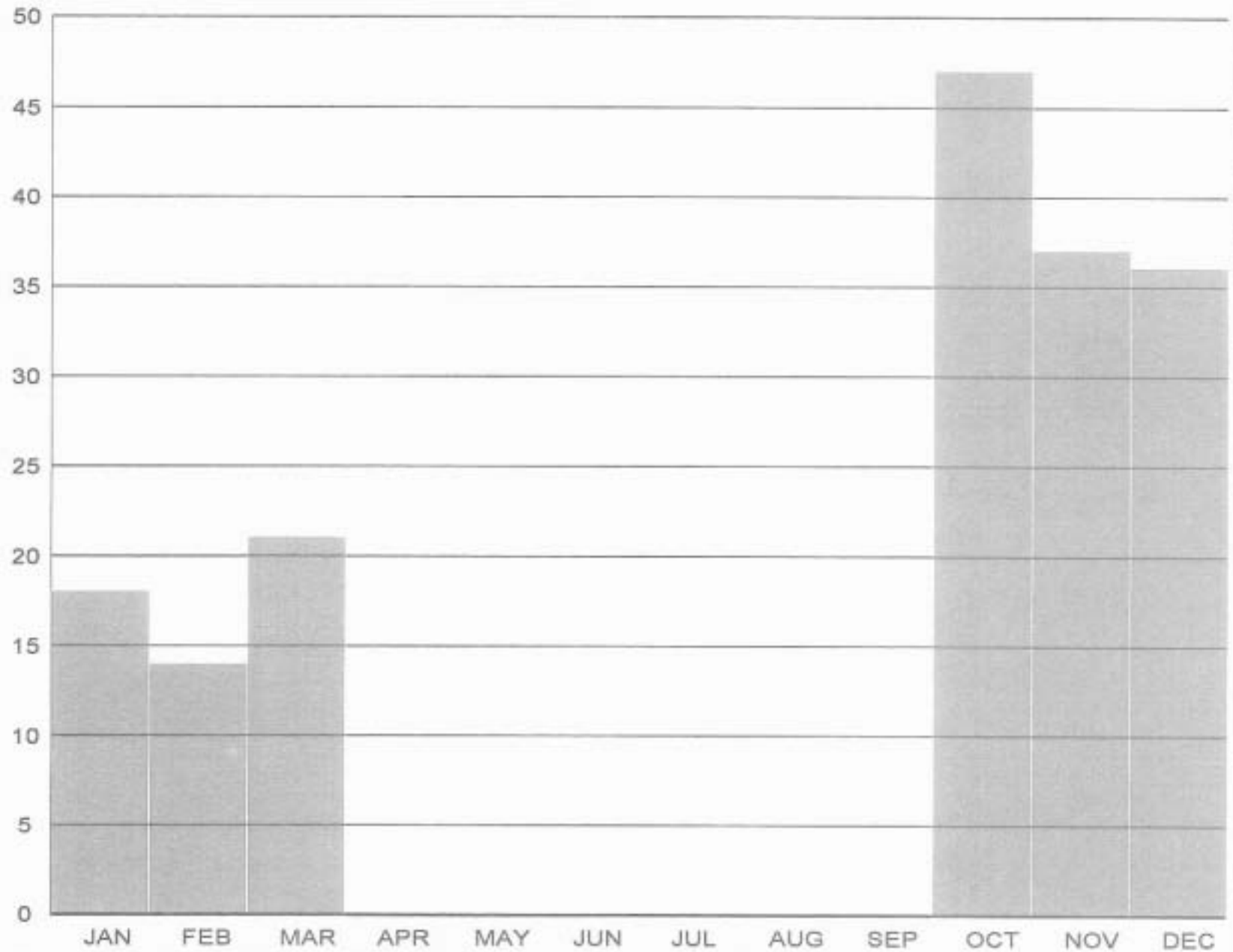
Event count

Total, Time, E Desc, Screen
173, 173, 173, 173

Event tips disabled
Earliest Date = 01/10/2001
Latest Date = 31/03/2002

KEY

- Possible events
- ▒ Probable events
- Definite events



DL: Incidents Workfile
Grid Ref 1 for Analysis
Grid Ref 1 for Polygon Selection

MONTH OF YEAR BAR CHART

Event count

Total, Time, E Desc, Screen

135, 135, 135, 135

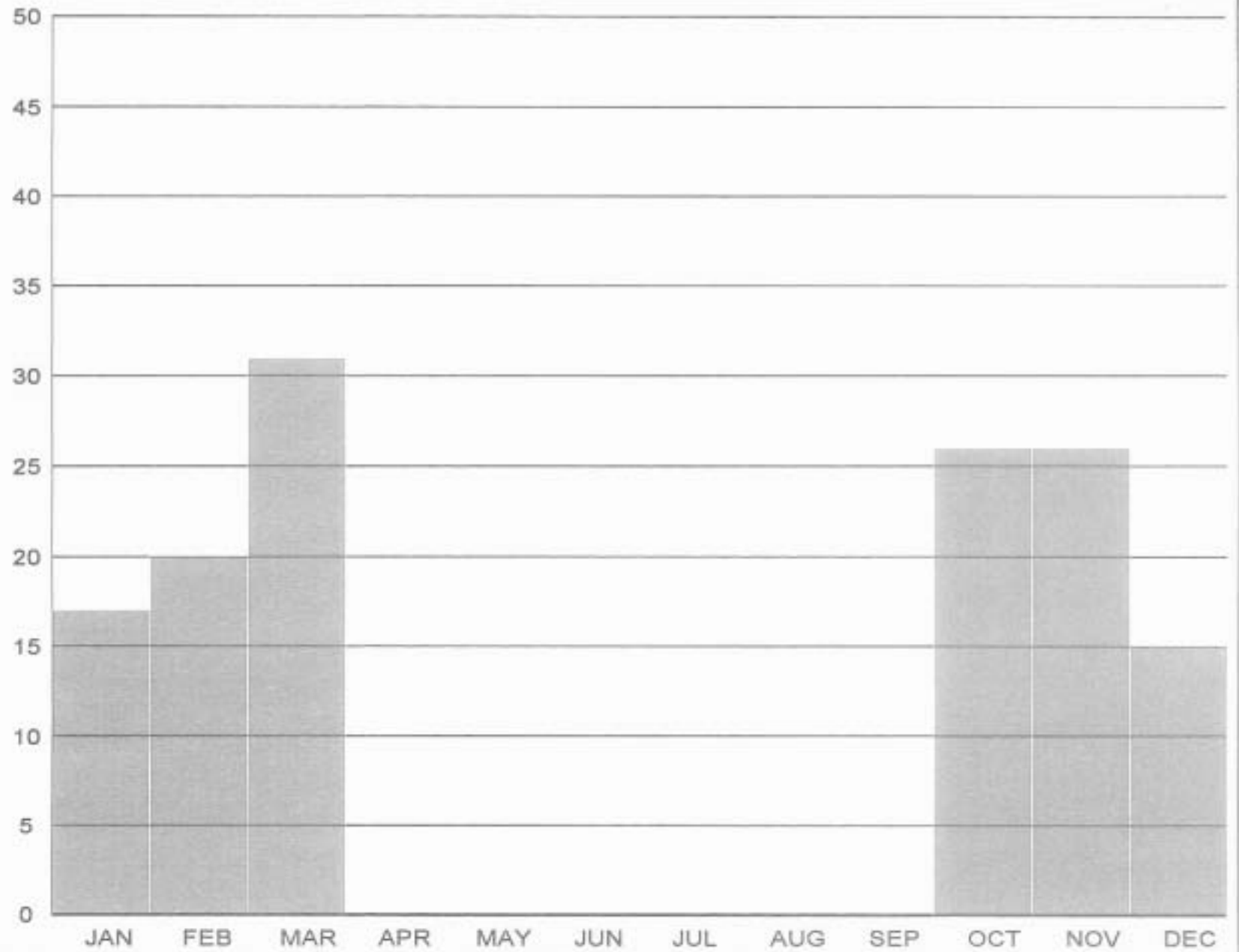
Event tips disabled

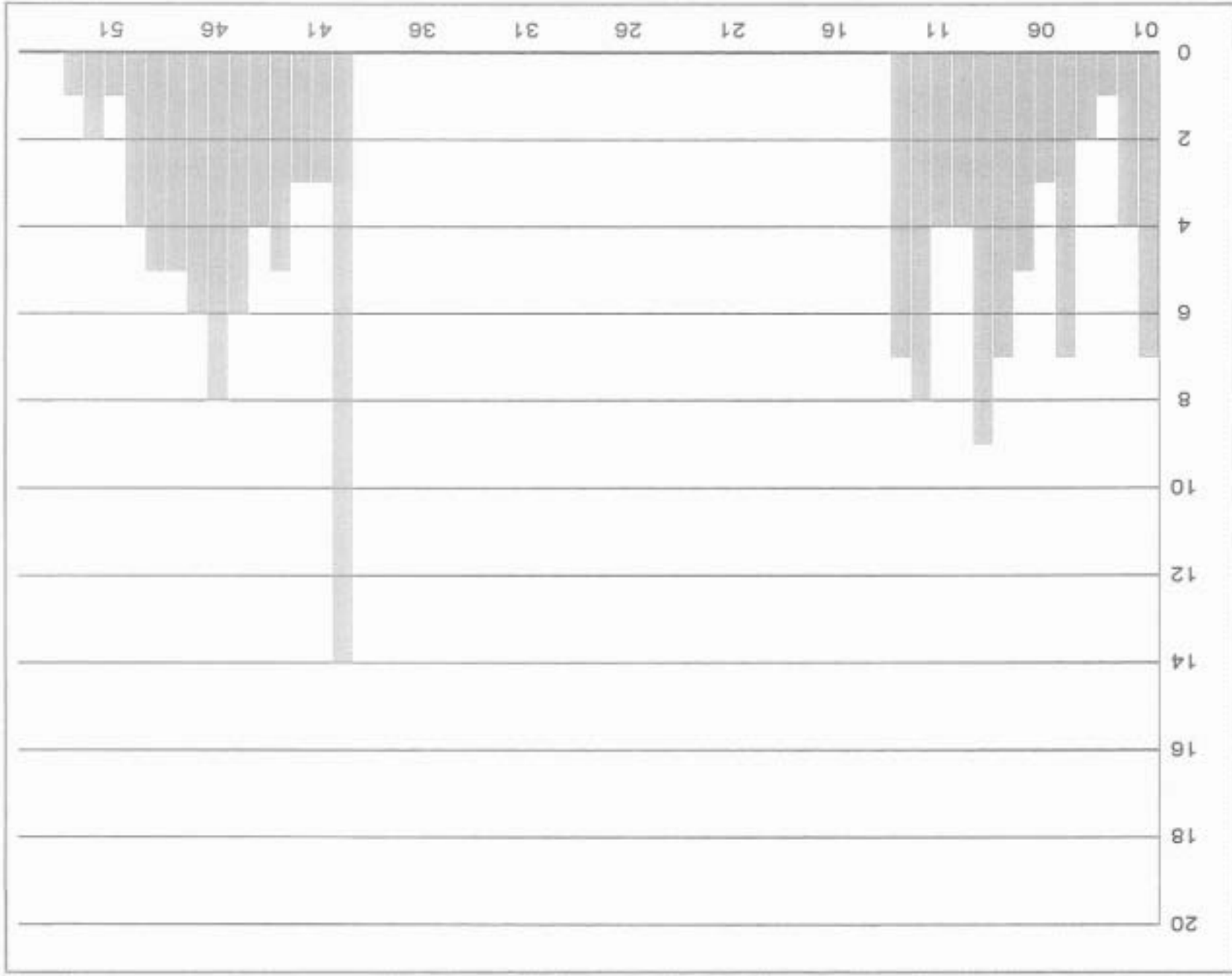
Earliest Date = 01/10/2002

Latest Date = 31/03/2003

KEY

- Possible events
- Probable events
- Definite events





DL: Incident's Workfile
 Gnd Ref 1 for Analysis
 Gnd Ref 1 for Polygon Selection

KEY

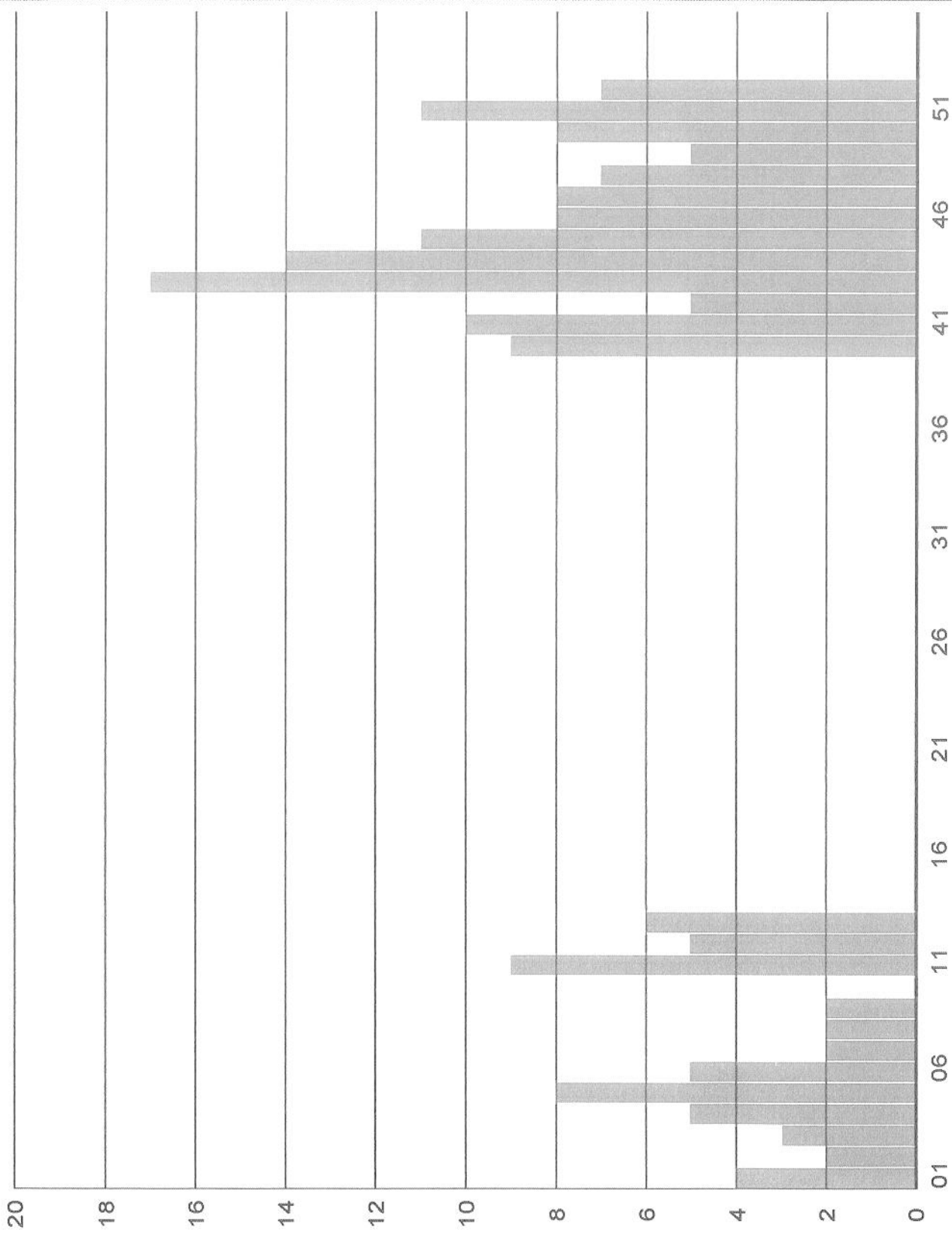
- Definite events
- Probable events
- Possible events

Event count
 Total, Time, E Desc, Screen
 135, 135, 135, 135
 Event tips disabled
 Earliest Date = 01/10/2002
 Latest Date = 31/03/2003

DL: Incidents Workfile
 Grid Ref 1 for Analysis
 Grid Ref 1 for Polygon Selection

WEEK OF YEAR BARCHART
 Event count
 Total, Time, E Desc, Screen
 173, 173, 173, 173
 Event tips disabled
 Earliest Date = 01/10/2001
 Latest Date = 31/03/2002

KEY
 Possible events
 Probable events
 Definite events



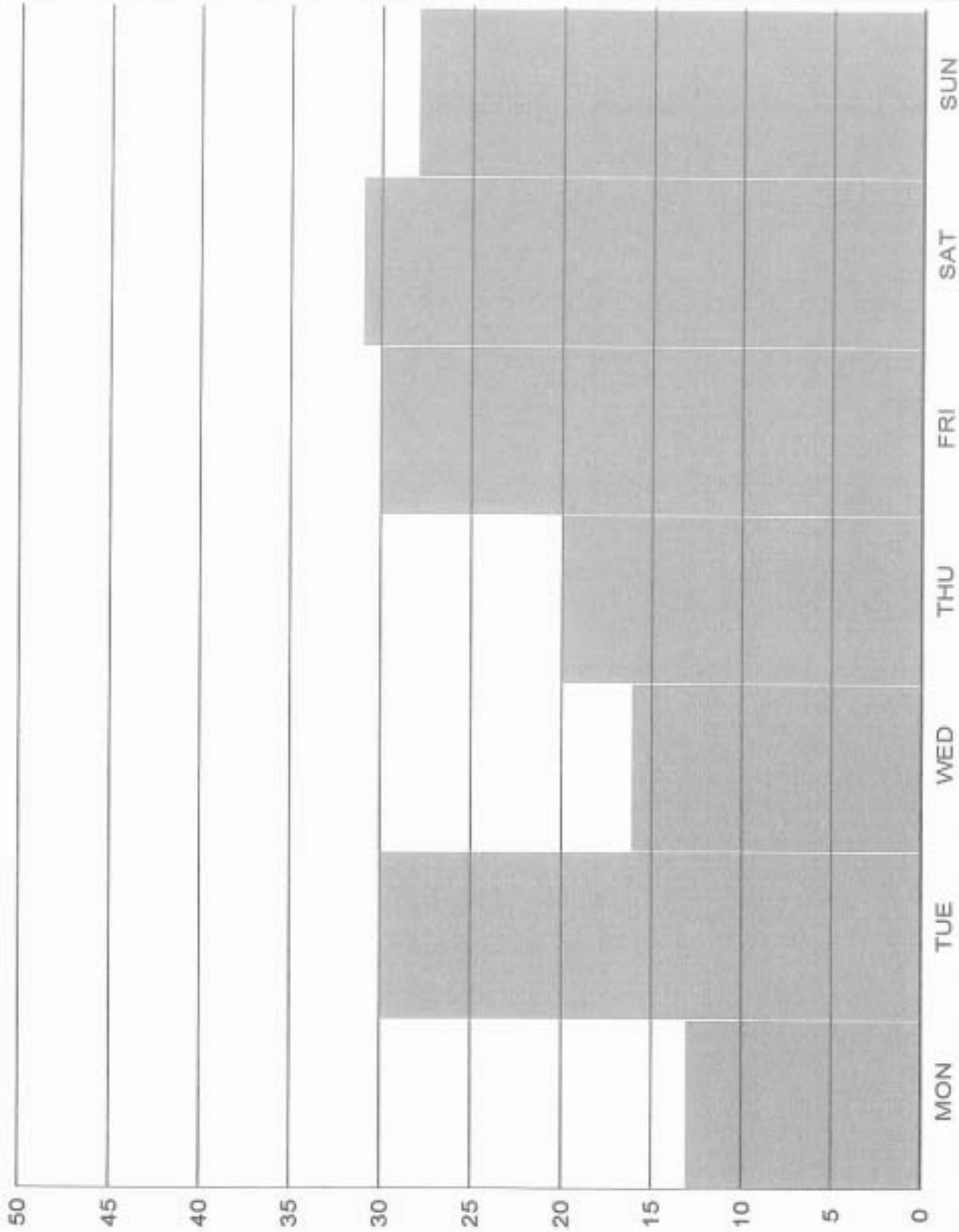
DL: Incidents Worcfile
Grid Ref 1 for Analysis
Grid Ref 1 for Polygon Selection

DAY OF WEEK BARCHART

Event count
Total Time, E Desc, Screen
173, 173, 173, 168
Event tips disabled
Earliest Date = 01/10/2001
Latest Date = 31/03/2002

KEY

- Possible events
- Probable events
- Definite events



DL: Incidents Workfile
 Grid Ref 1 for Analysis
 Grid Ref 1 for Polygon Selection

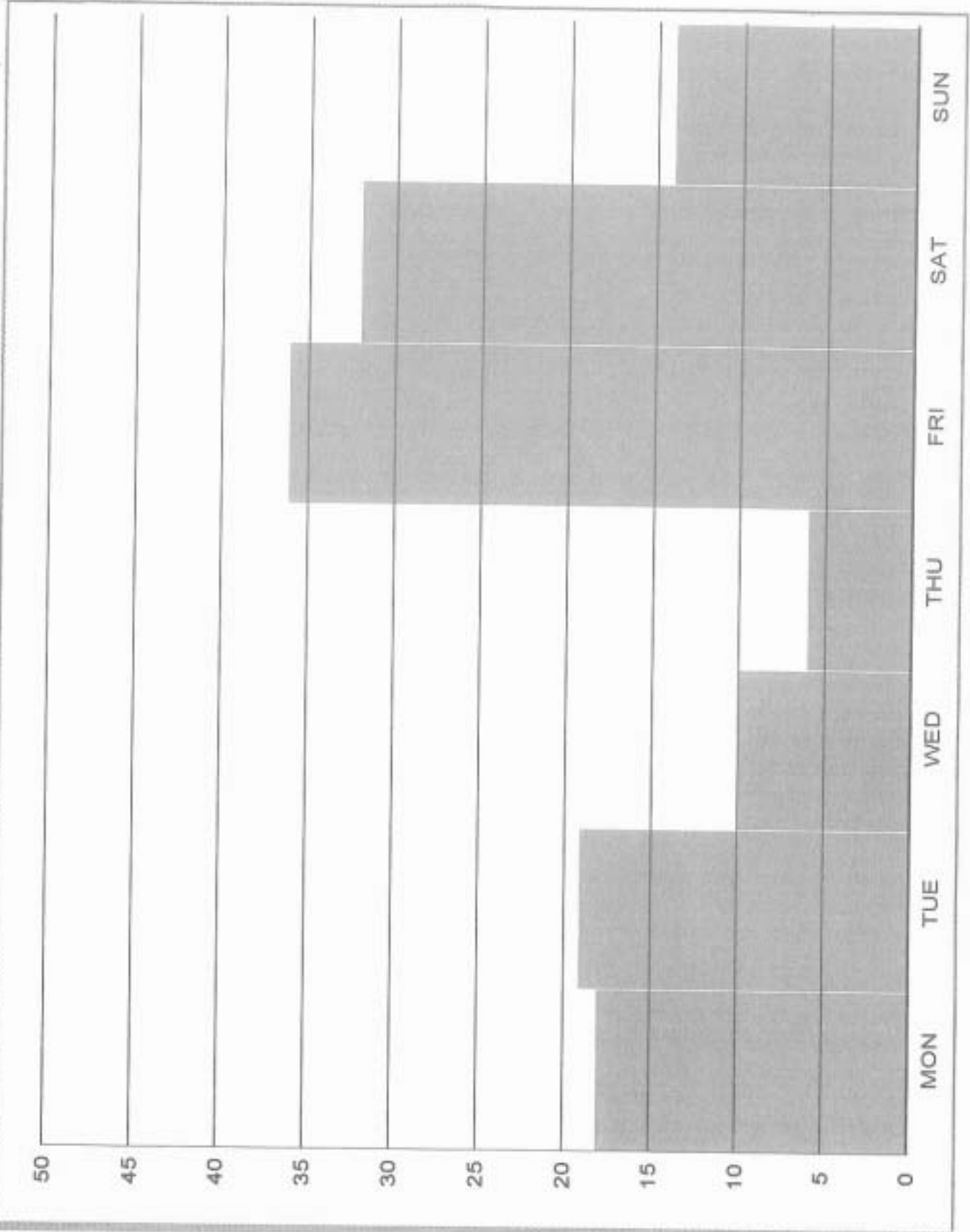
DAY OF WEEK BARCHART

Event count
 Total, Time, E Desc, Screen
 135, 135, 135, 135

Event tips disabled
 Earliest Date = 01/10/2002
 Latest Date = 31/03/2003

KEY

- Possible events
- Probable events
- Definite events



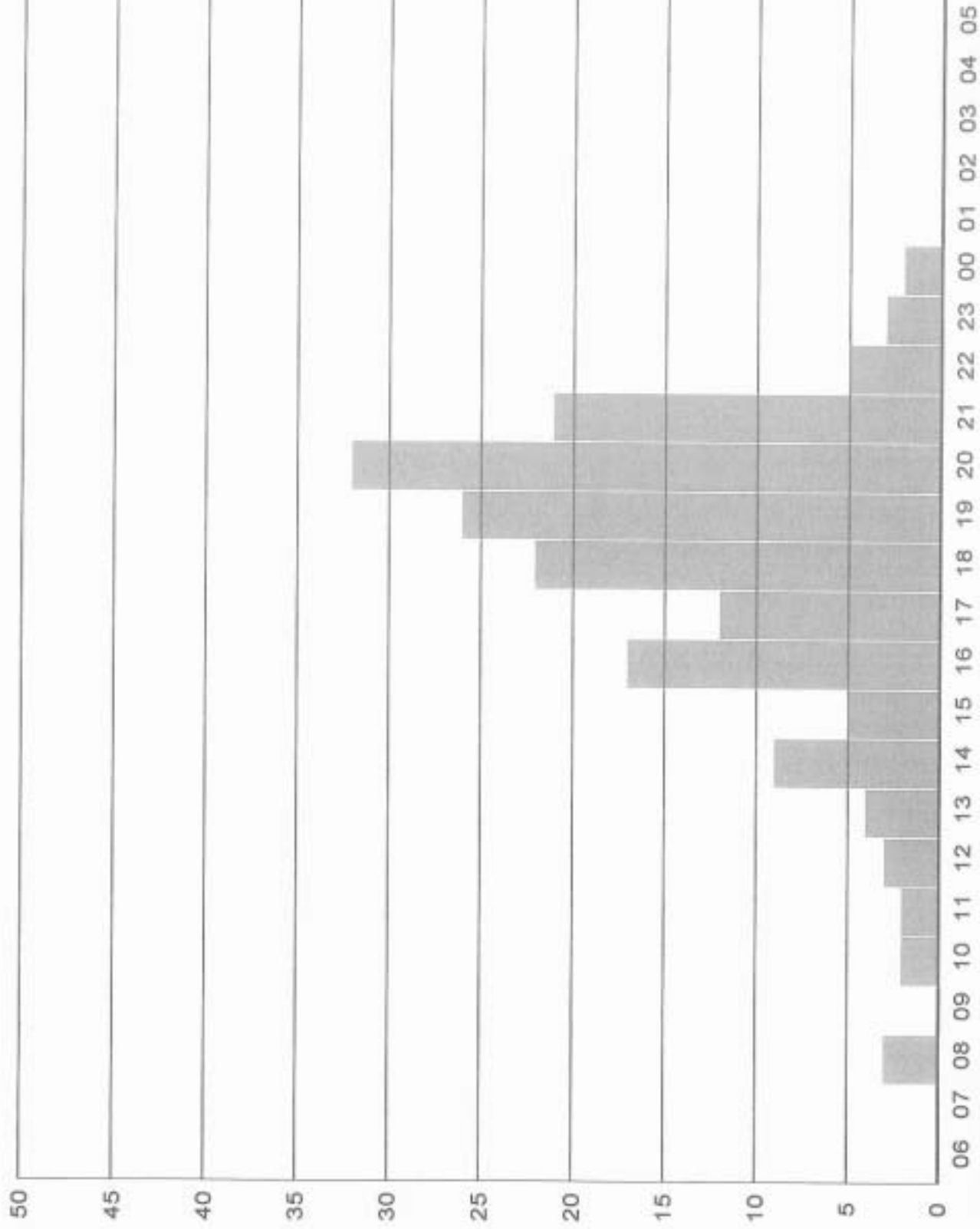
DL: Incidents Workfile
Grid Ref 1 for Analysis
Grid Ref 1 for Polygon Selection

TIME OF DAY BARCHART

Event count
Total, Time, E Desc, Screen
173, 173, 173, 168
Event tips disabled
Earliest Date = 01/10/2001
Latest Date = 31/03/2002

KEY

- Possible events
- Probable events
- Definite events



DL: Incidents Worldwide
Grid Ref 1 for Analysis
Grid Ref 1 for Polygon Selection

TIME OF DAY BARCHART

Event count

Total, Time, E Desc, Screen
135, 135, 135, 135

Event tips disabled

Earliest Date = 01/10/2002

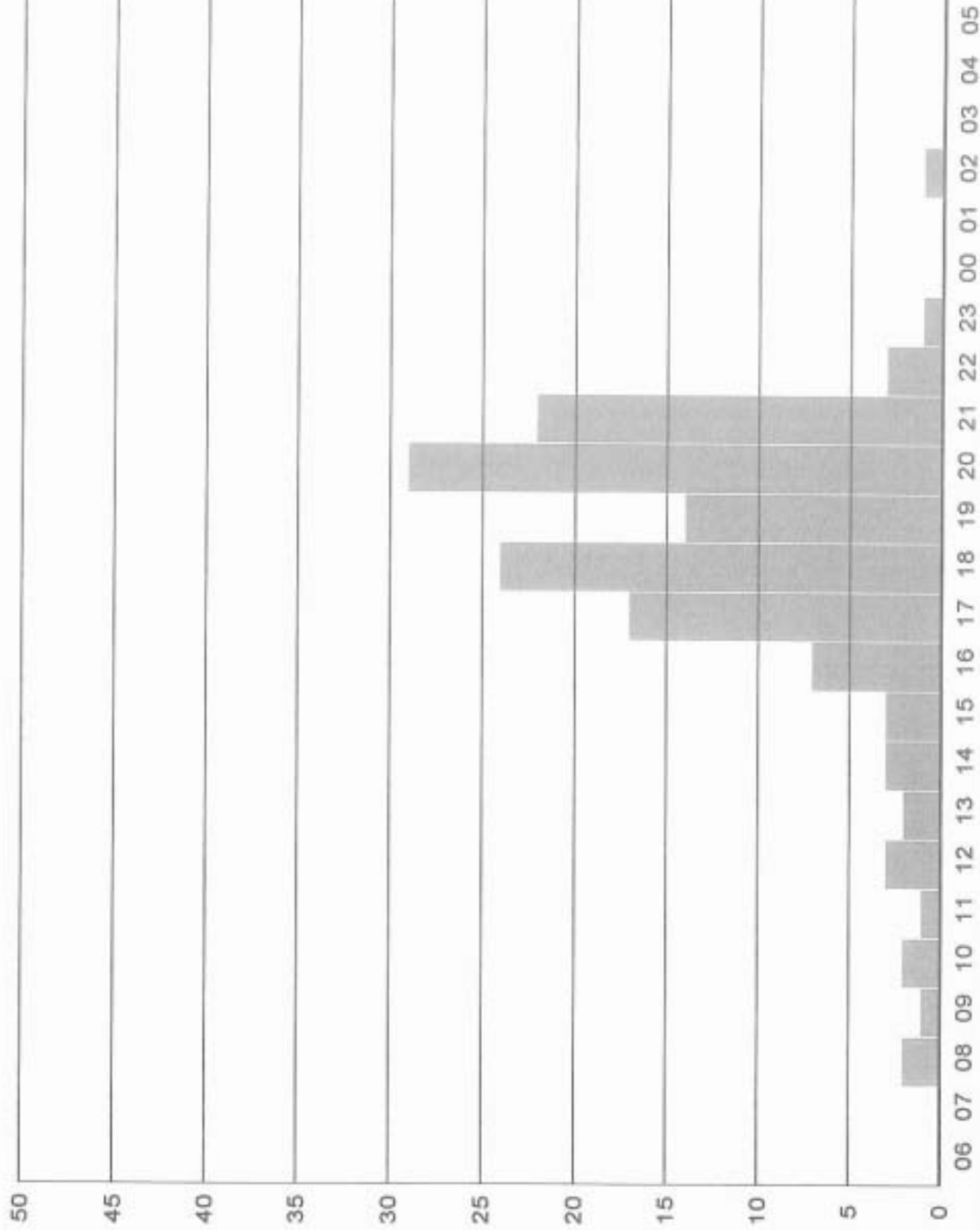
Latest Date = 31/03/2003

KEY

Possible events

Probable events

Definite events



Secondary fire incidents with the address Hyde Park Street, Benham

Incident No	Date & Time	Station	Address	Incident Type	Property type
25000527	11/01/2001 19:07	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25003947	12/02/2001 19:06	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25004109	14/02/2001 20:36	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25017553	12/04/2001 13:41	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25012564	22/04/2001 13:08	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25032290	13/10/2001 18:00	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25032161	30/10/2001 18:25	V	HYDE PARK, HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25040902	05/11/2001 16:14	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Gross/Health/Railway
25042615	05/11/2001 16:34	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25041305	05/11/2001 20:30	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25041463	06/11/2001 07:10	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25041464	06/11/2001 07:19	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25041514	06/11/2001 15:37	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25041526	06/11/2001 16:40	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25042120	06/11/2001 21:34	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25043000	10/11/2001 19:29	V	HYDE PARK, HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25042186	13/11/2001 19:30	V	HYDE PARK, HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25043297	17/11/2001 17:32	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25043271	17/11/2001 20:02	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25043019	02/12/2001 17:01	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25045516	08/12/2001 19:06	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25045926	11/12/2001 19:34	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25046016	12/12/2001 19:30	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25046001	12/12/2001 20:07	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25046334	15/12/2001 23:34	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25046517	17/12/2001 18:34	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25046674	18/12/2001 17:46	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25046664	19/12/2001 19:36	V	JCT. HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25046829	21/12/2001 21:50	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25047176	25/12/2001 19:06	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25047179	26/12/2001 21:18	V	OFF HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25047294	27/12/2001 19:12	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25047238	27/12/2001 21:11	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25047477	24/12/2001 21:25	V	HYDE PARK, HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
25047551	30/12/2001 16:41	V	HYDE PARK, HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container

31. 2607556	30/12/2001 19:11	V	HYDE PARK STREET, RECTORY ROAD, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD,	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
32. 2607552	31/12/2001 19:59	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
33. 3000013	01/01/2002 02:09	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
34. 30000154	02/01/2002 20:19	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
35. 30000616	10/01/2002 15:00	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container

Secondary fire incidents with hyde park street in the address 10/01/2002 to date

Inc No	Date & Time	Stn	Address	Incident type	Property type
36. 30000816	10/01/2002 18:00	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
37. 30003386	02/02/2002 16:01	V	123, HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
38. 30003646	04/02/2002 18:59	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
30012152	13/04/2002 21:02	V	TOP OF, HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
30015518	06/05/2002 16:52	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
30017610	23/05/2002 20:38	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
30021720	27/06/2002 23:11	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
30022452	04/07/2002 20:12	V	166, HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
30022727	07/07/2002 13:52	V	RR, HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
30023469	12/07/2002 17:30	V	HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
30023788	14/07/2002 19:27	V	162, HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container
30024174	17/07/2002 02:10	V	REAR, HYDE PARK STREET, BENSHAM, GATESHEAD, NEAR RECTORY ROAD	Secondary Fire	Refuse/Container

