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The number of assaults on emergency service workers has reached a three-year high, new figures have revealed.

In 2016/17, a total of 6509 common assaults were recorded on police, fire and ambulance staff, the equivalent of nearly 18 a day in Scotland.

And the Scottish Government admitted the true figure may be even greater, with official statistics not recording some of the more serious incidents.

The number of attacks last year was nearly 100 more than in 2015/16, the highest since 2013/14.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said the SNP had to take the issue of emergency service worker safety more seriously.

Other statistics from 2015/16 have shown that while 260 were convicted under the dedicated Emergency Workers Act legislation, just 58 received a custodial sentence as a result.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“The protection of our dedicated emergency service workers has to be absolutely paramount.

“There are laws in place to crack down on this very thing, and it’s time we started using them.

“It’s extremely worrying that the number of attacks recorded by police on emergency service workers has risen to a three-year high.

“We have to get tough on those who commit these offences to make it absolutely clear it will not be tolerated.

“Many of these attacks will have occurred when a police officer, paramedic or firefighter has arrived specifically to help the very people who end up assaulting them.

“That’s illogical and unacceptable, and the fact these figures may just be a fraction of the whole picture is all the more concerning.

"This is a subject I've pressed ministers on repeatedly, but I am yet to see any convincing action from them on this front."