

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service Response to National Flooding Incidents

Hereford and Worcester

An extended period of sustained heavy rain saw a subsequent attendance both in and around the Gloucestershire and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service areas. At one point more than 350,000 people in the counties found themselves without running water after the Mythe treatment works were submerged. The nearby Walham electrical sub-station was severely compromised with the threat of power loss to 500,000 in the county alone. In terms of power supply, the consequence of losing the station could have been felt within Wales.

Mid and West Wales FRS crews worked over a 7 day period to assist in the recovery of both the Mythe complex and the Walham Electrical Sub-station as well as general pumping duties throughout urban areas.

In addition to the provision of High Volume Pumps; the Service also responded to requests for assistance via the provision of Service Rescue Boats. Trained Mid and West Wales FRS boat rescue crews worked alongside similar crews from both numerous Fire and Rescue Authorities and other responders, (both whole time and voluntary). At the height of operations a total of five Service Rescue Boats were engaged in performing many water rescues alongside their other response colleagues; working tirelessly throughout extended shift periods in difficult conditions.

The level of response ensured that, despite the level and extent of the damage, no lives were lost as a direct result of water entrapment. In total, Service personnel worked across a seven day period providing twenty four hour operational cover. The ability to achieve this in addition to continuity of daily service delivery demonstrates that an appropriate level of resilience exists within the Service.

Expression of Thanks

Expressions of thanks have been received from many sources. The Chief Fire officer received a personal letter from the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, Mr Brian Gibbons A.M.

More recently; on Thursday the 28th November, a Service officer, representing the Chief Fire Officer, received a certificate of thanks from CFO Paul Hayden of Hereford and Worcester at an annual awards ceremony. CFO Hayden expressed his sincere thanks for the immense efforts of all concerned and the ability of the Service to maintain the resilience of the response over an extended period of time. Specific mention was made of the Welsh Region as a whole for the work ethos and professionalism shown during the course of their duties

Norwich East Coast Tidal Surge Response

The period leading up to Friday the 9th November saw the largest peacetime response to what was predicted as the largest tidal surge expected for some years. In advance of the predicted peak surge times, a large number of personnel and assets were organised and strategically positioned at the high risk locations along the East Coast of England. This ensured that an adequate effective flood response would be in place in advance of any event.

Following requests from the National Flood Co-ordination Centre; New Dimensions High Volume Pumps were positioned as required. Mid and West Wales assisted in the provision of two Rescue Boat Crews and an accompanying Flexi Duty Welfare Officer. Additionally the New Dimension Officer was mobilised on request from the FRSNCC to advise Incident Commanders.

Thankfully, the event did not prove to threaten as predicted, with only minor sporadic flooding occurring. These incidents were promptly dealt with by the resources in place. Due to the

immense amount of pre-planning, those at risk were temporarily relocated to safer locations and although in place, the rescue boats were not utilised operationally. All response personnel returned safely to Service area by the close of day.

Future Responses

It is likely these types of responses will continue. Officers are currently preparing guidance to support responding crews, and introducing mechanisms to ensure all elements of this kind of response are adequately covered, e.g. welfare, family welfare, communications, transportation, PPE etc.. Officers are also leading on the multi-agency work to ensure plans are in place to deal with an influx of emergency service workers into the Service's area.

Operational Assurance of Service Delivery

Members will be aware of the Welsh Assembly Government's Operational Assurance of Service Delivery (OASD) process, which is the operational element of the Wales programme for Improvement (WPI), the Welsh approach to stimulating and supporting improvement in the delivery of local services. The topic for 2007 – 2008 will be "*Preparedness for Major Disruptive Emergencies – With a Particular Focus on Wide-scale Flooding*". The Service's successful responses to these flooding incidents, and the planning currently being conducted, will be used as supporting evidence for the OASD self assessment.