



HEREFORD & WORCESTER
HWFRS
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

MEDIA RELEASE

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EU Flood Exercise – A Major Success!

Hundreds of fire fighters and rescue crews have now returned to their bases across Europe following the very realistic FloodEx scenarios that took place in the Netherlands last week.



The exercise involved responses from Poland, Germany, Sweden, Estonia and The Netherlands, and simulated the effects of a tidal surge that devastated the UK and Holland in 1953 resulting in over 2,000 fatalities.

The UK came close to a repeat of that disaster in November 2007, when sea defences on parts of the East Coast came within centimetres of being overtopped. On that occasion Chief Fire Officer Paul Hayden, of Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue

Service was asked to direct flood rescue operations in Norfolk and Suffolk, with the Worcester Flood Command Centre coordinating responding flood rescue teams from the fire and rescue service and voluntary agencies.

The UK Element of FloodEx was launched on Monday 21st September 2009 at the Fire Service College in Moreton in the Marsh, Gloucestershire, with key-note speeches from CFO Paul Hayden and the Rt. Hon Jacqui Smith MP. Attendees included emergency planners,



district councilors, and members of Parliament, alongside national government officers from a range of departments. Key objectives for UK FloodEx participants were to;

- Promote principals of a modular response to flooding
- Exchange knowledge with all involved parties
- Promote standardized working practices between all parties
- Foster liaison between the UK and EU
- Encourage collaboration between UK Rescue Services

After the speeches guests were treated to a tour of the impressive equipment used by the UK FloodEx rescue team. Guests were also treated to a tour of the Fire Service College facilities.

The exercise began at 04:30Hrs on Tuesday morning with four convoys departing from the Fire Service College, traveling through the channel tunnel, into France and Belgium and then through the Netherlands and on to the FloodEx base camp with a Dutch police escort (with the first convoy arriving at around 18:30Hrs and the last later that evening).



After a night's sleep on base camp crews were briefed at 06:30Hrs for each day's rescue scenario, which included tasks such as; moving heavy pumping equipment into remote locations and setting up pumping stations, rescues from contaminated water, mass decontamination of flood victims, and communications with EU colleagues. Much of the action was captured by international film crews and reporters including the BBC. The exercise was run for two days and checked by EU observers.

Following his return to the UK, Crew manager Ade Mayhew of Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service said: "It's been great to share specialist water rescue skills with colleagues from around the UK and EU. The scale of this training exercise was very realistic –and we've learnt things about our equipment and rescue techniques used by other services that I'm sure will help to save lives if we ever have a repeat of the 2007 floods."

CFO Paul Hayden, who led the UK's response to the exercise added: "The response included our new UK government funded fire and rescue capabilities for command, control and public decontamination as well as flood rescue teams from the fire and rescue service and colleagues from the military and voluntary sector.

"I have received a number of very positive comments about the professionalism of the UK contingent throughout this exercise, which gave Hereford and Worcester specialist rescue teams a chance to practice their skills under realistic and challenging conditions, working alongside colleagues from a range of fire and rescue services and voluntary organisations.

"The exercise also provided senior officers with a chance to practice the all important skills of coordinating incoming specialist rescue teams to forge a single a cohesive rescue response. Both of these issues were identified as imperative for public and responder safety in 2007,

where Hereford and Worcester crews were supported by their colleagues from fire and rescue services around the UK and from voluntary crews from RNLI and SARA.

CFO Paul Hayden continued: “This has been a fantastic opportunity to test the improved flood response training and coordination arrangements we have developed in the fire and rescue service since 2007. The EU spent in excess of £1.5m on this exercise to make it both realistic and challenging for all concerned. Not only would this scale of exercise been difficult to organise at a local level, but our success in attracting EU funding has enabled us to do so without cost to local council tax payers. Overall our involvement working alongside our EU colleagues was a major success.”

Notes

- The organisations involved in the exercise met at the Fire Service College on Monday, September 21 for a full briefing and launch event.



[Picture by Larrie Barlow © The Fire Service College]

- The 34 vehicle convoy left the UK for Holland at 04:30Hrs on Tuesday, September 22.



- Although a number of volunteers from Hereford and Worcester were be given the opportunity to practice their skills during the exercise – no front line service were affected and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service will not pick up any costs associated with the event.
- Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service received 104,000 euros to co-ordinate the UKs response to the exercise.
- Representatives from the following Fire Services took part in the exercise:
 - Essex Fire and Rescue Service*
 - Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service*
 - Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service*
 - Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service*
 - Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service*
 - Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service*
 - Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service*
 - West Midlands Fire Service*
 - As well as representatives from Fire Services in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland*
- The RNLI also attended.