

26<sup>th</sup> July 2021

---

Subject

**LFB Major Incident 12 July and subsequent Major Incident Declaration due to adverse weather conditions 2021**

---

Brief for

**Assistant Commissioner Andy Hearn – Mayors Round Table Meeting**

---

## Overview

On Monday 12<sup>th</sup> July at approximately 19:30 the London Fire Brigade (LFB) declared a Major Incident (MI) due to heavy rainfall creating serious flooding predominately across the south-west and north-west of London. The boroughs affected included: Kensington & Chelsea, Hammersmith & Fulham, Wandsworth, Hounslow, Hillingdon and Westminster, however many other boroughs saw significant increase in flood related calls.

At its peak between (17:00 – 21:00) we recorded 1,430 incidents with the total number of calls to flooding totalling 1,755 by midnight. In comparison the LFB records, on average, 115 incidents daily during the same timeframe.

The type of calls received included life threatening and non-life-threatening calls, examples of noted incidents with additional risks were:

- Vehicles stuck in high water with people trapped inside
- Flooding in residential premises, including properties where people needed assistance evacuating or rescue
- Flooding where there was a danger of fire
- Partial collapse of structures due to water
- Flooding to the infrastructure, including transport and electrical substations

The increased call volume began at approximately 1630hrs and was sustained until approximately 2200hrs when demand for the London Fire Brigade, although still high, slowed sufficiently to see a reduction in call volume.

## Response

In response to the increase in demand the LFB implemented a number of measures, including:

- Batch mobilising - this sees one fire appliance allocated a batch of calls (between 10-20) that are mostly in close proximity to efficiently respond to the high call volume
- Section 13 & 16 arrangements (mutual aid) were activated. This is our normal arrangements for cross border support from other Brigades that enabled outer London stations to centralise.

- Implemented a call triage system which ensured the LFB remained able to respond to our highest priority calls immediately.
- The brigade activated the Brigade Coordination Centre (BCC) as part of its strategic response arrangements. This focused on key tactical areas for delivery including, planning & logistics, operations, communications and resources.
- Additional communications channels to support the direct link between Brigade Control and command officers were implemented.
- Level one and level two water rescue capability was deployed which enhances the LFB response to safety in water related incidents with the latter being more advanced.
- Recalled to duty a national flood tactical advisor.
- Deployed specialist flood response personal protective equipment for responders from our operational support centre.

## **Major Incident**

Following a meeting of duty officers that concluded at 19:45, the declaration of a major incident was shared across the partnership with the support of London Resilience and took a primary role in the Strategic/ Gold partnership call at 20:30.

A <sup>1</sup>METHANE message to support situational awareness was shared with partners via the tri-service call and shared across all category one and two responders via the London Situational Awareness System (LSAS). This is an agreement that is noted in the Strategic Coordination Protocol (SCP) for London and was implemented following recommendations from the Grenfell Inquiry.

The meeting brought together key agencies, including local authorities to ensure support was available for impacted residents. A communications group was stood up and a strategy was agreed and implemented.

The Major Incident was stood down at 2230hrs.

## **London Operations Centre (LOC) known as Brigade Control**

In addition to the 999 calls directly attributed to flooding, other calls increased. It is estimated that Brigade Control dealt with 3000 calls during this period which lasted throughout the night up to approximately 08:00 on the 13 July. The data makes this the busiest recorded period for the brigade.

A regulated attendance was implemented to support the triage system prioritising life risk calls but also sending different or alternative resources to incidents to maintain the availability of life saving capabilities.

Existing arrangements were implemented that diverts the overflow of calls from the LFB to the North-West Fire Control, Staffordshire and West Midlands Fire Control. The call volume was such that all fire control rooms in the UK were asked to receive calls. Throughout the duration of the incident Brigade Control shared updates on call volume and call management strategy with partner agencies and UK Fire Control rooms via <sup>2</sup>Talk group 20.

Due to the sheer volume of calls, Brigade Control triggered a request for additional control officers to recall to duty to assist with the operation. Data indicates this was the busiest period for LFB control since recorded records began.

---

<sup>1</sup> A METHANE message is part of JESIP to share situational awareness across the emergency services.

<sup>2</sup> Talk group 20 is an open Airwave radio channel that enables immediate briefings to all UK fire control rooms

---

## Overview

On Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> July at approximately 14:30, the London Fire Brigade (LFB) started to receive large volumes of calls to weather related incidents, heavy rainfall creating serious flooding, predominately across the south-west and north-east of London. The boroughs that were affected included, were not isolated but the Boroughs of Waltham Forest, Redbridge and Barking and Dagenham were particularly affected, however many other boroughs saw significant increase in flood related calls.

At its peak between (14:30 – 19:00) we recorded approximately 1000 flood related incidents with the total number of calls totalling 1,545. LFB attended 759 incidents by midnight. In comparison the LFB records, on average, 115 incidents daily during the same timeframe.

A regulated attendance was implemented to support the triage system prioritising life risk calls but also sending different or alternative resources to incidents to maintain the availability of life saving capabilities.

The type of calls received included life threatening and non-life threatening calls, examples of noted incidents with additional risks were:

- Vehicles stuck in high water with people trapped inside
- Flooding in residential premises including properties where people needed assistance evacuating or rescue
- Flooding where there was a danger of fire
- Partial collapse of structures due to water
- Flooding to the infrastructure, including transport and electrical substations

The increased call volume began at approximately 1430hrs and was sustained until approximately 1930hrs when demand for the London Fire Brigade, although still high, slowed sufficiently to see a reduction in call volume.

**Two Major** Incidents were declared by partner agencies:

1. Metropolitan Police declared a Major Incident for Charlie Browns at roundabout 1721 and surrounding area, due to serious flooding and life risk:
  - A number of vehicles were stuck in water of approximately 600mm with people trapped inside. A systematic search was undertaken to confirm no persons trapped.
  - Flooding impacted a residential premise of four floors preventing in excess of 200 persons being able to leave.
  - Water was dispersed into the River Roding with the support of the Environment Agency.

The Major Incident was stood down at approx. 21:37

2. NHS Barts Trust declared a Major Incident at 20:30 due to flooding within their basement surgical ward and energy centre of up to 3 feet deep. This impacted their ability to utilise power and with the failure of the back up generators rendered three wards inoperable.

A 6-pump special service was authorised by the Duty Assistant Commissioner following a proactive engagement at the Gold Pan London call.

102 patients across three wards need to be removed and relocated. 20 Patients from the maternity ward were relocated within Whipps Cross, with a further 83 patients removed from their wards and supported by LFB crews to awaiting ambulances. Crews remained on scene and supported NHS colleagues for over 15 hours.

Control lifted regulated attendance at 19:30 and are currently working through the calls held under batch mobilising as well as calls passed from other FRS control rooms to confirm attendance is still required. We currently have approximately 540 open calls.

The direction to commit pumping appliances to clear outstanding batched incidents whilst balancing fire cover remains with the plan to maintain at least 60 appliances available for fire cover.

LFB did not declare a Major Incident on the 25<sup>th</sup> July and were able to maintain fire cover without the need for mutual aid. Our BCC was not stood up and incidents were dealt with under normal business with the exception of Batch Mobilising. LFB cleared remaining batched calls at approximately 10am on the morning of the 26<sup>th</sup> July.

### **London Fire Brigade Assets**

- All operational staff are 'water awareness' trained.
- All pumping appliances carry lifejackets as well as throw lines and inflatable hose kits for reaching people in water.
- We have 10 specialist water rescue teams (FRUs) equipped with inflatable boats, engines, dry suits and inflatable rescue paths.
- We have specialist flood response equipment available on request (20 rigid boats, 200 x 2 piece flood suits, floating pontoon systems and 250m of free standing flood barriers)
- There are 24 officers with the TAR tag who can provide advice at incidents.
- The LFB have declared 3 x 'Type B' flood response teams for out-of-area deployment to support the NCAF arrangements.