

Report of Assistant Director – Response

South District Exercise 2022

Purpose of report

1. To inform Members of the Service Exercise held on Sunday 6th November 2022 at Worcester Cathedral and the outcomes from the Exercise.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that the outcomes from the South District Exercise, the findings of which will be used to finalise the High Volume Pump (HVP) plan for the Cathedral and inform a review of the Cathedral's salvage plan, along with any other necessary operational points be noted.

Introduction and Background

2. On Sunday 6th November 2022, South District held its annual exercise to provide staff with the opportunity to practice their skills in a realistic environment, and the venue for this year was Worcester Cathedral. The scenario was a persons reported fire in the undercroft of the College Hall building, which is linked to the main Cathedral by the Cloisters. A number of Authority Members attended to see the exercise first hand.
3. The exercise was designed to test the operational procedures involved when tackling a significant fire in a national heritage risk, including the newly created High Volume Pump (HVP) tactical plan. The Cathedral's library is home to a number of priceless artefacts dating back to Anglo-Saxon times, including manuscripts. Therefore, another part of the exercise was to test the Cathedral's salvage plan, and crews worked with Cathedral staff to enact the plan to rescue and preserve replica books from the library's archive.
4. The exercise was attended by crews from Worcester, Malvern, Upton, Broadway, Evesham, the HVP from Wyre Forest, the Command Support Unit and Drone from Ledbury and the brand-new Welfare Unit from Tenbury. They were joined by colleagues from West Midlands Ambulance Service, including their Hazardous Area Response Team (HART) and British Transport Police, who are stationed at Worcester Fire Station. Together with Cathedral staff, and using the JESIP principles, they developed a multi-agency response to bring the scenario to an effective conclusion.

5. A media team consisting of reporters and cameras tested the Commanders on the scene and conducted a number of live interviews. The footage will be used to create a report that will be used as part of the Service's media training for officers and a debrief will be held for individual feedback.

Conclusion/Summary

6. As with any exercise, there will always be learning to be gained and an operational debrief will be conducted to gain feedback from Fire Control and all Officers and crews who attended. The debrief is due to take place on Wednesday 7th December 2022. The findings and recommendations will be used to improve HWFRS's operational procedures when responding to major incidents that require a multi-agency resolution. However, the incident objectives and outcomes were as follows:
 - Successful test of the High Volume Pump (HVP) Plan for Worcester Cathedral.
 - Successful test of the Worcester Cathedral salvage plan.
 - HWFRS crews better prepared for a large incident at a known Heritage risk within the Service area.
 - Joint Emergency Service Principles (JESIP) fully implemented and tested during a major incident scenario.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	None
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	None
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	None
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	None
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	None