



R B F & R S

news release

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EMERGENCY RESPONSE EXERCISE

Sunday's multi-agency exercise, involving the emergency services and local authorities from Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, together with the Environment Agency, was a great success, said exercise director, Area Manager Andy Mancey, of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The scenario for the exercise covered three separate locations and featured a simulated mid-air collision between two aircraft, a 737 passenger airliner carrying 120 people and a Cessna Light airplane carrying six people, over the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire borders.

The location of the main 'impact' of the airliner was on the site of a car boot sale on the Berkshire bank of the River Thames at Remenham, just outside Henley-on-Thames, whilst the light aircraft 'crash site' was in Henley itself, with a detached jet engine 'falling' on Mill Lane in Taplow, Buckinghamshire. The Royal Air Force loaned a section of a VC10 plane for the exercise, which played the part of the 737 at Remenham.

In addition to dealing with the initial emergency situation of burning aircraft, collapsed buildings, crushed vehicles and casualty rescues, fire and rescue crews were also briefed to respond as if they were dealing with contamination from fuel, together with radiation and other hazardous materials carried as cargo in the two aircraft, as part of the exercise scenario.

Area Manager Mancey said: "This exercise took 18 months to plan and involved many agencies and nearly 300 people. It was a complex and demanding scenario which tested the skills of everyone taking part and thanks are due to everyone who contributed, including our volunteer 'casualties'. Exercises on this scale are only run every few years and are extremely important in ensuring that levels of emergency planning and response are able to manage any situation.

"It is important to remember that, if this had been a genuine incident, it is not only firefighters, police, paramedics and hospitals that would have been involved. Many other agencies, particularly the local authorities, have to manage the aftermath of such events, which can last for weeks, months or even years.

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“It was encouraging to see how well all the different agencies involved were working together and highlights the importance of the co-ordinated planning and training that we do. An exercise of this size is invaluable in pinpointing any areas that can be improved and the feedback and ideas from the people on the ground on Sunday was very positive.”

Also taking part were members of the Casualties Union, who provided ‘live’ casualties’ with some horrific and very authentic-looking ‘wounds’. The Union is a charitable organisation that provides volunteer casualties for emergency response exercises and other events and whose members are skilled in the art of stage make-up and simulation of injuries.

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Notes for Editors:

Numbers of Fire and Rescue Service staff taking part were:

75 staff from Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service

50 from Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

40 (approx) from Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

If you require any further information, please contact Nicole Targett on 0118 932 2283.