

Incident Summary

September 2012 Spate Flooding



During the week commencing Sunday 23rd September 2012 North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (NYFRS) entered into spate conditions caused by widespread flooding across North Yorkshire and the City of York.

As a result the Service responded to hundreds of emergency calls during the week. The peaks of calls were received from Monday through to the Thursday.

While emergency calls to flooding eased off during the evening and overnight Monday they began to notably build again from early morning on the Tuesday and during the day water levels continued to rise in the Richmondshire and Hambleton areas of the County where the Service continued to receive calls for the remainder of the week.

During the period the Service received regular calls to boats being affected by the rising level of the River Ouse in York where the Service attended and gave advice to occupants of boats.

There was also an increased number of calls to the Boroughbridge, Tadcaster and Knaresborough areas in the more Southern area of the County where multiple rescues were performed.

To support the Service's response, standby pumps were provided from Cumbria, Lancashire, Cleveland and Durham and Darlington.

During the Wednesday and Thursday the flooding began to ease in the North of the County but there was an increasing number of calls in the South, although there were still a large number of rescues performed in the Boroughbridge and Topcliffe areas.

This led to the York Flood Group being activated on the Tuesday morning. This is a pre-determined group of which the Fire Service is a standing member that meets when the rivers Ouse and Foss reach certain trigger points above normal levels.

As the end of the week approached the weather began to normalise from the Friday into the weekend after which the Service returned to a steady state of operations.

During the week the Service performed multiple rescues of people stranded by floodwater from both buildings and vehicles. Of particular note were twenty four people rescued from Minerva Court in Boroughbridge and twenty five people rescued from a block of flats in Topcliffe.

It is notable that the Service was able to respond to this spate flooding without a single reported injury from operational staff and the Service received, on the whole, extremely positive feedback from both partners and the public regarding the professional manner in which operational staff in particular carried out their role. It is likely that this outcome has been achieved, in no small part, to the enhanced level of training which operational staff have embraced over the last four years and the enhanced level of equipment provided following the significant investment made by the Combined Fire Authority.