



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Community Safety Committee

INCIDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM JUBILEE CAMPUS

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 03 October 2014

Purpose of Report:

To provide the Community Safety Committee with an appraisal of the fire that occurred at the University of Nottingham Jubilee Campus on 12 September 2014

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1. BACKGROUND

On 12 September 2014 the Service attended a large fire in a building on the University of Nottingham's Jubilee Campus. The building was located in a densely populated area, surrounded by commercial buildings and university accommodation. At the height of the fire, over 60 firefighters, 12 appliances and a number of specialist units attended the incident.

2. REPORT

INCIDENT INFORMATION

- 2.1 At approximately 20:30 hours, numerous calls were received into the Fire Control room of reports of a fire on Triumph Road in Radford, Nottingham.
- 2.2 Following the high volume of calls for this incident, with callers reporting that the fire had spread through the roof, Control mobilised 12 appliances, 2 Ariel Ladder Platforms, the Command Support Unit, the Incident Support Unit, 4 Station Managers, 1 Group Manager and a Media Liaison Officer to ensure the incident was managed and dealt with promptly.
- 2.3 The £20 million GlaxoSmithKline Carbon Neutral Laboratory for Sustainable Chemistry, located on the university's Jubilee Campus, was still under construction when the incident occurred. The timber building, being built by construction company Morgan Sindall, was approx. 70% complete at the time of the fire.
- 2.4 Throughout the incident, a number of agencies assisted and liaised with the Service, including:
 - Nottinghamshire Police;
 - East Midlands Ambulance Service and HART;
 - Environment Agency;
 - Western Power;
 - Severn Trent Water;
 - Highways Agency;
 - British Red Cross;
 - Rapid Relief Team Voluntary Organisation.
- 2.5 During the initial stages of the incident, the Service was supported by colleagues from Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service as part of our normal response arrangements.
- 2.6 The incident attracted national media coverage which was effectively managed from the outset. All calls were referred to a single point of contact and messages were published on social media websites early into the incident to reassure members of the public that the Service was dealing with the fire.

The media was utilised to 'warn and inform' nearby residents of the dangers of flying embers and action to take should they be experiencing smoke from the large plume that spread from the campus. Positive comments from members of the public and the university have been received into the Service and on social media websites.

INCIDENT TIMELINE

- 2.7 The broad timeline below details the action taken by the Service for this incident and other incidents that occurred concurrently:

Early stages from 20:36 – first call comes into Control. Two crews from Highfields sent. The on duty Group Manager was informed.

Fire Control receives 150 emergency calls to the incident and more crews and equipment are called onto the incident.

At this stage the priority is to prevent the fire spreading to adjacent buildings as it has already engulfed the entire University building under construction. By 9pm full command and control is established from a dedicated command point which helps the incident commander to maintain effective control and safety of the incident.

Firefighting operations well established – as the response and incident tactics are effectively organised the number of crews' increases to 12. Although busy, the Service continues to deal with other simultaneous incidents as business as usual.

Firefighting operations are supported by other agencies by protecting or isolating power supplies nearby and boosting the mains water pressure. Water is also pumped from the nearby river onto the fire. Firefighters attempt to mitigate environmental pollution from water run-off and the Environment Agency provides support with this.

East Midlands Ambulance NHS Trust attends the incident as a precaution and although there are no casualties remains on scene for Firefighter Safety. A media strategy is put into place due to the significant public attention at the scene and through social media. The fire is sending burning debris into the air so information to warn people of the dangers is put out at the scene, via Twitter and the press.

Fire under control 23.05 – the fire is contained and under control. Review of adjacent properties continues to ensure fire hasn't spread. A crew is usually made up of five firefighters so this means that there are more than 60 firefighters at work fighting the fire.

Saturday 13 September – Scaling the Incident Down

1am to 3am – crews continue to be moved around the county to ensure that there are enough firefighters at the scene of the university fire to deal with the blaze, that the rest of Nottinghamshire remains protected in case of any other incidents to ensure the safety of the community.

08.30 hours – 12 hours after the fire was first reported, fire cover has returned to relative normality while three crews remain working at the scene of the Triumph Road fire. The materials that had previously been the building continue to smoulder so firefighters fight the fire from the ground and above to ensure it is entirely put out.

Sunday 14 September – Investigation Planning

The fire is out and crews return to the site periodically to check for 'hot spots' over the next 24 hours.

Police arrange a meeting date and time for the Police Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) and Fire investigation (FI) teams to rendezvous on Monday morning.

Monday 15 September to Present Day

10.00am- CSI and FI teams meet and commence the investigation into the cause of the fire.

FUTURE ACTION

- 2.8 The investigation into the cause of the fire is on-going with police and fire investigation officers. Further information detailing the causes of the fire will be released once the investigation has concluded.
- 2.9 There is significant interest in the incident due to the unique size and construction methods of the building. The fire sector is keen to share any learning from the investigation relating to fire development. Colleagues with fire investigation expertise from other fire and rescue services will be providing assistance, including the fire investigation dog from Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service. The Building Research Establishment has also been contacted and will be kept informed of developments.
- 2.10 A structured debrief will take place with the commanders and representatives from other agencies who attended the incident. The findings from this will be fed back to the Operational Assurance Team.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising as a result of this report as it is for information only. Members will be aware that there was a direct financial cost attached to dealing with the incident at the time which is within normal financial planning assumptions.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

A structured debrief is being co-ordinated and any training identified for personnel will be discussed with the Service Development Centre. Operational Assurance will be co-ordinating this and all incident related material – eg: risk assessments, video and media footage – to assist with identifying learning opportunities and good practice and ensuring that they are shared Service-wide.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment is not required for this report as it is for information only.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

On-going investigations are taking place into this incident in line with the Service's statutory obligations.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER