



MARCH 2021

INFORMATIVE

The quarterly bulletin of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service

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FLOODING TRIGGERED BY STORM CRISTOPH

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Fire crews attended flooding incidents across the North Wales region in January as Storm Cristoph hit the UK, bringing with it significant rain and multiple severe flood warnings.

The control room was busy with over 200 calls received at the height of the storm, with crews or officers attending 56 calls. Operational staff assisted at 48 properties and 28 casualties were rescued over two days of severe weather.

Officers worked closely with partners from other emergency services and local authorities in the planning and preparation for this widespread flooding. The worst areas affected were Ruthin and Bangor-on-Dee where residents from the local community were evacuated from their homes, and rest centres were opened whilst flood warnings and flood alerts were in place across North Wales.

In the early hours of the morning, control staff provided advice over the telephone to a person trapped in a car in flood water in Farndon whilst a rescue was mobilised, and fire crews were involved in assisting Her Majesty's Coastguard search and rescue helicopter in the rescue of three people from a bungalow in Holt affected by rising water levels.



DEFIBRILLATORS HELP SAVE LIVES IN NORTH WALES

The Service made a pledge to register approximately 50 life-saving devices on a national database in February – helping to highlight the Defibuary 2021 campaign.

'The Circuit' is a national database for Public Access Defibrillators (PADS) that allows the nearest resource to be found quickly in the event of cardiac arrest.

The Welsh Ambulance Service's NHS Trust held a month-long Twitter campaign as part of #Defibuary2021, which as well as educating people on CPR and defibrillation aimed to get as many defibrillators registered on The Circuit as possible.

With over 30,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests in the UK each year, a person's chance of surviving will decrease by 10% every minute without good quality CPR and early defibrillation - so easy access is vital.

Tomos Hughes, PADS Officer for Welsh Ambulance Service, said: "The fire and rescue service's pledge is a sizeable addition to life-saving resources in North Wales.

"I have no doubt the defibrillators will make an impact when medical emergencies arise."

Paul Jenkinson, Senior Operations Manager for North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, said: "We're proud to be supporting the ambulance service's #Defibuary2021 campaign to get as many defibrillators registered on The Circuit as possible.

"Quite simply, defibrillators save lives and making them publically accessible puts life-saving capabilities in everybody's hands.



"The Circuit network is connected to every ambulance service in the UK and allows them to direct bystanders to the nearest defibrillator to help save lives.

"A modern fire and rescue service does far more than putting out fires and attending road traffic collisions - we're committed to making North Wales a safer place and the registration of our defibrillators on The Circuit highlights that commitment."

Defibuary is an annual campaign run by the Patient Experience and Community Involvement (PECI) team from the Welsh Ambulance Service that aims to educate both young people and adults on how to perform CPR and use a defibrillator.

Fiona Maclean, PECI Manager, said: "Much of our campaign content this year focused on not delaying CPR and providing some reassurances to commonly held fears.

"A defibrillator can never harm a person and will only shock if needed, and an emergency call handler will always stay on the line with you to offer assistance when you call 999."

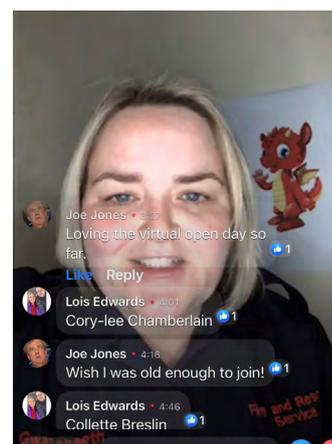
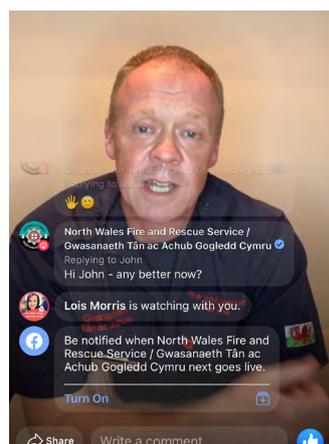
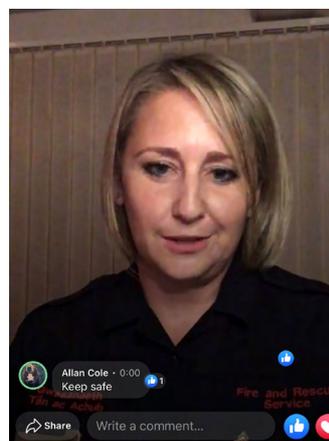
SUCCESS OF FIRST VIRTUAL 'OPEN DAY'

Staff from a variety of key departments took part in the Service's very first virtual 'open day' in November.

They came together on line to present a series of informative videos interspersed with live question and answer sessions highlighting a cross section of the work carried out across the Service.

The event, hosted on the Service's official Facebook page, included sessions focusing on the Phoenix project, an introduction to the Fire Cadets scheme, a fire safety awareness session for youngsters featuring the new Service mascot 'Sbarc', information about safe and well checks, as well as a virtual tour of some of the operational equipment used in helping to keep people safe.

It was also an opportunity to promote careers within the fire and rescue service, with a live question and answer session with Human Resources staff, and viewers were encouraged to take part in a quiz, with the announcement of the winner bringing the event to a successful close.



Viewers from as far afield as America and Ireland as well as residents from North Wales joined in the event – with over 1,000 people tuning in to watch the videos live.

Paul Scott, Senior Fire Safety Manager, said: "This was the first of a kind event for all of us who took part - a step into the unknown, broadcasting through Facebook live to an unknown audience.

"I'm pleased to say that the feedback we received was very positive and there was a real buzz around the event itself."

"It was great to get two-way conversations going online and be able to interact with members of our communities quickly and easily.

"I'm sure we will look at hosting similar events in the future to promote the work we do as a Service."



Be Safe

HEEDING FIREWORK SAFETY MESSAGES DURING OPERATION BANG

Messages around firework and bonfire safety had a new focus last year to help ensure that residents took on board important messages about staying safe during this unprecedented time.

Paul Scott, Senior Fire Safety Manager, said: “Usually our advice is to encourage people to attend organised displays. However, with those cancelled last year due the pandemic, our concern was that people may be tempted to set off fireworks and have bonfires in their own gardens, which in turn could put pressure on emergency services partners across the region.

“This called for a concerted partnership approach for this year’s ‘Be a Nice Guy’ BANG Operation - and involved us joining forces with North Wales Police and the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust to urge residents to think twice about setting off fireworks and to show respect during this difficult time.

“Our messages also tied in with those being issued by fire and rescue services across the UK, and featured on social media posts signposting people to our advice as well as that from our partners and Welsh Government.



“We also targeted fireworks distributors in North Wales with a bespoke safety leaflet issued with all fireworks sold, supported by local radio adverts appealing to residents to stay safe.

“Members of staff from the Arson Reduction Team together with our Educationalists worked with schools to ensure important messages were communicated despite restrictions on face to face presentations. Youngsters from across North Wales completed a firework safety quiz on the Kahoot platform and over 500 pupils entered our poster competition.”

The four competition winners in the different age groups in the poster competition were all rewarded with Lego gift sets.

SUPPORTING WHITE RIBBON DAY

White Ribbon Day in November provided an opportunity to show support for the global initiative which raises awareness and encourages people to work together to create a future without male violence against women.

Last year the Service announced that it had successfully gained White Ribbon accreditation in recognition of the actions it is taking to help end violence against women.

Justin Evans, Senior Training and Development Manager, is a White Ribbon Ambassador and has been heading up the work to promote this initiative within the Service.

He explains: “The challenges of the current pandemic mean that the ways in which we can raise awareness of this initiative have been impacted. However, the need for our work is acute. The coronavirus situation has sadly resulted in an increase in the incidence of violence against women - in June the National Domestic Abuse Helpline which ordinarily logs around 270 calls every day, saw an increase of 77%.



“We have been working to ensure that the unacceptable issue of male violence against women is highlighted at fire stations and workplaces across North Wales, and as a Service we are taking active steps to help stop violence against women by raising awareness and empowering colleagues to speak out.

“A number of colleagues, including our Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officers and Senior Managers as well as operational staff on station and support staff across the Service completed the ambassador or champion training last year, promising never to commit, excuse or remain silent about male violence against women.

“We have supported White Ribbon events for a number of years and staff have received training in accordance with the National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV).

“Following last year’s accreditation, the white ribbon emblem is now displayed on fire appliances, and we are continuing to work to embed the messages of the campaign across the Service - with the aim of encouraging staff across the region to sign up to become Ambassadors or Champions.

“With the increase in violence we have experienced during the pandemic, it is more important than ever that we make a stand and say ‘no’ to violence against women.”



ASSISTING THE WELSH AMBULANCE SERVICE

Earlier last year it was agreed for fire and rescue services across the UK to assist the NHS in a variety of ways as a direct result of the increased demands of Covid-19.

A number of staff from the Service volunteered to assist the Welsh Ambulance Service in the driving of ambulances during the pandemic.

Paul Jenkinson, Senior Operations Manager, explained: “The Service was keen to test the concept during a period of relative quiet, so that in the event of a spike in demand, any problems or learning that required change could be implemented without delay. Therefore we introduced a test of concept trial earlier in 2020.

“Following on from this, in December our firefighters were called upon to drive ambulances on behalf of the ambulance service to help protect North Wales communities.”



Necessary training was provided, with risk assessments and a Memorandum of Understanding completed between both services.

Preparations for deployment involved all staff receiving the required inoculations and more recently they also received Covid-19 vaccinations as required as part of their work for the ambulance service. A total of 16 staff are available for deployment as requested.

Paul added: “We are proud that we are working in partnership in this way and are grateful to our staff who are involved. This initiative demonstrates the importance of partnership working and of preparing in advance so as to be able to implement assistance promptly after a full test of concept.”

VIRTUAL EMERGENCY SERVICES CAROL CONCERT

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service joined North Wales Police and the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust to broadcast the annual carol service online as a result of the pandemic.

The pre-recorded service at St Asaph Cathedral took place in early December and included performances from Llanefydd singer/songwriter Mared Williams, Sergeant Arwyn Jones from North Wales Police, and the Beaumaris Brass Band.



Prayers were read by the Dean of St Asaph Reverend Nigel Williams and Marcus Wyn Robinson, Chaplain at North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, as well as readings from representatives of all three blue light services.

Shân Morris, Assistant Chief Officer, who took part in the service said: “The carol service is one of the highlights of the Christmas period, not just for our staff and volunteers, but also for the community who always turn out in force to support us.



“The Covid-19 pandemic meant we had to think differently about how we hosted this year’s service, but we were pleased to see so many people tuning in on the fire, police and ambulance social media accounts to watch the event.”

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM



attend national events in Cardiff and London, staff contributed to video footage prepared for the Welsh Festival of Remembrance.

Members of staff across the Service also took part in the two minute silence, with fire stations holding a socially distanced formal parade and staff working alone or from home encouraged to show their respects as appropriate.

It was also an opportunity to pay tribute with a short video posted online featuring the clips recorded by officers for the Welsh Festival of Remembrance.

Over £700 was raised for the Poppy Appeal through the purchase of poppy pins.

Following the commemoration events, Simon Smith, Chief Fire Officer, said: "Although we are all living with the continued challenges of the current pandemic, I'm sure for many of us it was good to be able to take this opportunity to reflect and give thanks. Even in these difficult and unprecedented times, we will remember them."

The on-going pandemic meant that Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day took on a very different focus in November.

However, personnel were still able to represent the Service at community events on Remembrance Sunday, and although it was not possible to



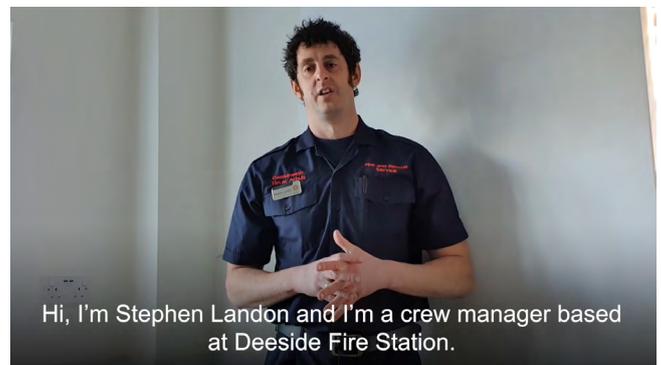
VIDEO APPEAL TO HELP STOP SPREAD OF COVID

The behaviour of communities across North Wales is key to preventing the spread of coronavirus to keep the region safe.

As a new, more contagious, variant of Covid-19 was identified at the beginning of the year, the region's health board, emergency services and local authorities came together to make a public appeal for everyone to stick to the rules and help stop the spread.

A new video was released in February, featuring the personal experiences of three people whose lives had been impacted by coronavirus: an ambulance driver, a firefighter and a fit and healthy individual who contracted the virus.

One of the three featured in the video was Crew Manager Stephen Landon who spent time in hospital on the ICU ward after contracting Covid-19 at the start of the pandemic. His message is clear - stick to rules and help stop the spread.



Dr Chris Stockport, Executive Director for Primary Care and Community Services at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, said: "If people ignore the rules and just do as they please, the virus will keep spreading. More people of all ages will get sick, putting more pressure on hospitals, ambulance and public services."

"On behalf of the partner organisations in North Wales, I'm urging all residents to keep up their efforts, stick to the rules and help stop the spread."

"The number of cases of Covid-19 are slowly reducing in North Wales, but new variants are circulating and if we do not take extra care, they will continue to spread."

'MAE GEN I HAWL' DAY

The Service joined with other public organisations across Wales in December as part of a one day campaign to raise awareness of the rights of the public to use the Welsh language.

The Welsh Language Commissioner's office was responsible for co-ordinating the day as a practical way of encouraging organisations to promote Welsh language rights.

When the event was launched in 2019, the campaign reached nearly a million Twitter accounts, with 753 messages using the hashtag #maegenihawl being shared by 321 users.

This year, once again messages were shared on the Service's social media accounts, supporting the Welsh Language Rights Day which raises awareness and celebrates the Welsh language services that are available.

The Service continues to support the Welsh language throughout the year. By communicating bilingually with the residents of North Wales we are able to reach out to as many of our vulnerable residents as possible in order to help them stay safe in their homes.





GETTING SWITCHED ON TO SAFETY AT CHRISTMAS

As Christmas lights were switched on across the region, last year's festive safety campaign was launched at the beginning of December and focused on electrical safety in the home.

Kevin Jones, Community Safety Manager, said: "As residents took to preparing Christmas displays even earlier than usual last year, we wanted to emphasise the importance of doing so safely by not overloading sockets and using correctly fused multi-gang safety leads.

"With many people favouring a variety of electrical devices as Christmas gifts we urged people to be conscious of overloading, to avoid charging items overnight and to use chargers from a reputable

source rather than cheap aftermarket chargers – all good advice throughout the year.

"Whilst the build up to Christmas and the New Year is a generally time to relax and enjoy being with family and friends, whenever spending more time at home, extra vigilance is always required to help prevent a fire."

The campaign included radio and newspaper adverts, social media videos featuring staff issuing top safety tips, a Facebook competition, and the distribution of advice on 'white goods' electrical safety.

The chosen competition winner earned a chocolate hamper for helping to share important fire safety messages.

KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Social distancing measures and national guidelines mean that staff have had to adapt ways of communicating and working with young people during the coronavirus pandemic.

This has involved creating innovative solutions to deliver important youth programmes.

Staff from the Phoenix team, fire and rescue service Educationalists, members of the Arson Reduction Team and Fire Cadet leads have been delivering virtual presentations to young people across North Wales.

North Wales has eight Fire Cadet units which would usually meet weekly at a fire station but during the pandemic cadets have been given the opportunity to take part in fitness sessions, compete against each other in quizzes, discover more about career opportunities with the Service, and learn about the Royal Navy – all delivered through Webex.

Maintaining links with young people is vital to ensure youth programmes can continue while the usual face to face programmes are not possible.