

Minimising the impact of a major incident



A MAJOR blaze on an industrial estate in Crewe in June saw propane cylinders explode, 50 gallon drums of solvent erupted into flames and hundreds of aerosol cans blasted high into the air.

The fact that there were no reported injuries is due to a rapid evacuation and the enforcement of a rigid exclusion zone by all of the emergency services involved.

The first call to Aztec Chemicals on 4th Avenue, Crewe Gates Industrial Estate, was received by the Fire and Rescue Service control room at 12.16 on Monday June 4 – this was followed by a further 43 calls from both staff on the site, local residents and nearby businesses.

The first fire engine was on the scene in six minutes and more resources were immediately called for – at the height of the blaze there were 25 fire appliances, a high volume pumping appliance, a foam unit, aerial appliances and a hazard management unit.

A 200-metre exclusion zone was set up – later, this was increased to 400 metres because of the potential risk of explosion from mass storage



cylinders containing 25 tonnes of Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG), close to the original site of the fire.

Fire crews concentrated initially on cooling the LPG cylinders and had to use walls to shelter from exploding aerosol cans as they set up jets.

The fire made rapid progress and spread to other buildings on the site and Cheshire Police's plane was brought in to assess the spread from the air.

With a specialist high volume pump supplying water to 10 ground monitors – which allows water to be applied safely from higher-risk areas – and a foam tanker being used as a water cannon, crews managed to contain the fire and at 6pm the incident was reduced to 10 appliances.

The following morning appliance numbers were

reduced to two, and the cordon and roadblocks minimised, although crews had to remain at the scene damping down potential hotspots for a further two days.

Investigations into the incident are continuing, with the Service working closely with other agencies including the Health and Safety Executive.

Chief Fire Officer Steve McGuirk said: "I have no doubts that the truly courageous actions of our staff and our partners, while not saving the immediate buildings, did stop the fire from escalating further and devastating this important economic area of Crewe. To have brought the fire under control without any reported injuries is a major achievement."

Two 'firsts' take top honours for Service

A GARDEN developed jointly by the Prince's Trust and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service won a top gold award at the prestigious Royal Horticultural Society Garden Show in Tatton in July – at the first attempt!

The garden, sponsored by Alpro Soya, was built with the help of volunteers from the Service, young offenders from Thorn Cross Young Offenders Institute at Warrington and members of the Prince's Trust team building programme which is run by the Service.

Called 'A Personal Journey', the design was created by Stockport-based Janine Crimmins, who also received a gold medal at the last year's RHS show for her design of a BBC garden.

Cllr Rob Polhill, Vice Chairman of Cheshire Fire Authority, said: "To win a gold award at the first attempt is a magnificent achievement and a tribute to the dedication of our



volunteers and young people.

"Our Service has a strong tradition of working with young people and both the design of the garden and the teamwork involved in its creation show what can be achieved when their energy is channelled."

Meanwhile, the Service's fire cadet programme at Thorn Cross – the first such scheme in the country – has won a top honour at the

national Youth Justice Alliances Awards.

The Thorn Cross scheme, which involves a 12-week course where young people learn fire skills training while working towards a range of qualifications, won the Best Civic Society Alliance award.

The awards were presented by Baroness Scotland and Youth Justice Board (YJB) Member Salima Hafejee.



• (From left) Salima Hafejee, Julie Probert, from Thorn Cross, and Watch Manager Andy Garner together with Baroness Scotland.

Did you know?

- CHESHIRE Fire and Rescue Service carried out 43,985 Home Safety Assessments in the 12 months up to August 31 this year. A total of 52,439 smoke alarms were fitted during the period and 306 of those were specialist deaf alarms.

- OVER the last 12 months the Service replaced 438 single and double electric blankets and 501 deep fat fryers for chip pans, with funding provided by Cheshire County Council Social Services, helping improve home safety and reduce fire risks.

Civic leaders' insight into improved safety



CIVIC dignitaries from across the area were given a first-hand insight into how the Service is improving the safety of local communities during a recent visit to the organisation's Winsford Headquarters.

Following a presentation by Chief Fire Officer Steve McGuirk, the dignitaries saw a series of demonstrations including:

- New recruits using trauma care techniques after a road traffic collision.
- Specialised rescue equipment, including the Service boat which carried out rescues in the recent Gloucestershire floods.
- Community safety advocates highlighting chip pan dangers.
- A tour of Cheshire's control room.

"We were delighted that so many of our civic dignitaries were able to spare

the time for our event at Headquarters," said Fire Authority Vice Chair Cllr John Joyce.

"Mayors play a major part in the civic life of their local communities and it is important that they are able to see first hand the major changes which Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has brought in over recent years to reduce risk and to improve the safety of their residents."

Attendees included: Chester City Council Sheriff Andrew Storrar, Congleton Borough Deputy Mayor Cllr Mike Parson, Crewe and Nantwich Borough Mayor Cllr Maurice Jones, Ellesmere Port and Neston Mayor Cllr Ted Lloyd, Macclesfield Borough Mayor Cllr Barry Burkhill, Vale Royal Borough Mayor Cllr Doug Shingler, Warrington Borough Deputy Mayor Cllr Graham Welborn and Winsford Town Mayor Cllr Mrs Flo Hughes.