

'Management of Major Flood Emergencies' seminars



It is generally accepted that flooding is an increasing problem within the British Isles and recent events such as Boscastle, Carlisle and Cork have served to highlight the need not only for effective emergency service response but also preparation for both the short and long term effects of these events by Emergency Planners.

Whilst much development has taken place in recent years with regard to emergency service response to water and flood incidents this has primarily been addressing frontline tactical capabilities and development of 'Specialist Flood Managers' has not generally been addressed. As a leading Training provider to the emergency services in the UK and Ireland, Rescue 3 (UK) has been promoting the need to develop Flood Managers and recently combined with Lane Jefferies and Associates to run two 'Management of Major Flood Emergencies' seminars, one at the Lifeboat College in Poole and the other at Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh.

The key presenters at these seminars were all from North Carolina, USA. North Carolina has had to develop first class flood planning and response to cope with the all too frequent hurricanes which hit the state. Deputy Chief Jeff Dulin and Battalion Chief Tim Rogers from the Charlotte Fire Department provided the emergency service perspective whilst the emergency planning input came from Jeff Cardwell an Area Co-ordinator with North Carolina Emergency Management. Their combined experience in planning for major floods, management of the search and rescue component and overseeing the reconstruction after the flood event is vast and as presenters they were able to share their knowledge, experience and understanding with presentations that kept you on the edge of your seat.

Tim Rogers at the start of the seminar outlined that outlined that floods by their very nature are:-

- Multi-agency events.
- Multi-jurisdictional events.
- Haz-mat and public health events that can kill and injure on a large scale.
- Long term events that can directly affect and exhaust emergency services personnel and citizens physically, emotionally, and mentally.

And this set the stage for the seminar showing how a multi agency systems based approach to major floods can be developed that allows for the impact of such events to be reduced as far as possible and for lives to be saved at all stages. Simple but effective tools such as providing access to real time stream and river gauge information for fire and rescue services and use of TV and radio public information broadcasts were highlighted.

From an emergency planning perspective the figures were staggering. During Hurricane Floyd in 1999 over 45,000 people were housed in shelters with 60,000 meals per day being served and 1.5 million gallons of water being delivered in affected area. In terms of input from the State Emergency Management Agency this hurricane was a seven year event.

The seminars culminated in a tabletop flood management exercise to allow delegates to put into practice the concepts and tools they had been learning about. As an observer watching groups consisting of Fire and Rescue personnel, RNLI, Police, Environment Agency and Emergency Planners working through the exercise it was all too apparent that the multi-agency systems based approach that we had been hearing about was the way forward.

The lessons learnt in North Carolina have direct relevance here in Europe. Concepts such as a team typing, the S.E.A D.E.P.T.H. model for flood managers, flood fight training and expedient training for emergency responders are directly transferable and would save lives and reduce the impact of major floods in the UK and Ireland and it is hoped that these seminar will lead the way to such concepts being accepted this side of the Atlantic.

Following the success of these first two seminars the next 'Management of Major Flood Emergencies' seminar will be held at the Flood Water Ireland conference in Limerick on Nov 30th & December 1st 2005 being organised by Rescue 3 (UK) and Lane Jefferies and Associates. Details are available from Rescue 3 (UK) on 01678 522035 or by e-mail at info@rescue3.co.uk

FLOOD WATER IRELAND 2005
A Flood Management and Specialist Water Rescue Conference for the Emergency Services
Castletroy Park Hotel, Limerick
November 29th - December 1st 2005

Flood Water Ireland 2005 will provide a unique training opportunity delivering both strategic and operational flood and water rescue training at the one event.
The programme (subject to confirmation) will include:

- Strategic Water Rescue Conference
- Management of Major Flood Emergencies Seminar
- Swiftwater Motor Boat Operations Workshop
- Rescue 3 Swiftwater First Responder Course
- Teaching Water Awareness Workshop
- Practical Equipment Demonstrations

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