

Exercise Unified Response



As many of you will have seen on the local news and social media, the UK's largest live emergency resilience exercise "Exercise Unified Response" took place recently at the disused Littlebrook Power Station site in Dartford.

The scenario was based on a block of flats collapsing onto Waterloo tube station. Tube carriages were embedded into rubble and metal debris at precarious angles only accessed through a small tube station entrance and dark narrow tunnels.

This was not a local lead exercise however staff from Darent Valley Hospital volunteered themselves, and their relatives, to take on the role of casualties over the 4 days.

On day one, 1000 casualties were simulated using over 600 volunteers with injuries ranging



Joanne Seymour

from life threatening wounds and burns, broken bones and abrasions, as well as maternal casualties, to the panicked and uninjured evacuees. Students from Rotherham College created amazing, sometimes too

realistic, injuries, burns and wounds Containing foreign bodies. Organisers also enlisted the help of amputee and disabled volunteers, some of whose injuries would be too graphic to share, but added an extra element of realism into their extraction from the wreckage.

Our volunteers were placed in the carriages and waited patiently, in very cold conditions, for the rescue teams to arrive, playing up to their roles very well! Their complaints ranged from life threatening injuries, vomiting and fitting as well as being in the dark for 2 days with injured and deceased casualties. And it didn't stop once they were removed from scene, dead or alive, as they continued in their role until they were through casualty clearing and onto the hospital, morgue or survivor reception centre.



Gina Tomlin

Overall, from staff feedback, this exercise was an amazing experience but also provided them with a brief insight into the complexity and the devastation that such an incident would create and what would face our colleagues in the Emergency Services. Despite the cold, they had an enjoyable experience and got to take part in what was the largest exercise ever run in Europe. The professionalism that I witnessed, as well as joint multi agency working was phenomenal and no doubt the lessons learnt will change local and national response arrangements for Mass Casualty Incidents.