

REPORT OF THE LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY - 24 APRIL 2023

Chairman's Welcome And Introduction

The Chairman welcomed Mr Steven Brown as the new Director of Corporate Services and Treasurer to the Authority.

UKs International Search and Rescue Team - Deployment To Turkey

Group Manager Mark Warwick and Crew Manager Lindsay Sielski attended to provide a presentation to Members on the UKs International Search and Rescue Team (ISAR) deployment to Southern Turkey which had been discussed at the last meeting.

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) had been a member of UK International Search and Rescue (ISAR) for a number of years and had been deployed to many countries to provide humanitarian support to unexpected disasters. This incident was a quick, same day deployment to Turkey following a huge earthquake on the morning of 6 February 2023. The team consisted of 77 firefighters from across the UK, 4 dogs, structural engineers and medical teams. There were around 6,000 ISAR personnel attending from across the world to help, working alongside local people who provided intelligence and aid. LFRS had 6 firefighters who were part of the UK ISAR team. These volunteers were vaccinated, had undergone rigorous and ongoing training (on processes and equipment) to gain specialist knowledge and skills to operate in hazardous conditions and were available to respond at short notice on behalf of the Government Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office.

On arrival the team set up base, electronic communications were down and moving around the collapsed buildings and rubble was a challenge. In addition, Turkey continued to be hit by thousands of after-shocks with risk assessments needing to be fluid. Senses were overwhelmed by dust and people in disarray. The dogs were a great asset and did not let the team down. They were able to cover large areas of ground which reduced the risk to firefighters, and they were able to find signs of life to provide those searching with information to assist with digging locations.

The Authority applauded the efforts of the highly motivated and dedicated ISAR teams.

Operational Incidents of Interest

Members noted the increased likelihood of lithium-ion power sources finding their way into waste recycling plants which thereby increased fire risk. This issue was a challenge for the industry given lithium-ion batteries emitted toxic gasses, were unstable when damaged and could auto-ignite. Battery packs used in electric vehicles were large however, incidents were often from smaller batteries such as used in e-cigarettes, e-scooters and many other household devices. Many waste sites screened waste to identify the presence of power sources and sift them out, however, the prevalence from a myriad of appliances which used them, resulted in some finding their way into the system. This was a national issue which required end-to-end analysis to improve processes together with support from the Fire Sector and Environmental Agency to reduce fire risk.

DAVID O'TOOLE
Chairman

LFRS
Fulwood