

Briefing Note

Title: Severe weather and out of hours calls – Bank holiday weekend 25-28 May 2018

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Intended audience: Internal ☒ Partner organisation ☐ Public ☐ Confidential ☒

Purpose

To outline the issues highlighted during the bout of severe rainfall over the bank holiday weekend.

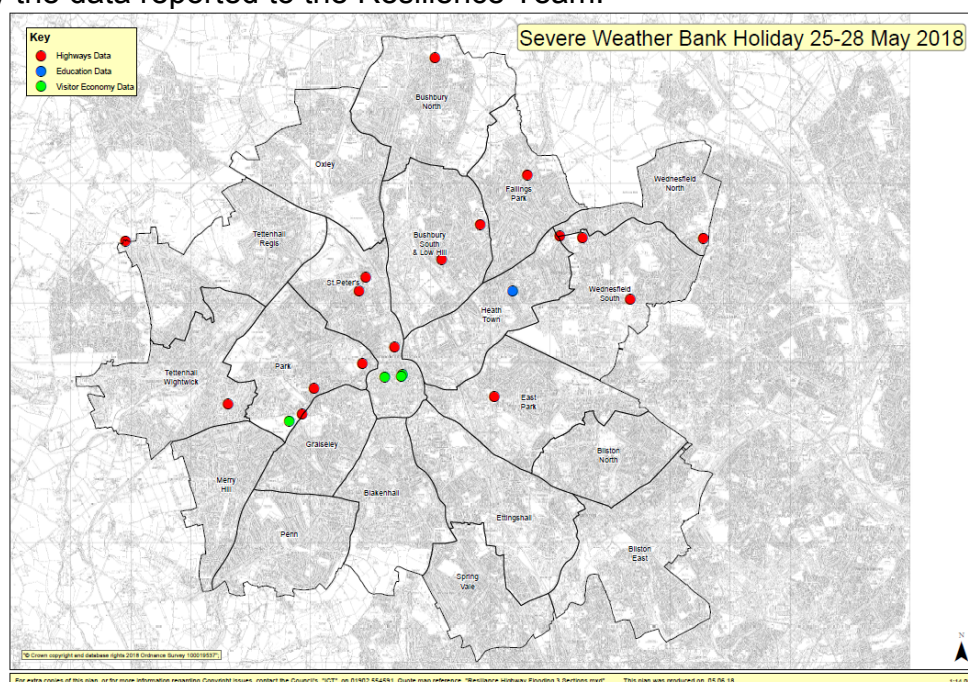
Overview

The Met Office put Yellow and Amber Warnings in place at various times between 25-28th May for rain. Over the weekend the West Midlands experienced a months' worth of rain fall onto the West Midlands in under an hour, with over 10,000 recorded lightning strikes in the West Midlands alone. With this a number of impacts were felt across the City, including a number of flash floods and power outages. We are currently establishing the overall impact on council services and buildings.

Geographical map of incidents reported

The attached map displays data collected over the bank holiday weekend from the Highways Team, Education and Visitor Economy. All highways data was received via the out of hours Contact Centre and are essentially the incidents that affected the city; as can be seen the flood incidents were localised.

The Education and Visitor Economy data have been gained from Service Heads. This includes the flooding of Heath Town School, the flooding of the Civic Halls, Art Gallery and Makers Dozen Studios, as well as the fire at Bantock House from a suspected lightning strike. It should be noted that this is only the data reported to the Resilience Team.



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Table of postcodes West Midlands Fire Service were called out to over the weekend when the severe rain hit. These could not be plotted fairly on the map due to the limited information (due to data protection) on post-codes, it would pin point a whole area rather than specific location.

Date	Postcode	Number of Calls	Number of Attended Calls	Incident Type
27/05/2018	WV3	2	0	Flooding
27/05/2018	WV6	1	1	Special Service Call
27/05/2018	WV10	1	0	Water Rescue Incident
27/05/2018	WV10	7	1	Flooding
27/05/2018	WV10	1	1	Flooding affecting electrics
27/05/2018	WV11	7	1	Flooding
28/05/2018	WV1	3	0	Flooding
28/05/2018	WV3	3	0	Flooding
28/05/2018	WV6	1	0	Flooding
28/05/2018	WV10	3	0	Flooding
28/05/2018	WV10	1	0	Special Service Call
28/05/2018	WV11	5	0	Flooding
28/05/2018	WV12	2	0	Flooding
28/05/2018	WV14	1	0	Flooding

On-call procedure – bank holiday

A Duty Director and Duty Manager were on-call at all times over the Bank Holiday – personal numbers were used at times (pre-planned) in order to accommodate the volunteer system that is used on Bank Holidays. The full list of numbers to be used were distributed to officers on-call as well as the 24 Hour Contact Centre. The usual co-ordinated response structure should have still been adopted as necessary:

Public/Responding Organisation > 24 Hour Contact Centre > Duty Manager > Duty Director > Managing Director > Council Leader

The Duty Director and Duty Managers reported that they received no calls over the weekend to their personal numbers although it was later discovered that a Councillor had called the Duty phoned but received no answer.

In response to the issues surrounding the bank holiday on-call procedure, a review is taking place in the Resilience Team to mitigate against the issue reoccurring. The next bank holiday is 27th August; if permanent measures are in place then they will be utilised but as a minimum, the duty phone will be diverted to personal phones to avoid a similar situation.

24 hour contact centre

There were reports that some staff, councillors and members of the public could not get through to the 24-hour contact centre provided by Wolverhampton Homes.

It has been determined that the 2999 out of hours line was operating and taking calls as usual, but a significant volume of calls were received as follows:

Saturday – 193 calls
Sunday – 957 calls
Monday – 440 calls

This is a total of 1590 compared to an average weekend (Sat-Sun) call volume of 270.

There were 2 call operators on shift over the weekend. Analysis of call volume has identified that during the peak on 27th May between 17:00 and 20:00; between these hours an average of 17 calls were answered every hour.

Further investigation has established the issues that were preventing some callers reaching an operator. These callers received an automated message explaining their call could not be answered at this time. This was due to a capacity issue, with the maximum number of calls that could be queued set at 32. Normally for out of hours calls this threshold is not hit.

ICT have made changes to the system ensuring calls are now held in a queue when there is a surge in demand; such as that experienced on Sunday. Domain Architects are looking to add a queuing message to the setup where possible.

ICT performed a high-volume test to ensure the out of hours line can now handle a high volume of calls and the changes were successful.

Other mitigations

- 3 extra phone lines were also installed Tuesday (29th) night. 2 additional operators who do not normally take the emergency calls were on duty to take calls (although they are not specifically trained to handle emergency calls), plus an on-call supervisor - so 4 in total plus supervisor.
- All 17 rest centre volunteers were alerted to the upcoming forecast and the possibility of being requested overnight.
- Councillor phone numbers were added to the Apprise logging system for the Duty Director and Duty Manager to contact in the event of a significant incident in their ward.
- A new webpage went live with information for residents about what to do if they have surface water flooding in their street. Residents would immediately see this link from the home page if required - www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/severeweather.
- Highways had doubled the number of gully tankers on stand-by, and cleaned debris from culverts.
- Emails were sent to councillors throughout the week to keep them updated.
- Social media updates were put out throughout the week to inform the public.

Next steps

A debrief questionnaire has been disseminated amongst colleagues for their comments, in particular to review the 24-hour contact centre but also to highlight good practice identified from various other aspects of the flood response. A structured debrief will be held to enable lessons to be identified and actioned.

A review into the on-call process is now ongoing.

Briefing Note

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