

Press release: First joint exercise with the fire service in the south west to test flood defence barriers

Environment Agency field operatives will roll out up to 120 metres of temporary defence barriers, in partnership with Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service officers. This will be the first joint exercise of its kind in the south west, although the fire service has previously helped deploy barriers during live incidents.

The exercise will take place at the Ashley Road recreation ground, next to the River Avon, from 10am to 1pm. Teams will deploy 3 types of barriers and seepage pumps to practise their joint response to flooding.

Robbie Williams, Environment Agency Operations Manager for the Wessex Area, said:

We are investing to reduce flood risk in Salisbury as part of a £2.5 billion investment nationally to better protect 300,000 homes by 2021.

Salisbury is at risk from flooding from 5 rivers running into the city and their close proximity to homes and businesses, so it's important we limit the overall impact and extent of flooding, and keep people safe.

Joint exercises like this will help us be better prepared for any future incidents as we'll be able to deploy the barriers more quickly and efficiently when flooding is expected, helping to protect communities and the local economy.

Jason Moncrieff, Station Manager for Salisbury, Wilton and Amesbury, said:

Across our area, Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service has a number of communities at high risk of flooding. It is great to have this opportunity to work closely with Environment Agency colleagues, both to test how we can support them when flooding is expected, but also to better understand how they work and the defences they have available.

The exercise site is 1 of 4 areas in the city where temporary defence barriers would be deployed in a real life river flooding incident.

These measures are supported by the Salisbury Operating Flood Working Group, which launched a multi-agency flood plan outlining the city's emergency

response last year. Volunteer wardens were also recruited by Salisbury City Council to act as the eyes and ears of the community for any flood risks.

Partner agencies and some schools have been invited to observe the exercise, including Wiltshire Council, Salisbury City Council, Wiltshire Police and wider members of the Wiltshire and Swindon Local Resilience Forum.

One of the Environment Agency's new Incident Command Vehicles will also be on site recording footage of the exercise. The WiFi-enabled vehicle acts as a mobile incident room and a temporary headquarters for staff out in the field, enabling better site management, situational awareness and visibility in flood risk communities.

Local residents will be informed about the exercise in advance and invited to stop by to find out more. Ashley Road and the formal footpath around the edge of the recreation ground will still be accessible to users.

Residents can sign up to receive flood alerts by phone, email or text message. Residents can [register online](#) or by calling the 24-hour Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

There are 3 types of barriers. The Innero and Geodesign barriers are aluminium frames which expand into shape before being lined with plastic sheet to create a waterproof wall, with the Floodstop barrier being a plastic structure linked together for more specific deployments.

Three teams of 8 people (6 Environment Agency, 2 fire service) will rotate on the hour between each barrier type, overseen by site controllers.

The Salisbury Operational Flood Working Group members are Salisbury City Council, Wiltshire Council, the Environment Agency, Salisbury Cathedral, Salisbury BID (Business Improvement District) and Highways England.

The media are invited to attend the exercise at 11am on Tuesday 5 December and carry out a brief tour of the site and carry out photo/filming/interview opportunities with approved spokespeople from the Environment Agency and Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service. Please confirm your attendance with the Environment Agency press office by emailing communications_wessex@environment-agency.gov.uk.

On arrival the media should report to the information stand on site, to be signed in and given high visibility jackets for safety and identification purposes. Press officers will assist with this process. Please note, the Environment Agency cannot accept any liability if health and safety procedures are not followed.