

Press release: Highways England supports training exercise in Birmingham

The event took place on Friday night on a closed section of the A38(M) in Birmingham for a 'real-time' incident involving a HGV, double-decker bus, a van and four cars. The training scenario was a road-traffic collision. To add an extra dimension to the incident, the van and one of the cars was on its side and on its roof.

The exercise – organised by West Midlands Fire Service – took place in a closed section of the carriageway which was utilised for the exercise as part of on-going repair work by Highways England at Spaghetti Junction.

Highways England has been working closely with the emergency services for the past couple of months to stage the exercise.

Highways England emergency planning officer, Frank Bird, said:

This was a really useful training exercise for us and our partners to test responses to a challenging incident. We continue to work closely with the emergency services across the West Midlands and we're pleased to be able to help by utilising an existing closure on the road to help support their training programme.

Watch commander Andy Wagner of West Midlands Fire Service, who planned and organised the exercise, said:

We're extremely grateful to everyone who helped make Friday night's exercise as realistic as possible, including Highways England for ensuring we had use of the A38(M).

We aim to get to life-risk emergencies in five minutes or less, and then put in place an assertive, safe and effective plan to resolve the incident. This scenario drew on the wide range of skills and resources that would be needed in such challenging circumstances. It was a great opportunity to test and perfect how several agencies work together.

The incident also posed a challenge to paramedics called to the scene to treat nine 'casualties' in the form of actors that replicated wounds similar to those that would be experienced in real-life.

West Midlands Ambulance Service hazardous area response team manager, James Price, said:

The exercise on Friday night was a great opportunity to test our skills and joint-agency team work at a multi-vehicle collision.

Routine exercises like this take place across the West Midlands region regularly and are important as they enable us to test our ability to deal with large scale incidents. Thanks to Highways England and West Midlands Fire Service for organising the exercise.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.