

Italian Hovercraft Team



On 25th July 2007, whilst overseeing the pumping operation at Mythe Treatment Works, I received a message from Control informing me that an Italian hovercraft crew had self-presented at Fire Service HQ to offer assistance. Normally, this would seem a peculiar request, but given the events during the past few days, anything seemed possible.

I was asked to speak to them in Italian and establish who they were and who sent them. It soon became clear that the minister for civil protection in Rome had e-mailed the Prime Minister's Office, to inform us of their deployment. The Cabinet Office contacted GFRS the next day to establish their authenticity and following a call to Turin and later from the Italian Embassy, the hovercrafts were given clearance to be deployed.

26th Day 1 - Launched from Mythe Treatment Works onto the River Avon and hovered across to the River Severn. We carried out a three-mile sweep of the river. Our brief was life risk, humanitarian aid and water distribution to remote areas.

27th Day 2 - Launched at the Red Lion Public House, Wainlodes Hill. We carried out a search down to Ashleworth, checking several remote properties and delivering water. Mobilised to an emergency call involving a large spillage of diesel on the river near Haw Bridge. Within 5 minutes, we reached the incident and made a quick assessment, which enabled us to call upon the appropriate environmental protection equipment to contain the spillage.



29th Day 4 - Launched at Wainlodes again to check on livestock and surrounding water levels, which were receding. Deputy Chief Constable was invited to view the hovercrafts in action.

30th Day 5 - The Italian Rescue Team were invited by the Chief Fire Officer to attend a presentation and tour of the Tri-Service Headquarters.

Tally Giampa
Station Commander, Gloucester

28th Day 3 - Launched at Gander Lane, Tewkesbury and carried out a search for a missing person in fields behind the Abbey. Within 10 minutes, crews discovered a body. Crews then spent several hours assisting Police and Scenes of Crime Officers in recovering the body. Tewkesbury water rescue teams were utilised to assist due to the depth of the water being about 10 feet. The national media also descended on this incident and spent several hours at the scene covering the story.



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