

# Rockcliffe Industrial Estate Warehouse Fire

Thursday 2 December 2021

## Update

Multi-agency partners (including Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service, Cumbria County Council, Carlisle City Council and the Environment Agency) are working closely to bring the incident at Rockcliffe Industrial Estate safely to a close.

Work has continued to retrieve the waste from within the structure of the building, extinguish it and safely dispose of it, and as a result has generated additional smoke in the short term. We would like to assure local residents that this was anticipated but required in order to progress with the safe clearance of the site. Residents are advised to keep all windows and doors closed whilst this work is carried out as a precautionary measure.

Colin Cox, Cumbria County Council's Director of Public Health said:

*"An assessment carried out early into the incident identified the risk to health from any air pollution as very low. However due to the ongoing smoke in the area, air quality levels will be affected. The advice from Public Health remains the same, residents in the surrounding area who are affected by the smoke should keep any windows and doors closed. Any residents with any concerns about their individual health should contact their GP Practice or NHS 111."*

John Bunn, Cumbria Waste Team Leader at Environment Agency said:

*"We have supported the combined decision between the Fire and Rescue Service, Local Authority and the Environment Agency to allow the material to continue to burn rather than extinguishing it in the immediate phase with water which, due to the circumstances of the incident would have been ineffective and would create a greater risk of environmental hazard due to the water run-off."*

*"The current tactic agreed to retrieve the waste from the building, extinguish and safely dispose of it is the best course of action to safely extinguish the fire."*

John Beard, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service's Chief Fire Officer said:

*"We would like to thank the public for their patience and understanding whilst we bring this incident safely to a close. We understand the additional smoke in the surrounding area is not pleasant, however the multi-agency team are doing their upmost to safely extinguish the fire whilst minimising the impact on the local community."*

This incident will be constantly kept under review and monitored to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the local community. Fire crews will also maintain a presence in the area, carrying out routine safe and well visits to provide information and advice to local residents.

For further information, please visit: [www.cumbria.gov.uk/rockcliffefire/](http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/rockcliffefire/)

This incident is being managed by a range of agencies and partners, including:



# Your questions answered:

**Q: When did the fire start?**

A: The fire started on Monday 8 November when Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service were called to the scene.

**Q: Why did you choose to leave the fire as a controlled burn?**

A: When the fire began, active firefighting from outside of the building took place immediately. This was successful in bringing the fire under control but did not fully extinguish it.

After careful assessment, the decision was taken to move to a controlled burn. Agencies decided this was the best cause of action rather than extinguishing it with water, which would create a greater and more significant environmental hazard due to the water run-off.

**Q: Why has there been additional smoke in the local area?**

A: The second phase of the work to extinguish the fire involved retrieving the waste from within the structure of the building, extinguishing it and safely disposing of it. This approach was anticipated to generate additional smoke in the short term but required in order to progress with the safe clearance of the site.

**Q: Do you have plans to test the air quality following the fire?**

A: The assessment carried out last week identified the risk of any air pollution as very low. However due to ongoing public concern all the agencies involved in this incident have reviewed the situation and have agreed there is no need to change the approach. If you feel this should be reviewed again please contact UK Health Security Agency, who are the government agency responsible for this area of activity in the UK.

**Q: Has the fire had any effect on the water courses?**

A: This is being carefully monitored and there have been no reported impacts on any local watercourses.

**Q: Who owns the licensing for the site?**

A: The site operates under an Environment Agency exemption licence but following a fire of this nature it is standard practice for an investigation to take place.

**Q: Who is responsible for the clean-up of the site?**

A: The site operator is responsible for paying for the clean-up which will be carefully monitored by a range of agencies to ensure all the correct practices and procedures are followed.

**Q: What are you doing to keep us informed?**

A: Following feedback from the community, we are working hard to keep you informed. We are in regular contact with Rockcliffe Parish Council, and we are publishing regular updates through the media and through the various agencies' social media accounts.

**Q: What will the site clean-up consist of?**

A: A programme of works will be agreed to demolish the remains of the building and will be carefully monitored and managed by a range of agencies and specialists.

To view the latest updates, please visit Cumbria County Council's Facebook or Twitter accounts.

If you have any further questions, please email: [corporate.communications@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:corporate.communications@cumbria.gov.uk)

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