

# Emergency Response and Recovery

# Plan For The Evening

Hearing from our colleagues from:

- Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Health and Safety Executive
- Bedfordshire Police
- Association of British Insurers
- Bedford Borough Council Public Health
- Bedford Borough Council

Please reserve your questions for the partners until after all of the updates. Any questions for British Geological Survey (BGS) to [proffice@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:proffice@bedford.gov.uk)



# Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

## **Current Situation**

More than 40 households within the cordon have now been given the opportunity to go back to their premises for a short period of time to collect property, supported by fire service staff.

BFRS remains onsite to support partner organisations in the on-going activities in the cordon area.

## **Actions Taken**

Supporting partners agencies in the on-going investigations to determine the cause of the explosion and fire.

Supporting partners agencies in delivering their responsibilities including escort in cordon area.



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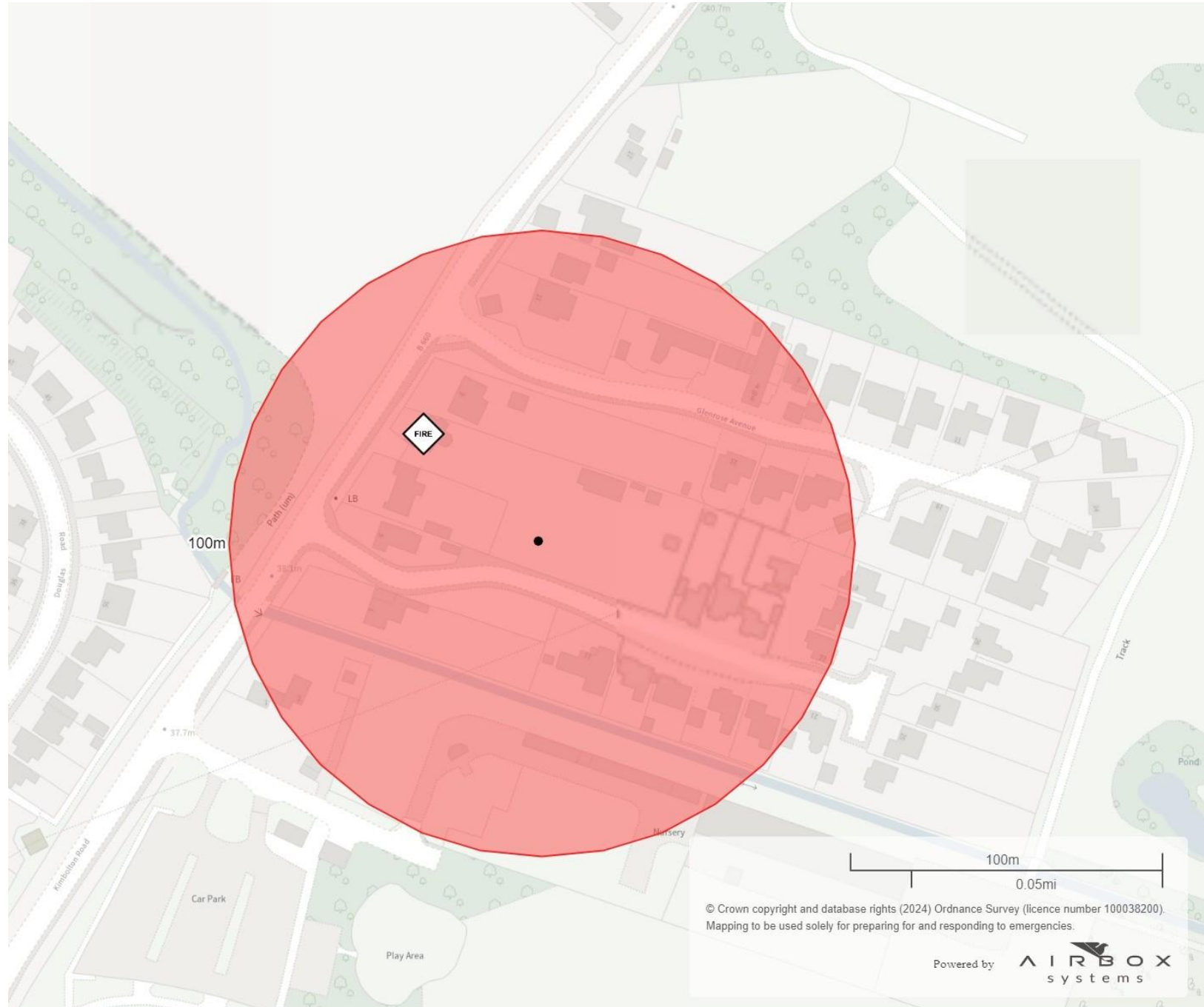
## Actions Taken

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# The Cordon

This is the affected area. Residents have been evacuated from Glenrose Avenue, Cleat Hill, and Wagstaffe Close.



# Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

## Current Situation

- Borehole blockage at -10.7metres below ground level has been cleared.
- Gas pressure at 4 bar was then allowed to freely vent out of the borehole and vent stack. Safely dispersing to atmosphere.
- Drilling has continued past -66metres below ground where gas pressure had stopped progress.
- Drilling mud has been pumped into the borehole to 66 metres depth.
- Additional drilling mud sourced to recommence drilling to prove borehole depth.
- Controlled sequence of operations.
- Continuous monitoring and checks.

# Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

## **Next Steps**

1. Barite sourced and has been delivered (today)
2. Mud mixing to give overbalance
3. Clean / ream the borehole to bottom hole depth.
4. Determine suitable position (both strata & depth) for deployment of a packer.
5. Test gas tightness and cement borehole.

# British Geological Survey

Analysing first pass soil gas survey to determine concentrations of gas in soil and flux of soil gas (soil to atmosphere)

This will need to be repeated to understand the dynamic system.



# Bedfordshire Police

- We are continuing to work with partners to conduct a thorough investigation into the cause of the explosion. This includes reviewing any previous issues reported in the local area and ensuring sufficient resource of any post incident demand
- We have and will continue to support the partnership response by staffing the cordons and maintaining a police presence in the area to ensure empty properties are secure
- In coordination with partners, we will also support with efforts to escort people inside the cordon to attend the properties when it is safe to do so

# Association of British Insurers

We have been in contact with our network of Property Insurers who have assured us they are taking action to support any affected residents. Members are contacting their customers in the neighbourhood who may have been affected. *We recommend that any customers who have not yet spoken with their insurer do so as soon as they can to discuss the situation and the support they may require.*

- Insurers will respond to each claim on a case-by-case basis. For those whose properties have been damaged by the explosion, the provision of alternative accommodation where conditions mean the home is uninhabitable is standard in most home insurance policies.
- Where residents have not suffered property damage, but they have been told to evacuate by the police or any other authority, alternative accommodation is not generally provided as standard in home insurance policies as it is normally the responsibility of the local authority and emergency services. Our members will work with Bedford Borough Council to understand the situation and provide support as appropriate.

# Methane and health

Ian Brown FFPH, Chief Officer for Public Health  
Bedford Borough Council

Produced with advice from toxicologists  
from the UK Health Security Agency

# Health effects of methane

- Methane is a non-toxic gas, and low levels of exposure would not be expected to cause adverse health effects.
- High levels of methane can reduce the amount of oxygen breathed from the air. This can result in mood changes, slurred speech, vision problems, memory loss, nausea, vomiting, facial flushing and headache.
- In severe cases there may be changes in breathing and heart rate, balance problems, numbness, and unconsciousness. If very high exposure continues it can be fatal.
- The immediate health effects from a high level of methane exposure can be reversed by moving to a well-ventilated area or otherwise increasing oxygen intake.

# Frequently asked questions (1)

Are there any long-term health effects?

- Long-term health risks are unlikely where residents did not experience any symptoms at the time of exposure.

Can methane cause cancer?

- Methane is not thought to cause cancer.

Is health screening necessary?

- Health screening of the local population is not required as methane is not expected to result in long-term health effects, where symptoms did not occur at the time of exposure.

# Frequently asked questions (2)

How might methane affect children?

- Children exposed to high levels of methane are expected to show similar effects to adults.

Does methane affect pregnancy or the unborn child?

- There are limited data available on the direct effects of methane exposure on pregnancy or the unborn child. Therefore, it is not possible to draw any definitive conclusions. Effects on the unborn child are more likely to occur if the exposure to methane causes the mother to be unwell.

What should I do if I have any health concerns regarding exposure to methane?

- Contact your GP or call NHS 111.

# More information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/methane-properties-uses-and-incident-management>

## Guidance

### **Methane: health effects and incident management**

Information on methane, for use in responding to chemical incidents.

From: [UK Health Security Agency](#)

Published 1 July 2014

Last updated 8 January 2019 — [See all updates](#)

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## Documents



### [Methane: general information](#)

Ref: PHE publications gateway number 2014790  
PDF, 39.7 KB, 4 pages

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology.

► [Request an accessible format.](#)



### [Methane: incident management](#)

Ref: PHE publications gateway number 2014790  
PDF, 79.8 KB, 12 pages

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology.

► [Request an accessible format.](#)

# Bedford Borough Council

- Officers continue to liaise with residents to provide **ongoing advice and support**, and to establish how the Council can best assist with their needs.
- The following remains:- Advice and support centre at St Marks' Church, financial support, 24/7 emergency helpline for residents, and text updates sent to residents daily.
- We have worked with partners to offer everybody secure access to properties. (43 households have returned to collect belongings)
- Free Office Space on offer at Borough Hall from Monday – Friday



**Housing:**

- 31 households accommodated

**Welfare Assistance:**

- 43 households paid
- 96 clothing payments through our financial support package
  - Financial Package payments are being made on a weekly basis

**Emergency Helpline:**

- 219 calls answered in total
- Average waiting time on line 2mins

**Bin Collections:**

We are working to resolve any missed bin collections.

**Postal Service:**

- Contact has been made with Royal Mail and we are trying to find a solution. Currently post is being held at Ford End Road for collection.

Q & A