

Fire crews praised for work during flooding

Fire crews from Edinburgh are among those singled out for praise today as the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service assess the work done over the last week or so to help those in the east of the country to battle floods.

Firefighters responded to a number of incidents as heavy rain struck various areas in the East Service Delivery Area over the festive period.

Head of Service Delivery in the East, Deputy Assistant Chief Officer John Miller, said: "Operational crews and Control personnel have worked extremely hard over what has been a period of intense activity for the emergency services. Most incidents were resolved quickly and on occasions through a coordinated multi agency response.

"Measures were taken to ensure we always had sufficient resources to respond wherever they were needed. We remain fully prepared to protect communities throughout these areas during this period of difficult weather and will continue to respond wherever we are needed.

"In this type of weather I would urge people to follow advice issued by Flood Line Scotland, our Police Scotland colleagues and by Transport Scotland, which will help them stay safe and avoid running into difficulty on the roads."

The East area, particularly Peebles and the Borders have been devastated by flooding since 26 December last year and crews have been working around the clock to provide assistance to people across these areas.

One of the most serious of these occurred in Aberfoyle around midday on 30 December when the town's Main Street was

completely flooded following a rapid rise in water levels, leaving several people stranded in shops or trapped within their homes.

The local crew from Aberfoyle community fire station were the first emergency responders on the scene, closely followed by their colleagues from Balfron fire station. Faced with a rapidly developing situation, the incident commander requested additional resources, and water rescue teams were immediately mobilised from Stirling and Glasgow with rescue boats and other life-saving equipment. The boats were used to very good effect, removing those people who required assistance to a place of safety, with many taking shelter in the fire station itself until the waters receded some hours later.

Elsewhere in the Stirlingshire area, firefighters rescued a family from their vehicle after they became trapped by flood water at a caravan park in Strathyre, and other crews were involved in pumping flood water from property in Killin.

Station Manager Richard Norman said, "Our firefighters worked hard today to resolve a challenging situation safely. The local crew from Aberfoyle were very quick to assess the situation and to bring on the specialist resources they needed to support them in conducting 20 rescues from flooded properties using boats and inflatable sleds."

"The local knowledge of these crews was invaluable in bringing the incident to a safe conclusion and returning some normality to their community."

"Throughout the incident, a partnership approach was adopted and the fire service worked collaboratively with the police, ambulance service, local authority and utility companies to implement the agreed plan."

In Fife, people were rescued from cars after flooding hit various locations. Two fire crews from Methil and three water rescue crews from Glenrothes rescued four adults, three

children and a dog from two vehicles trapped in water 3ft deep on the A917 near Colinsburgh on 26 December. Later that night crews were called to assist two women, one elderly, when their car became stuck on the B936 at Grange of Lindores, near Newburgh.

Three people had to be rescued from a Borders river on Boxing Day as flooding returned to the region and a further three had to be rescued after their car became trapped by another Tweed tributary which had burst its banks.

A woman fell into the Lyne Water near Romanno Bridge in Peeblesshire and two men who attempted to rescue her also became trapped in the rapidly rising river. All three were swept downstream around 200 metres before they were eventually rescued by fire crews from West Linton and Peebles backed up by specialist water rescue teams from Glasgow and Edinburgh. These crews had to work in the most challenging conditions.

The woman was rescued and taken to hospital by ambulance suffering from hypothermia and shock. Both men, who were checked at the scene by ambulance personnel but didn't require any further treatment.

In Peebles, river levels rose higher than experienced since 1994 prompting a multi-agency response involving Scottish Fire and Rescue, Police Scotland, Scottish Ambulance Service and RNLI, the Mountain Rescue and local authority emergency planning officers.

A spokesperson for SFRS said: "We had 66 firefighters in attendance at the incident on 30 December and four specialist water rescue teams using boats to rescue persons trapped in their homes and cars. Six people were rescued by our specialist water team using these boats.

"We also mobilised a specialist Urban Search and Rescue team to a care home in Peebles. They were sent as a precaution

because water was flowing through parts of the care home.

“There were 25 people rescued from the care home. Apart from the care home, we rescued 15 other people, five dogs and one cat.”