

Radiation incident response a real team effort

Career Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) personnel and a range of stakeholders ensured that a complex hazardous material vehicle incident in Muchea was expertly managed.

In a two truck collision on the Brand Highway a vehicle trailer was damaged, exposing a container with a radioactive element inside.

Acting Manager CBR/Hazmat Stuart Palmer said first arriving fire crews were quick to take control of the situation.

“Firefighters from Ellenbrook, Joondalup and Osborne Park stations checked that there were no significant injuries to either driver and identified the hazardous material risk,” Stuart said.

“They then managed the incident by securing the area and seeking specialist assistance.”

Stuart said a request was made to call in the Hazmat Emergency Advisory Team (HEAT), a group of key stakeholders who can advise on

incident coordination and response, and quickly tap into expert advice.

“HEAT contacted specialists Radiation Health to ascertain the source of the radiation, what activity could be expected, and how best to handle the material,” he said.

“Once it was identified as a common radioactive material used in industry as a measurement tool, it was possible to determine the risk to responding personnel at the scene and advise the recommended course of action.

“A Field Liaison Officer was deployed to the incident site to liaise with the Incident Controller, firefighters and HEAT.

“This allowed for the right information to be made available and provided the ability for members of HEAT to contact their network of specialists, ensuring best practice.

“It is an approach that has proven highly effective at HAZMAT incidents.”

With the right people on scene, personal dosimeters and radiation survey meters were used to assess the levels of radiation in the area. Fortunately, they were found to be at a consistently low level.

Having established that it was safe enough for closer inspection, crews were able to visually confirm there had been no breach of the container.

They arranged with the owner to have the material safely collected and removed.

Stuart said the excellent communication between all stakeholders had ensured the safety of those at the scene.



The damaged vehicle trailer.

▼ The radiation cylinder was not breached in the crash.