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The 2010 Fire on Hastings Pier



The 2010 fire on Hastings Pier, photo by Kurt Smith (HPC084.012)



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Photo of the Hastings Pier Fire taken by Colin Bewes from the RNLi Hastings Lifeboat, RNLB Sealink Endeavour, whilst on service as a crewman on 5th October 2010 (HPC 093.003).

Fire hit Hastings Pier for a second time on 5th October 2010. The alarm was raised at 1am when a small fire was spotted in the ballroom. Local residents heard explosions as the flames spread rapidly, consuming the buildings on the Pier. The fire fighters quickly made it their priority to preserve as much of the substructure as possible.

Although the Pier had been closed to the public for some years, it was initially feared that there could be people on the structure. The Coastguard requested assistance from Hastings RNLi lifeboat station and the volunteer lifeboat crew were paged at 1.15am. The crew launched both the all-weather lifeboat and the inshore lifeboat. Fire fighters with specialist equipment were taken aboard the larger, all-

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weather lifeboat, Sealink Endeavour, and used the lifeboat as a platform to operate thermal imaging cameras to check for signs of life. Once it was deemed that there was no one on the pier, fire crews used specialist pump equipment to tackle the fire with seawater. A Sussex Police helicopter also helped the fire brigade.

Clive Mayhew, Volunteer Lifeboat Press Officer for Hastings RNLI, explained, "Hastings RNLI has trained for an eventuality such as a fire on the pier. The pier has been closed to the public since 2006, so obviously there was the potential for it to be used by vagrants or targeted by people with a more sinister motive. In recent years several other famous piers have burned down, so the lifeboat crew and the fire service had previously discussed how we would react to such an incident in Hastings.

A fire on the pier is not something the RNLI would automatically be involved in – only if there were a perceived risk to life would we launch. Because there could potentially have been people on the pier, we agreed to work with the fire service."

The volunteer crew's extensive training stood them in good stead, as conditions at the time of the launch were difficult. There was a low tide and the sea was rough, so getting the lifeboat close to the pier and keeping it steady was a challenge.

The lifeboats supported the fire service until 6.30am, when the fire service concluded that the crew were no longer needed. They returned to station while fire crews remained on shore to tackle the remainder of the fire. It was finally brought under control at 8am, leaving only one building standing, the western band shelter. However, the combined effort of the fire fighters, the police, and the RNLI meant that the substructure remained largely undamaged by the conflagration.

For more information on the work of the RNLI, please contact Tim Ash, Divisional Media Relations Manager (South East and London) on 0207 6207426 or 07785 296252, email tim_ash@rnli.org.uk or contact RNLI Public Relations on 01202336789.

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