

West Deptford fire response

At 12:20 am, Saturday 15 March 2003, at the West Deptford facility in the US a fire started in the refinery acid scrubber. The alarm was raised by a member of staff and the site emergency team and local fire services were quickly alerted.

The fire involved the refinery acid scrubber, the associated ductwork and pipe rack. At 6:30 am the initial fire was put out. Unfortunately the fire rekindled and took a further six hours to extinguish.

Over 365 fire fighters attended the scene, many for over 14 hours. The site fire fighting team worked alongside the fire service. There were no injuries to Johnson Matthey employees. Unfortunately four fire fighters suffered minor injuries from smoke inhalation.

The rapid reaction of staff and the local authorities restricted the damage to the facility. The water used to fight the fire was collected to ensure no damage to local water systems. Emissions to air were also monitored during the course of the fire. There were no reportable releases during the entire duration of the fire.

Thanks to the considerable energy and commitment of the staff at the facility, damaged areas were completely rebuilt within five weeks. The rebuild time included significant structural work and the design and installation of a highly customised fire suppression system.

The rebuild was completed without any impact on Johnson Matthey customers.

After the fire at the community advisory panel hosted by local industries Johnson Matthey addressed concerns and questions raised by community representatives. There were no complaints over the Johnson Matthey handling of the incident.

