RISCAuthority at work

Dr Jim Glockling reports from the FPA's recent meeting with the Building Regulations Advisory Committee and highlights some exciting news about developments within RISCAuthority

PERHAPS OMINOUSLY, on Friday 13th we presented to the Building Regulations Advisory Committee (BRAC) on the issues set out and made possible by our Safe Futures postcard campaign. By way of reminder, the three issues were: pursuing a solution to the automatic fire alarm (AFA) problem by insisting on high-integrity fire detectors in all new commercial buildings; addressing the external weak spots to fire in the external envelope of some modern building methods such as light timber frame construction; and reducing the areas of mandation for the sprinkler protection of warehouses.

We understand that the minister received more than enough postcards from supporters to instigate an invite. We were kindly afforded a generous 45-minute slot in which to make our case to the assembled audience. The presentation, which may be downloaded from **www. riscauthority.co.uk**, was very well received and we were happy at the consideration and interest given to our cause. We will of course follow this through, but for now this seems like a very good start.

Bookings for the London RISCAuthority seminar are now closed, as we had to call a halt at a record breaking 170 seats. Details of the Manchester seminar and finalised speaker list have just been posted on the website and you are advised to book early if you would like to attend. In addition to the talks, it will be an opportunity for us to showcase some of the major recent RISCAuthority initiatives, including launches of the 2015 Insurer's Guide to Property Protection (augmented Approved Document B [ADB]); the new large-loss statistics collection website; and the all-new RISCAuthority INFORMER database.

In our pursuit of modernising RISCAuthority output as directed by the executive committee and members' forum, we have embarked on an extensive 'big-data' initiative to distil as many risk control relevant datasets into a one-page-per-postcode output to support the insurer, surveyor and their clients alike. The entire library (to be known as the INFORMER database) is now complete for all 2,000,000 UK postcodes. It includes demographic data, together with proximity data for crime, flood zones, water source protection zones (SPZs), mining, power grid infrastructure, earthquakes, weather trends, landfill sites, COMAH sites, and firefighting water provision; as well as performance and policy information for fire and rescue service response and historic fire data from our large-loss statistics dataset.

While this tool will be valuable enough, it will also be the engine behind our groundbreaking new 'intelligent' information delivery website. Using a very simple Google-like webpage, the intention is that users, providing just two small pieces of information, their business type and postcode, will be rewarded with a library of risk-control advice that is bespoke to them and relevant, both in terms of their area and the business they conduct.

Prominent by its omission from the dataset is information derived from the fire and rescue service Incident Reporting System (IRS). In spite of satisfying Herculean tasks set by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in the past to get access to this data, it still eludes us and prevents us from doing those most essential analyses of cause and effect, and lessons learned, in insurer relevant terms. The crime data that is now provided by police forces is exceptional in terms of quality, quantity and content, and true case data. Flood Hack – a government initiative to put real-time data from the country's water level monitoring systems in the hands of the big technology firms, to encourage them to use it innovatively and sort out our flooding issues – has been a great success. In spite of this, access to fire data remains stubbornly difficult.

However, recent meetings with DCLG on this subject might indicate that things are about to change. Mounting internal and external pressures to share seem to be converging and, aided by personnel changes, we could see a change of heart on the horizon. RISCAuthority has teamed up with the Fire Industry Association to specify its requirements for a useful dataset, which will be presented to DCLG in due course.

On a final data note, the fire and rescue service response tool will be updated in 2015 to include up to date information and some very clever modelling of the relevance of traffic to fire appliance delivery, and of station utilisation/appliance availability. The new tool's output will be accompanied by probabilistic analysis of delivery and how this changes with time as more stations become available to deliver in that time frame. This is an advanced model, yet the output is simply understood and highly valuable to grasping reasonable expectation ■

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