

RISCAuthority at work



Dr Jim Glockling explains how RISCAuthority has partnered with fire and rescue services to offer business continuity tools to promote property protection and resilience initiatives

OVER THE last few years, we have recognised an ever increasing and very much welcomed interest by fire and rescue services (FRS) in the promotion of business and property protection and resilience initiatives. At one important level they are in a position to help with the distribution of best practice guides and toolkits, and this is proving to be exceptionally effective given the number of touch-points that they have with businesses in their jurisdiction and the positive relationships they are forming with them.

In support of this, RISCAuthority has provided FRS badged risk control resources for business continuity. We are delighted that these are reaching audiences of a size many times greater than insurers alone could hope to meet and the results are very evident in the download statistics. Moreover, regional FRS initiatives are amplifying this effect still further, reducing the complexity of RISCAuthority engagement with the 50 or so individual UK FRSs.

But it does not stop there. Keen to measure benefit in respect of services to the entire 'community' (using the broadest interpretation of the word) and commercial estate, the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and some FRSs are undertaking a ground up review of the entire scope of benefit they provide within catchment. They are seeking to price this within a comprehensive 'cost of fire' review supported by the Fire Sector Federation. The provision of FRS resource has typically revolved around maximising the saving of lives. In a typical occupancy category breakdown, this puts care homes at the top of any list and warehousing at the bottom.

These inventive studies are looking to essentially undertake this analysis using a range of new criteria that will build a more complete picture around which to determine resource allocation. These other objectives will be particularly meaningful to local communities and insurers, and include optimisation of financial loss, loss of jobs, preservation of infrastructure, environmental impact reduction and such like. It is not difficult to see how the ordering of the occupancy list might radically alter, depending upon which hat is worn.

A motivating factor behind this is also the recognition that the life preserving job is by and large done in many areas that have always formed the focus of attention – regulation, licensing, and ongoing inspection. This has made these environments very much safer; so while they are life-critical, they are at a very much lower risk of lives being lost in them. The role of the fire service extends therefore into protection of the economic health of the local area – too often businesses that burn down never re-open in the area, or even the same country. RISCAuthority is supporting these initiatives with data and resources wherever possible and greater engagement is encouraged.

As reported later in this issue, the RISCAuthority London seminar (*see pp33-37*) had a record breaking attendance this year and we were forced to defer many wishing to attend to the Manchester seminar, which takes place on 4 June. One of the talks by the Environment Agency (EA) caused much discussion on the need for hard and fast rule sets to be applied regarding the protection of important aquifers from firefighting water.

Having covered these Source Protection Zones (SPZs) in the new RISCAuthority INFORMER database, we find we are a little stuck on the advice we give to insurers on the relevance of their proximity to insured properties, and it seems we are not alone. FRSs, sometimes forbidden from spraying water on fires under the threat of legal action if they do, have no hard and fast rules to apply either. It is understood that CFOA and EA are meeting regularly to achieve a common policy, but progress is hampered by the terminology. The Zone ratings (one to four) describe the porosity of the geography over the aquifer, but not the importance of the aquifer beneath. Some low lying counties, such as Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire are highly reliant on their aquifer water source. Others, in hillier parts of the country, are less so.

The RISCAuthority INFORMER database will go live this month and in an upcoming issue of *FRM*, I will provide a close look at this exciting initiative ■

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