

# RESILIENCE →))))))))) NEED TO KNOW GUIDE

## Understanding FRS response and Business Resilience

### Fire and Rescue Service Response and Business Resilience

The United Kingdom has one of the best records for fire safety in the world achieved through legislation and the work of the fire and rescue services. Legislation is in place only to protect people and as such there is no mandate to protect property or business. Actions following evacuation to prevent fire spread, extinguish the fire, protect critical assets, reduce consequential damage, and recover the property or/and business are entirely voluntary, and without specific consideration by the business owner will not happen.

It is a common misunderstanding that the Fire and Rescue Services are obliged to intervene to protect businesses and property. They may (and very often do) provide game-changing assistance when it is safe to do so. Firefighter safety, and the ability to safely respond is influenced by many factors including:

- the time and weight of response provided – this determines the size of the fire challenge and the resources available to deal with it;
- the structural stability of the building involved in fire – building collapse is a noted and terrible cause of firefighter deaths and increasingly buildings are being constructed of weaker materials;
- the level of pre-planning undertaken and FRS familiarisation with the site;
- building/site complexity;
- water availability and access;
- presence of high risk items such as fuels storage, acetylene etc;
- presence of fire suppression systems.

The Business and Property Protection Portal (BPPP) uses state of the art modelling to describe the time in which fire appliances may reach your business' postcode at weights deemed appropriate to being significant to Resilience efforts. Full consideration requires knowledge of many other factors including the local Fire Authority's Automatic Fire Alarm Policy which may introduce additional delay times.

This report has been provided because the modelling tells us that delivery of a (non-mandated) fire service response to your location is unlikely to guarantee the survival of your business and that there may be a need for you to embrace self-sufficient measures for the protection of your business against the threat of fire.

### Recommendations for businesses in locations where FRS response may not support Resilience ambitions:

- Analyse your business on the assumption that there will be no FRS intervention. Suppression and extinguishing systems are the best means of providing a timely response to fire at the local level (around machinery), compartment level (room), and building level, when the fire is still small and more easily manageable. These systems provide both high integrity detection and on-the-spot response and could be the difference between losing your property and business, and having 'minor' interruption to business.
- It is vital that the consequence of a slow or low-weight FRS response is considered within your overall Resilience plan – for example, where 'suppression' systems are deployed for out of hours fire security, if not the FRS, who will put the fire out once the 'suppression' period has expired? (\*Suppression systems may not extinguish fire – only hold it until other actions may be taken to extinguish – if these actions do not occur within timeframe then uncontrolled spread may follow).
- Engage with your local Fire Authority and determine measures that might be put in place that will enhance their effectiveness. Consideration should be given to familiarisation exercises, pre-planning, information provision, access, water provision, signage, salvage and protection priorities, firefighter facilities such as dry-risers and firefighter lifts etc.
- Take every opportunity to use construction materials and methods with good passive fire performance that will both limit fire spread and ensure the integrity of the building for those attempting to manage the fire.
- Deploy high integrity alarm systems that will invoke a response from FRS (you will need to engage with your Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) and FRS).
- Make available, maintain, and train personnel in the use of 1st aid firefighting systems such as centre-fed hose-reels and extinguishers designed for the risks appropriate to their location.
- Use 3rd party approved products and services and have rigorous maintenance regimes in place to ensure the ongoing viability of installed protection measures.

