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# Managing Community Risk at Wiltshire Fire - An Integrated Approach

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# Managing Community Risk at Wiltshire Fire - An Integrated Approach

Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service have implemented Innogistic's Community Fire Risk Management Information System (CFRMIS) as a corporate solution for managing their community safety data and operations. In this case study Julian Parsons (Wiltshire F&RS) and Daniel Ormsby (Innogistic), take a look at some of the benefits of an integrated approach to managing community risk

In 2005 Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service (WF&RS) Community Safety Department identified the need for a new approach for its use of community safety based information.

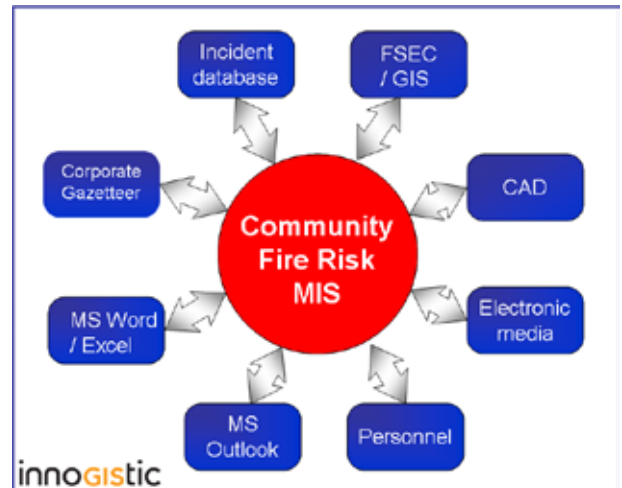
The Modernisation agenda presents a number of challenges to community safety,

- A new duty to provide community safety education required by section 6 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.
- Challenges to reduce accidental and deliberate fires through Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP) as outlined in the National Framework Document.
- Expectations on the Enforcement of the new Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2003 (FSO).
- The development of the Fire Services Emergency Cover Model (FSEC)

All these activities would form part of the Service's IRMP and would have to be effectively risk managed.

WF&RS Community Safety Department decided a management information solution was needed for these activities that was a lot more than just a filing system for premises. All the various community safety and other relevant service activities would need to be integrated in order to provide effective use of resources to recognise and manage the risks presented in the community.

Various Management Information Systems were examined and the decision was made to pilot the Community Fire Risk Management Information System (CFRMIS) developed by Innogistic Software. Innogistic are an independently owned British software company, based in Bristol, who supply IT solutions to the Emergency



Services, Local Authorities, Utility Companies and other public and private sector organisations. At the time of writing 17 Fire and Rescue Services are using CFRMIS operationally to manage their fire safety operations. The company has also successfully won a regional contract to supply CFRMIS to the remaining Fire and Rescue Services (F&RS) in the South West.

CFRMIS has the ability to fully interact with WF&RS technical and non-technical Fire Safety activities with existing tools, such as the incident database, mapping software and gazetteers. CFRMIS also brought new tools to provide a fully integrated solution. This would allow for streamlining of some business processes while at the same time providing the ability to improve targeting of resources based on risk.

## Business Process Changes

One of the main process changes derives from the commencement of the FSO on 1st October 2006. With the new legislation comes a new self-regulatory approach with the removal of fire certification and the broadening of the type of premises for which FRS have an enforcement role. Fire Certification was an activity which had been a heavy burden on Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) and dictated the scope of premises on which FRS had to concentrate their resources for providing certificates and monitoring the adherence to prescriptive conditions. The FSO means that FRS now have to take a much more risk based approach to standards monitoring through an audit based programme, designed to look at premises based on risk. CFRMIS allows the categorisation of premises based on a nationally recognised risk matrix, which takes into account many factors including empirical evidence.





The carrying out of an audit of premises scores a current risk rating which when fed into the matrix then determines the risk level and accordingly when the premises should be revisited. The revisit then can be used to re-score the premises based on remedial activities required to comply with the FSO. This new rating can then be fed into CFRMIS and a new schedule for revisiting can be determined. Adopting this process, the level of risk, based on FSO compliance of the building stock, can be reduced.

Importantly the results of the Auditing activities are fed straight into the FSEC database in real time, allowing for a current overview of Other Buildings risks, to be available.

Other such business changes delivered through CFRMIS is the delivery of an organised system of dealing with multi-occupied premises through a system of parent and child recording. Also CFRMIS has a site facility, which can be used for recording premises that share a campus or large industrial site. Both these functions are supported by mapping and gazetteer facilities, which allow ease of access to locating files and prevent file duplication and resulting risk duplication which can potentially cause bias in FSEC.

The process of administering the results of an Audit is also streamlined by CFRMIS. Using a nationally recognised Audit form, the results of an Audit are collected in the form of a quantified risk assessment based on the level of compliance found from each Article of the FSO. From this a level of enforcement is recommended and the

appropriate letter can be generated by CFRMIS and standard paragraphs applied dependent on the articles which are not complied with. This subsequent letter and audit form can then be saved into CFRMIS as a record against the premises subjected to audit. Inspecting officers are also able to input their time spent on the Audit, or other non-direct fire safety time, as and when accrued. This prevents the need for paper records of time and future administrative time in inputting the records into a database. Such real time recording also allows for very current reporting for performance management.

CFRMIS has proven to be particularly useful in assisting in the targeting of WF&RS Home Fire Safety Check (HFSC) programme, being carried out to reduce the number of accidental dwelling fires. Through various tools WF&RS has been able to identify geographic area and socio-economic groups who have the highest incidence of accidental dwelling fires. Through the mapping facility within CFRMIS it is possible to look at geographical areas of concern to monitor the amount of HFSC activity and search for gaps. In fact it is possible to quickly identify individual streets that may have been missed. Before carrying out work in these areas it is possible to directly view the incidence of fires in that specific area, as CFRMIS has a live link with incident database. Through these various tools managers are able to allocate resources based on evidenced risk.

Part of WF&RS Community Safety Department needs was to improve performance management, monitoring and provide a way of identifying resource requirements against risk. CFRMIS is an extremely powerful reporting tool, with the ability to provide reports on a whole range of matters by activity type or by personnel. This allows for careful monitoring of the use of resources against areas of risk.

In addition to reporting, CFRMIS has a powerful forecasting tool, which provides accurate estimates of future workloads based on a projecting forward the current inspection strategy. The forecast which bases its predictions on actual inspection times recorded for previous audits, allows WF&RS to assess whether it has sufficient resources to deliver the current inspection strategy, to identify any peaks in inspections, and if necessary adjust re-inspection frequencies accordingly. The forecaster can model workloads on a brigade wide basis, or down to individual stations, and is another tool which helps WF&RS ensure that its resources are effectively targeted.

#### Lessons learnt

The introduction of any new IT system often presents considerable challenges, ironically few of which tend to be technical. A successful IT roll-out requires 'buy-in' from across the service – from senior management, the IT department, end users, and project managers - all working together to a common goal. New business processes may need to be introduced, and teams re-trained. Finally the roll-out is likely to be conducted in the context of 'business as usual'.





Ensuring the continuity of day to day operations, can present challenges in finding the adequate resources to introduce a new solution.

Unfortunately for many of these reasons, we too often hear of IT projects in the public sector running late or over-

budget, and some which never even see the light of day. However, with both WF&RS, and Innogistic Software, concluding the roll-out of CFRMIS at WF&RS to be a great success, the following lessons can be learnt:

- First and foremost, an open and honest dialogue between the fire and rescue service and the supplier is key. A project will undoubtedly have a more successful outcome if both parties are working together in partnership towards a common goal. A relationship based on a battle of wills between the F&RS ‘quoting the contract’, and the supplier charging for the most minor deviation from it, is unlikely to engender a spirit of trust, which is essential to achieve a successful outcome.
- Secondly, it is essential that the project is adequately resourced by both parties, and that the continuity of personnel throughout the duration of the project roll-out is maintained. At WF&RS a new dedicated system administration post was created prior to project rollout. The specific responsibilities of this post were to manage and co-ordinate the day to day tasks at WF&RS to migrate from the legacy system to CFRMIS, covering areas such as data migration, training, testing and system configuration. Following go-live the post has been maintained to ensure the continued smooth running of the system. A dedicated project manager was also in place at the supplier end who liaised with WF&RS on all matters throughout the project roll-out
- Thirdly, it is essential that the project team at the F&RS represents all the necessary stakeholders. At WF&RS the project team was headed up by an Area Manager for CFS, with participants on the team from CFS and TFS management, performance management, IT, administration, and the FSEC team, thereby ensuring that all necessary parties were represented. In addition, prior to project roll-out, the system was demonstrated to a large audience of inspecting officers and administration support staff, which ensured that the main body of end users felt a sense of inclusion at the outset, and recognised the benefits that the system would bring on the completion of roll-out.
- Finally, preparation prior to starting the project roll-out was key. All members in the WF&RS project team were fully trained up in the CFRMIS system, prior to the commencement of its roll-out. This ensured that

the team had a common vision, and had a common understanding of how information from the legacy system should be migrated across into CFRMIS.

**Futures**

With the successful roll-out of CFRMIS at WF&RS complete and the first 6 months of operational use already delivering significant benefits, what does the future hold?

One of the most significant changes to be introduced is a Mobile Working initiative. WF&RS, along with 9 other F&RS’s are working in partnership with Innogistic to develop a mobile solution which will eliminate the need for paper based processes, improving the efficiency of both Technical and Community Fire Safety activities.

The CFRMIS Mobile application will allow fire safety officers to download their scheduled jobs onto a Tablet PC, and on completion of an electronic Fire Safety Audit form at the inspection site, thereafter automatically synchronise the data with the master CFRMIS database at WF&RS’s hosting centre. A similar solution, but adopting a personal digital assistant (PDA) for completion of Home Fire Safety Checks has also been developed for Community Fire Safety activities. The adoption of a mobile solution will eliminate the need for re-keying data captured on paper, and ensure that the central CFRMIS database is up to date with the very latest known information. The Mobile Solution is being rolled-out for pilot testing in the latter half of 2006, with a view to operational use from 2007 onwards.



In addition to Mobile Working, another significant development in electronic working is e-Fire. The CFRMIS application integrates to the e-Fire portal using platinum level integration, such that requests for F&RS services (e.g. HFSC’s), entered into the portal, are automatically synchronised with CFRMIS. The integration mechanisms are already in place, and once the transactional element of the e-fire portal has itself gone live, the combination of e-Fire and Mobile Working initiatives will result in an end to end electronic solution, from service request through to fulfilment.

**Conclusions**

Through developing a close working partnership WF&RS and Innogistic Software have been able to install a Management Information System that meets needs of the Community Safety Department in a timely and cost effective manner.

Although CFRMIS has only been “live” for six months, the system is already delivering benefits in improved business practices and as a result facilitates WF&RS in targeting its



resources in the most effective manner. Currently, WF&RS is carrying out a review of progress since implementation and planning the expansion of the use of CFRMIS across the service to deliver Community Safety, gathering of intelligence for risk management and its ability to act as the hub for integrating information.

WF&RS and Innogistic continue to work closely on system developments to meet the changing needs of IRMP and expectations of central government in the reporting of Community Safety activities.

## Innovative IT for a joined up world



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