Emergency Response Planning with Fire and Rescue Services

Effective emergency response planning can significantly reduce the impact of unexpected incidents.

This document outlines the advantages of working closely with the Fire and Rescue Service when preparing for such events and provides guidance on producing and implementing this liaison with Emergency Response Plans.

Version: 1.1
Date: 27th February 2026

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Introduction

Effective emergency response planning is essential in minimising the consequences of unexpected incidents, such as fire, and flood , etc., reducing the scale of property damage, business interruption and impacts to environmental and sustainability goals.

A key component of this planning is building strong, proactive relationships with the local Fire and Rescue Services (FRS). Such engagement can help ensure that both the organisation and the responding crews understand the site, the fire engineering and building design, its risks, and the measures in place to control them. This can help improve preparedness and support a coordinated and efficient response should an emergency occur.

This Loss Prevention Standard discusses the main considerations and provides useful guidance on FRS liaison and associated emergency response planning. It encourages building owners and occupiers to provide, and maintain, up-to-date information at the point of use. Undertaking such response planning can support and strengthen risk assessment procedures.

Note: This Loss Prevention Standard relates to FRS liaison and is focussed on asset loss prevention and related risk management guidance, it does not include private or occupational structural firefighting teams. It is also not intended to address casualty exposures. The presumption is that all regulatory requirements, such as fire risk assessments and compliance with local building regulations, codes, or standards, have or will be met.

Note: FRS in other territories can equate to the fire brigade, fire department, fire service or other similar named public provided emergency services.

Understanding the Risks

The potential risks associated with poor or absent emergency planning include but are not limited to:

- **Risk Assessment.** Unknown site hazards can delay FRS response whilst risks are assessed.
- **Site Access.** Inadequate or blocked site access can delay FRS response.
- **Response Equipment.** Any necessary specialist equipment can be requested at the onset of the event or in some cases obtained by the site on FRS advice, avoiding delays.

- **Fire Systems**. Delays due to unfamiliarity with any complex firefighting facilities and/or controlling equipment, e.g., sprinkler controls, private water supplies, hydrant locations, alarm systems, site drainage systems, etc.
- **Site Information**. Outdated site information can result in poor operational decisions
- **Environmental Damage**. Emergency events create environmental impacts including contamination and waste clearance. Risk assessment during the event can create delays whilst containment requirements are assessed and implemented.

Familiarisation Visits

Many FRS crews are amenable to undertaking site familiarisation visits; indeed, this is supported by the **Fire and Rescue Services Act** in the United Kingdom, particularly where:

- The Premises present significant or unusual risks, such as those found in sites with large or complex buildings or hazardous activities.
- Non-typical fire safety equipment is installed, such as private water supplies, fire protection or active smoke control systems, riser systems, etc.
- Operational intelligence needs updating, possibly due to changes in the premises, hazards or to satisfy management objectives.
- The premises request a visit for safety planning. For instance, in the United Kingdom, premises that are classified under the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations, and which store, use, or process significant quantities of hazardous substances, e.g., chemicals, fuels, gases, explosives, etc. will often require or recommend liaison and familiarisation inspections are undertaken to ensure emergency planning arrangements are understood by all stakeholders and sufficient.

Local FRS crews are however often prepared to visit premises and property in their jurisdictional areas that do not meet the above criteria but where unusual hazards, site features, historic property and artefacts, environmental challenges, fire safety aspects, etc., are present that may benefit from evaluation and familiarisation.

The FRS visit will typically include a tour of the site to evaluate:

- Premises layout and access routes for FRS appliances.
- Positioning and suitability of key fire safety equipment, such as private and public water supplies and hydrants, sprinkler pumphouses or valve locations, fire alarm systems and detection equipment, other detection and protection equipment, smoke and heat venting, wet and dry risers, firefighting lifts, isolation controls, etc.
- Identification of key hazards such as fuel tanks, gas cylinders, oxidising agents, explosive materials, suitability of signage, etc.
- Other unusual site features, for instance large stockholding of combustible materials or toxic substances, solar photovoltaic (PV) systems, significant lithium-ion battery related exposures, etc.
- Evacuation routes, assembly points and procedures for evacuating people who may require assistance during evacuations.
- Vulnerable environmental features, such as canals, watercourses, protected land, etc., and the anticipated containment arrangements for firefighting water runoff.
- Exposures to and from the premises.
- Occupation of the building.
- Who the responsible person is and relevant contact details.
- Redundant firefighting equipment.

In addition, key documents may be requested which can be shared with the FRS for operational readiness. Key documents can include, but are not limited to:

- Current fire and flood risk assessments and progress reports on any remedial actions.
- Detailed building layout plans showing layout, design and construction materials.
- Detection and protection systems, including smoke control systems - layout and control points.
- Hazard and risk information including combustible/flammable stocks and materials.
- Details of the surface water and other drainage systems.
- Isolation controls for gas, electricity, water, drainage, solar PV systems, etc.
- Water supplies and hydrant locations.
- Access and evacuation points.
- Security codes, etc.
- Rendezvous points for all emergency services to meet and coordinate activity.

Note: A FRS familiarisation visit should not be confused with a Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (RRO) audit or enforcement visit in the United Kingdom. They are very different. FRS familiarisation visits are completed following invitation by site management and is completed by local operational FRS crews. A familiarisation visit is an opportunity for the local FRS crew to learn about the 'premises', and for the 'premises' to learn about and from the FRS crew.

For further guidance on the RRO please refer to the Aviva Loss Prevention Standard **Fire Safety Legislation – United Kingdom** for further guidance.

Important: Other regulations, standards or codes will apply in other territories. It is your responsibility to satisfy these local jurisdictional needs.

Important: As an incident can occur any time of the day or night, extend the invitation for a familiarisation visit to all local FRS crews and all shifts.

Emergency Response Planning

Effective emergency response planning can assist with the management of unexpected events or incidents, enabling prompt firefighting deployment by the attending FRS crews. Key considerations for FRS-related emergency response planning include:

Emergency Response Teams

Appoint a dedicated Emergency Response Team (ERT) to help manage emergency events, and ensure key responsibilities are allocated and appropriate training provided. ERT duties include, but are not limited to:

- Manage small events where emergency services are not required to attend, e.g., localised flooding, low hazard chemical spills or emissions, etc.
- Manage evacuation of occupants and conduct roll calls.
- Commence site preparation for attending emergency services, e.g., clear access routes, remove any obstacles that may impede firefighting efforts.
- Establish command rooms and provide necessary equipment.
- Supervise sprinkler pumphouse operations, ensuring systems function normally.
- Support the FRS upon their arrival and during deployment with site information that can assist firefighting deployment.

Refer to the Aviva Loss Prevention Standard **Emergency Response Teams** for further guidance.

Emergency Grab Bags

The ERT, or any other person appointed to attend emergency events, should have access to pre-packed 'emergency grab bags' containing useful information and equipment.

Emergency grab bags, which should be suitably robust and weatherproofed, can include, but not be limited to:

- Laminated site plans, showing locations of:
  - ✓ Key buildings with details of the occupancy/contents.
  - ✓ Hazardous materials and any associated isolation points.
  - ✓ Utility and drainage arrangements including any isolation points, etc.
- Evacuation plans.
- Essential contact information including Business Continuity incident management teams, insurance contacts, e.g., insurers and brokers, etc.
- Communication equipment and spare batteries, chargers.
- Writing equipment, e.g., pens, pencils, pads, etc.
- Health and Safety equipment such as PPE, hand wipes/sanitisers, first aid equipment, foil blankets, torches, glow sticks, emergency food and water.
- Keys and codes.
- Other important documents, such as permits, hazard locations and details.

Emergency grab bags should be checked at least monthly to ensure all required contents are present.

Premises Information Boxes

Essential site information should be available for the FRS upon attending the site, particularly if a familiarisation visit has not previously been undertaken. Premises Information Boxes (PIBs) or Secured Information boxes (SIBs) provide a secured means of storing relevant premises information to enable prompt firefighting deployment by the FRS.

PIBs/SIBs should be clearly identified and located in an accessible and prominent location, typically building reception areas. Multiple PIBs/SIBs may be required for large buildings with numerous entrance routes. If located externally, PIBs/SIBs should be in a sheltered and illuminated location.

Ideally PIBs/SIBs should have a lock that can be opened using a standard FRS 'Gerda' key. It is recommended that the door is spring-loaded to ensure it remains openable even if the handle has been vandalised. The key used should be the standard issue FRS Gerda key, which is registered to prevent unauthorised copying.

Location details can be shared with the FRS for storage on mobile data terminals.

Note: PIBs/SIBs are mandatory for some high-rise building types in England and Northern Ireland as specified in the Fire Safety (England) Regulations and Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) guidance.

PIBs/SIBs should contain:

- **Building Plans**. Two sets of building and site plans including:
  - ✓ A3 sized area plans (laminated if possible) including highlighting the site buildings, surrounding buildings, hydrants, open water, fuel tanks, etc.
  - ✓ A3 sized buildings block plans (laminated if possible) for all floors showing compartment boundaries.
  - ✓ Utility isolation points including solar PV systems.
  - ✓ Site drainage systems and shut off valves.

- ✓ Details of any combustible claddings or building materials.
- ✓ Fire alarm panel(s).
- ✓ Details of any firefighting lifts and shafts, wet and dry risers.
- ✓ Hazards such as flammable or combustible materials, oxidising agents, reactive chemicals, pressurised systems, etc.

- **Keys/Codes**. Clearly labelled access Keys and codes for external and internal doors including roofing, wet and dry riser inlets, plant rooms and cupboards, lifts, etc.
- **Contact Information**. Details of relevant persons such as site managers, facilities managers, ERTs, etc.
- **Other**. Any other issues or site information that might be helpful and relevant operating instructions, simplified for use in an emergency event.

PIBs/SIBs should be maintained and kept up to date. An inspection should be undertaken at least monthly to check for damage, missing documents, etc. A formal review of the contents should be undertaken after any relevant change to the premises or trade activities, key personnel, etc., at a minimum of six-monthly intervals.

Ensure any changes that might impede access, such as security codes are notified to the FRS, and that keys still work (locks may have been changed).

Command Areas

Identifying areas, e.g., car parking or other hand standing, that can be made available as command areas to the FRS can help with the prompt deployment of FRS resource and incident management. Emergency events can occur in any location therefore a number of potential command area options, as directed by the FRS, should be available across the premises.

In addition, the PIB/SIB contents should be transferred to the agreed location if requested by the attending FRS.

Note: Command centres are also a critical component of the on-site emergency response and business continuity incident management. These are typically run alongside rather than within the FRS command centre, however, guidance should be sought from the FRS, e.g., during familiarisation visits or other direct contact.

Contaminated Water Containment

UK FRSs are required to follow national environmental protection practices to prevent or reduce pollution during emergency incidents, typically via the use of temporary containment devices such as portable bunds, drain covers, portable tanks and pumps.

Businesses and organisations have their own responsibilities to both limit contamination of land and watercourse and aid the FRS in the containment of contaminated water in an emergency event by:

- Risk assessing the contamination risks at the premises, including those associated with emergency events.
- Installing appropriate containment systems, such as drain interceptors, bunding and containment walls around tanks and silos holding potential contaminants such as fuel, liquids, chemicals, etc.
- Creating lagoons, holding tanks or other sacrificial areas that can be used to contain water runoff.

- Providing access to shut off valves or persons trained in the operation of shut off valves, should be provided to the attending FRS along with site plans highlighting all surface and full water drains, interceptors and sensitive areas in proximity to the site, e.g., designated protected areas, etc.

Organisations should also ensure suitable pollution control equipment is located at the premises such as spill kits, drain covers, absorbent booms, portable bunding materials, pumps, etc. Guidance can be sought from the FRS during familiarisation visits or other direct contact.

Important: Some premises using/storing hazardous materials, such as COMAH designated sites in the United Kingdom, have specific duties for the containment of contaminated run off water.

Refer to the Aviva Loss Prevention Standard **Preventing Pollution from Fire Fighting Run-Off** for further guidance.

Vehicle Access

Depending on the size of the premises, people exposed and hazards present, an emergency event will result in FRS crews, ambulances, police cars, etc., attending the site and adequate vehicular access and hardstanding to external areas of the buildings are critical.

Whilst ensuring adequate means of access for emergency vehicles is considered within building regulations and codes across the United Kingdom Member Nations, changes to the buildings, amenities and occupancy can often result in access routes becoming blocked or less accessible. Ensure:

- Vehicular access for emergency vehicles is addressed within risk assessments and clear rules and protocols issued to occupants and enforced.
- The use of road markings and warning signage should be considered to prevent persons unfamiliar with the site parking in unsuitable areas.
- Guidance can be sought from the FRS during familiarisation visits or other direct contact.

Roof Mounted Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Systems

Fires involving roof mounted solar PV systems are not uncommon and present firefighting challenges, particularly during daytime emergency events where the solar modules, or panels as they are otherwise known, are continuing to produce energy and firefighters exposed to electrocution hazards.

Solar PV installations fitted with Module-Level Power Electronics (MLPEs) such as optimisers or micro-inverters, can be safely isolated by the ERT or FRS and help prevent delays to firefighting deployment.

Refer to the Aviva Loss Prevention Standard **Roof Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Systems -Planning and Design** for further guidance.

Salvage Planning

Salvage planning allows organisations to prepare an organised response to emergency events. Considerations include but are not limited to:

- Complete a salvage risk assessment identifying critical equipment, stock or other materials to prioritise for removal by the FRS, or salvage teams.
- Assemble a salvage team and allocating roles including FRS liaison.
  - ✓ Ensure suitable training is provided to the salvage team, including training exercises.
  - ✓ Discuss with your insurer and/or insurance broker and claims teams as to whether they have salvage guidance to support a consistent and joined up view between all parties.
- Relocate critical items to lower risk and/or more accessible locations. This can help speed up salvage operations.
- Include location plans and details of any equipment/items with unusual weights and dimensions in PIBs/SIBs.
- Identify suitable locations to temporarily store salvaged items. Ensure any temporary structures are suited to the 'worst-case' weather conditions in the locality.
- Procure any necessary equipment such as covers, storage boxes, packing cases, cleaning materials, stillages (at least 150mm stillages are recommended where there is a risk of damage to items caused by wet/contaminated ground or floor conditions), personal protective equipment, etc.
- Produce formal procedures for cleaning, applying covers, inspection and testing arrangements.

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For more information please visit: Aviva Risk Management Solutions – Specialist Partners

Sources and Useful Links

- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-england-regulations-2022/fact-sheet-secure-information-box-regulation-4
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Fire (Scotland) Act 2005
- Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006
- Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006
- Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010
- https://nfcc.org.uk/our-services/building-safety/fire-safety-england-regulations-2022/faqs/
- HSE Guidance L111 A guide to the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations (COMAH)

Note: Whilst UK standards and legislation are referenced in this document, other international standards and legislation should be referenced where applicable.

Additional Information

Relevant Aviva Loss Prevention Standards include:

- **Roof Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Systems -Planning and Design**
- **Preventing Pollution from Fire Fighting Run-Off**
- **Emergency Response Teams**
- **Fire Safety Legislation - United Kingdom**
- **Flood Guidance and Mitigation (Global)**
- **Flood Guidance and Mitigation (UK)**

To find out more, please visit Aviva Risk Management Solutions **or speak to one of our advisors.**

Email us at riskadvice@aviva.com or call 0345 366 6666.*

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27th February 2026

Version 1.1

ARMSGI3772026

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