



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority  
**MAKING YOU SAFER**  
PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING  
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# **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE & MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY**

## **PROTECTION STRATEGY 2014/15 TO 2019/20**

# **PROTECTION STRATEGY**

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## **Our Vision**

**That Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes are the safest areas in England in which to live, work and travel.**

To achieve this vision we will engage in activities and partnerships that will contribute to community well-being and promote better levels of safety by:

**Prevention** - Providing education on how to prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies.

**Protection** - Enforcing, advocating and campaigning for high standards of safety.

**Response** - Where risk levels remain intolerable, despite our efforts to educate, engineer and eliminate them, providing appropriate high quality response services.

Our Protection Strategy directly underpins our Service's Corporate Plan. It provides a clear plan, for our own staff, our partners and the community to show how we are contributing towards making the communities we serve safer.

The Fire and Rescue Service has a role to fulfil across a broad safety agenda. This requires us to continually improve our prevention, protection, intervention and education activities; making them appropriate, meaningful and accessible to our diverse community.

We will help people take responsibility for their own safety, identify risks and put effective control measures in place to prevent any potential harm, loss or damage.

This strategy has been written to reflect CFOA's over-arching Protection publications and provides strategic guidance for the Service over the next two years. This is reflected in the Service's Protection Strategic Aim and Priorities:

## **AIM**

"We will ensure that our public buildings and workplaces are protected from risk of fire by promoting ways of making all types of property safer, proactively targeting premises most at risk, and where necessary enforcing fire safety legislation."

## **PRIORITIES**

1. To support and maintain a risk based inspection programme to enforce fire safety legislation, targeting premises that pose the greatest risk to life.
2. To provide education and advice to promote a better understanding of how fire protection measures can reduce the impact of fire on life safety, the environment and economy.
3. To promote the use of fire suppression systems, sprinklers and fixed installations in non-domestic properties to reduce the risk to life, property, the economy and environment from fire.

Our Protection Strategy outlines the key areas of focus that Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service will undertake in the period between April 2014 and March 2017. It brings together our overarching ethos of engagement, education and supporting business to achieve compliance with fire safety law whilst also demonstrating a consistent approach to providing advice, enforcement and sanctions; supporting economic and business growth. It also expands on our Protection policy statement:

*"The principal aim of the Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority (hereafter known as 'The Authority') is to make Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes the safest places in England to live, work and travel. Securing compliance with regulatory fire safety requirements is an important part of achieving this aim.*

*The Authority is required under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (hereafter known as 'The Order') to enforce the provisions of the Order and any regulations made under it, in relation to premises for which it is the enforcing Authority. In performing this duty, the Authority must have regard to such guidance as the Secretary of State may give it.*

*In accordance with such guidance provided by the Secretary of State, and other statutory and non-statutory codes, such as the Regulators' Code, it is the Authority's policy to help and encourage regulated entities to understand and meet regulatory requirements more easily and respond proportionately to regulatory breaches."*

There is a strong link between our Prevention and Protection methodologies. We will use accurate, informed data to ensure that we target our resources effectively. We will educate and support business in fire safety compliance and business continuity. We will therefore contribute to improving the safety, competitiveness, and prosperity of businesses in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes by:

- Improving our understanding of the workplace risks.
- Effectively engaging with the business community to assist in developing their understanding of how to ensure the safety and prosperity of their organisations.
- Promoting growth and healthier lifestyles through better regulation and increasing awareness of the responsibilities in the Order.
- Educating on the benefits of having robust business continuity plans and arrangements.
- Applying lessons learnt from fire investigations.
- Working with the business community to help reduce the impact of unwanted fire alarms.
- Lobbying for greater use of sprinklers in business and commercial premises.

Our vision is to achieve safer business and community sectors where preventable fire deaths or injuries in fires and fire losses are reduced to all-time minimal levels. We will also provide businesses with consistent and common advice, information and enforcement practices.

We will enhance firefighter safety and sound operational decision-making through the use of training and information exchange between Protection officers and Response departments, focussing on the built environment.

Our Protection Training Strategy document will evolve to reflect national guidance whilst satisfying local need, providing a framework of qualifications and competence for inspecting officers and Protection managers. This will assist in having the appropriate skills to ensure that we promote consistency and

common approach of the legislation by delivering clear processes, effective development of staff and up to date guidance to inspecting officers and Protection managers.

This consistency will be enhanced by our involvement in Primary Partnership Authority Schemes, with our overall aim to target our protection activities consistently and professionally in support of the economic needs of local and national business.

## **1. Periodic Audit Programme.**

The current audit process uses a well-established "high risk" based programme.

The FRS National Framework Document directs FRAs to:

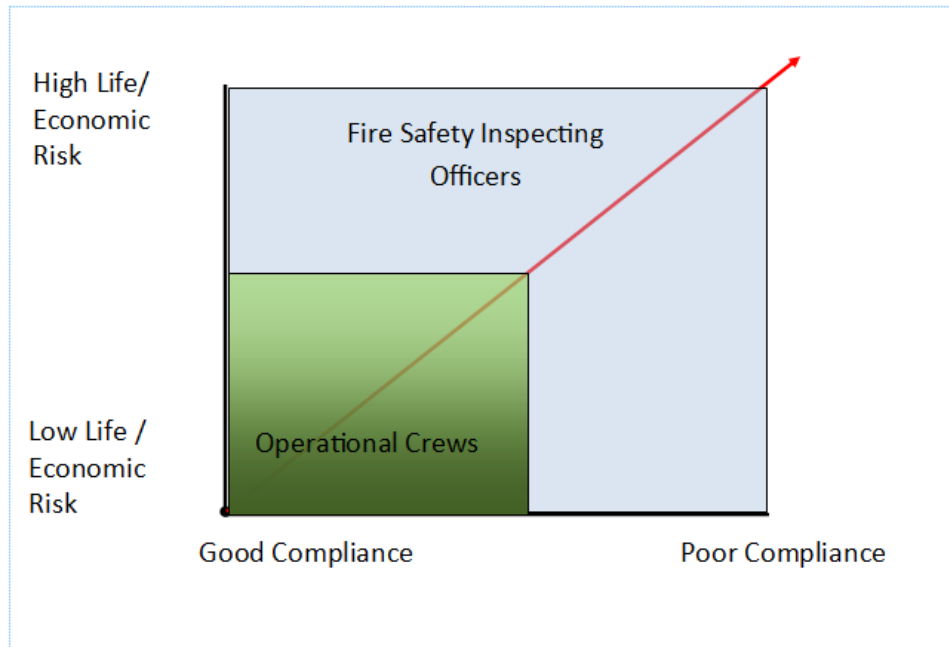
"Set out its management strategy and risk- based programme for enforcing the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in accordance with the principles of better regulation set out in the Statutory Code of Compliance for Regulators."

The Statutory Regulators' Code is a central part of the Government's 'Better Regulation Agenda'. Its aim is to embed a risk-based, proportionate and targeted approach to regulatory inspection and enforcement among regulators and seeks to ensure that the enforcement of regulation does not unnecessarily inhibit economic progress. It comprises five principles, one of which is risk assessment, stating:

"Regulators should take an evidence- based approach to determining the priority risks in their area of responsibility, and should allocate resources where they would be most effective in addressing those priority risks."

There is a need to focus Protection audits on the most vulnerable premises. This would focus on risk to life, premises with historically poor compliance and premises with a greater risk of high economic, social value and historic value loss. Use of a risk profiling model will enable BMKFRS to make an intelligence- led decision on where the key areas of activity should be. This will assist us in identifying those businesses that are less likely to comply with legislation and more likely to have a severe fire that will have a greater impact on business and the local community. Once identified, these premises would receive support and education on risk assessment awareness and business continuity. They would also receive information on common causes of fire in these types of premises. Additionally operational site specific risk information will be updated.

This will be achieved by a closer relationship between Protection and Response personnel and by the use of integrated Management Information Systems, sharing this data.



## 2. Firefighter Safety and Sound Operational Decision- Making.

Protection activities can significantly improve firefighter safety in three ways.

Firstly, Protection activity will reduce the future risk to firefighters by supporting fire risk management. This will reduce the number of fires and their severity, exposing firefighters to fewer, smaller fires. Fewer fires and early fire extinguishment will allow premises to return to business sooner, promoting economic growth.

Secondly, educating firefighters about building construction, specially provided firefighting facilities, access facilities and water supplies will enable them to plan an effective firefighting strategy using this essential knowledge.

Thirdly, by liaising closely with firefighters on site specific risk assessment of buildings, Protection can improve firefighter's risk assessment skills in relation to building hazards and inherent control measures. This would further enhance a consistent approach to the gathering of Site Specific Risk information and will subsequently improve awareness of the significant hazards, enabling better informed command decisions based on an understanding of risk.

We will utilise Management Information Systems which join both risk data from Protection activity with accessible risk information of the build environment for operational personnel to achieve cross-cutting information exchange.

### **3. Automatic Fire Detection (AFD) and Unwanted Fire Signals (UFS).**

BMKFRS continues to lead nationally on FRS process and procedures to reduce the occurrence of false alarms and unwanted fire signals. We will continue to work with business and Alarm Receiving Centres (ARCs) to progress our aim of supporting business and reducing the burden on our response resources. Businesses understandably want to know when a real fire has started and for a message to be sent so that BMKFRS resources make an attendance. This avoids risk to life, reduces fire damage and supports business continuity and growth. Working closely with fire alarm engineers at the development and planning stage, business owners and ARCs, we aim to achieve a greater consistency to call reductions. In so doing businesses will be free to grow without disruption and cost from UFS and escalating incidents.

### **4. Training Framework**

In order to achieve our desire to provide business with consistent advice, information and enforcement, it is imperative that our Protection managers and inspecting officers work to a nationally recognised standard. This provides business with assurance that we are applying legislation consistently across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. This recognised standard supports business growth and ensures that all activities undertaken by inspecting officers will have due consideration on compliance, enforcement and economic growth.

We will continue to ensure that personnel engaged in protection activities on behalf of the Service are qualified in line with our Protection training and development template, which will be continually monitored to ensure that it reflects nationally recognised qualifications and skills.

### **5. Primary Authority Scheme/ Consistency and Common application of Legislation.**

BMKFRS can support a consistent approach to fire safety legislation and support business through the Primary Authority Scheme (PAS). PAS is a statutory scheme available to businesses with a presence in more than one local authority area. A business can enter into a legal partnership with a single local authority to secure greater coordination of regulatory and enforcement activities. It applies to a range of regulations, including the Order.

The advantages to business include: consistency of interpretation of Fire Safety regulations, better intelligence, advice and guidance, and access to specialist advice about Fire Safety. This in turn saves time and money whilst also ensuring compliance and supports economic growth and business continuity.

The advantages to BMKFRS include: more productive relationships with business, wider input into the safety agenda, quicker enforcement actions and enhancement of compliance across the relevant industries.

This scheme not only assists with a less punitive approach towards fire safety compliance but also provides the opportunity for BMKFRS to expand its Protection knowledge within the Service.

A full business case setting out detailed costs including full charging of overheads and recovery schedule (income) will be set out for each MOU.

## **6. Business Engagement**

With a move to an enhanced advisory and educational role of the Service, we will deliver advice in the workplace and target the business community with initiatives which provide information on fire safety, arson prevention and sprinkler systems, in addition to our work on AFDs and UFS.

The overarching aim of our engagement with businesses is to make our communities safer, healthier and more prosperous environments for individual citizens, businesses and their employees across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. We will achieve this by promoting best practice across business sectors, provide advice and guidance to businesses on fire safety and listen and understand the challenges and barriers that businesses face to achieve compliance.

This strategy document is supported by Service policy, procedures, guidance and information notes. **The index for these is located: N/common/Standard Forms/Templates/SD Index/Prevention & Protection**



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