



Essex County
Fire & Rescue Service

Business Engagement Strategy 2023 – 2024

Working with businesses in Essex

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Introduction

At Essex County Fire & Rescue Service (ECFRS) we are committed to working with businesses across Essex in a proactive way. ECFRS will work with business owners to educate them in the requirements under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, referred to within this document as The Order, to keep their businesses compliant and as safe as possible.

Scope

The regulated premises include all buildings used for a commercial purpose, or for public use, as well as the areas within residential buildings which are shared by more than one household.

In November 2022 there were approximately 82,000 premises within Essex that fall in scope of The Order.

The Business Engagement Strategy is one strand of the work carried out by the Protection Department, with most of the work being carried out by the Protection Department's Business Engagement Team (BET).

Definitions

ECFRS	Essex County Fire & Rescue Service
BET	The Business Engagement Team, within the ECFRS Protection Department
(the) Authority	The Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (EPFCC). The body with a statutory duty to enforce the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRFSO). (Also the Enforcing Authority).
CFRMIS	Management information system used by ECFRS Protection Department.
Responsible Person	The person who has control, or a degree of control, over a building.
SDP's	Service Delivery Points – where the Inspecting/ Auditing Officers are based
Dwelling	A domestic premises as defined in Article 2 of the RRFSO.
Harm	The adverse impact on life safety of relevant persons.
Likelihood	The relative probability that an event will occur based upon local historical data from the preceding three years.
Risk	A combination of likelihood and severity; the likelihood that a fire will actually cause harm, together with a measure of effect.
Risk based inspection programme	A strategy that sits within the Protection Department that categorises commercial properties based on their risk.
Severity	A value representing the potential maximum harm in the event of a fire.

Business Engagement Strategy

The ECFRS Risk Based Inspection Programme identifies those premises which will be subject to a pre-planned visit by ECFRS personnel in order to check compliance with the requirements of The Order. With over 82,000 properties that currently fall within the scope of this work within Essex (as of Nov 2022), it is recognised that attending all these properties to carry out audits or inspections is unrealistic. This document outlines a strategy to engage with businesses in other ways to share information and educate on the legal responsibilities that sit with each business owner in a bid to drive up understanding and compliance with The Order and to make businesses safer.

This strategy also outlines the work the BET will do with Local Authorities (LA) and the plans in place to build these professional working relationships in 2023.

Thematic Inspections Programmes

From time to time, it is acknowledged that incidents or occurrences locally, nationally, or even internationally will raise awareness of issues that may have an impact on premises and therefore the safety of people within Essex.

In such circumstances, the BET may be redirected to support a thematic inspection programme in order to ensure that the risk in those premises is reduced to an acceptable level and to reassure the public.

Capturing Data

The Business Engagement Team will, at every opportunity, work with our Data and Performance Team to explore new ways to capture and record data on businesses across Essex. This data, where appropriate, will be used to direct resources, carry out pre planned events and inform the Service Delivery Points (SDP's) to help reduce the risk at commercial properties.

All activity carried out by the BET will be captured against within this document and displayed on the PowerBI dashboard.

As a newly formed area within Protection, this data will be reviewed to create realistic KPI's in the future, once the BET is fully resourced.

Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO)

HMO's fall under the Housing Act 2004. The Order only applies to the common shared areas (with the exception of serving a prohibition notice under Article 31(10)) of such premises. Therefore, unless above a commercial premises, the Local Housing Authority (LHA) should take the lead in auditing and enforcement activities in HMO's. There are plans to recruit a Housing Officer into the Protection Department in 2023 as part of our Business Engagement Team to work more closely with LHA's and develop clear MOU's.

Our Business Engagement Team will work closely with LHA's to sample audit the common areas of some HMO's less than 7 storeys high (less than 18m) based on our risk intelligence data. Where possible such audits will be carried out jointly with the LHA.

Communications/ Media Streams

The BET will work with the Campaigns and Partnership Manager to develop a Communication and Marketing Strategy to support with educating and informing business owners across Essex, and to support internal education on aspects of fire legislation that affect operational crews. This strategy will include consideration to the following media platforms:

- Social Media Platforms/ Campaigns – using both the ECFRS platforms and creating new platforms specifically for the Business Engagement Team, as a tool to educate and inform Responsible Persons (RP).
- Radio – The BET will be the default point of contact for all radio interviews relating to workplace safety across Essex. Following significant incidents, this will be co-ordinated by

- the Media Department to ensure a consistent message across all areas of the service.
- Magazines/ Newspaper – The BET will engage with Essex based business magazines and explore ways to educate and inform businesses of key information using these streams.
 - Online – The BET will work with the Campaigns and Partnership Manager to ensure the ECFRS website is kept up to date with all relevant information. They will review all public facing information on the website to ensure it remains relevant and that ECFRS is displaying all information it is required to.
 - Internal – The BET will work with the Campaigns and Partnership Manager to ensure the internal information on the Intranet is maintained and up to date. Internal awareness campaigns should also be developed using tools such as Workplace.

Business Safe and Well Visits (BS&WV)

The BET will carry out Business Safe and Well Visits. These are visits that are aimed at (but not limited to) the Medium and Low Risk Premises (as defined in the RBIP) as these are the properties that are less likely to be audited by our Inspecting Officers due to their risk profile.

The aim of these visits is to educate businesses on The Order, their responsibilities under The Order, and to carry out basic safety checks of the property, feeding back to the RP on any non-compliances found.

These visits will be carried out by members of the BET. A new role of a Fire Safety Advisor is currently being explored by the Protection Department to increase the capacity within the BET to support this initiative.

Impact Days

An Impact Day is a multiagency event organised by the BET but involving the Local Authority, partnership agencies and all areas of the Protection Department, to target a specific area for a day.

An Impact Day will look to target businesses of a certain type, most likely to fall within the High and Medium Risk category (dependant on the risk identified within the area) in the assigned area of the county, using audits as a way of educating and informing businesses of any non-compliances against The Order.

The main outcome will be to educate and inform, but enforcement activity will occur if a property is identified to be in serious breach of The Order.

Local Authorities will provide Housing and Environmental Officers to support these events and deliver their own messages in a collaborative approach to improving business safety.

Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS)

The Protection Departments BET will be responsible for monitoring UwFS for ECFRS.

The BET will monitor the data and respond to any premises that demonstrate an unacceptable level of UwFS. They will also use the data to work with businesses across Essex, educating them in ways to reduce the number of UwFS being received by the fire service. Having this activity led by one team creates a consistent approach across the county.

Where appropriate, the BET will work with the Prevention Department to implement a joint strategy where false alarms occur in domestic premises.

NAMOS

Under the Dangerous Substances (Notification and Marking of Sites) Regulations 1990 (NAMOS),

any person in control of any site or premises where a total quantity of 25 tonnes or more of dangerous substances are used or stored, or are to become used or stored, must give written notification to the local fire service.

The BET will be responsible for receiving these notifications, reviewing the information, and then informing the Operational Risk Information Team, the Operational and Community Risk Team, and the local fire station. The BET will work with other areas within Protection should any additional action be required.

Rural Engagement

As a department, we recognise that some of our most isolated sites, such as farms, due to their locations and travel distances from our fire stations may result in a longer response from the fire service in the event of an incident occurring.

To reduce this risk, the BET is working to recruit and establish a Rural Engagement Officer position, who will be responsible for working with these rural sites to educate and inform to reduce the likelihood of an incident happening, and ensuring all measures are in place at the site should an incident occur.

These sites still have responsibilities under The Order, and a failure to address any non-compliances will result in these sites being referred into our SDPs for enforcement activity to be considered.

Conference's/ Events

Either when new legislation is launched, or to carry out general education against The Order, the BET will take a lead in educating and informing businesses on behalf of ECFRS. It should be noted that this is not a requirement of ECFRS but shows our proactive approach to working with businesses. Conferences or attendance at specific events may be used as a tool to achieve this.

The BET will take the lead on behalf of the Protection Department to organise any events run by ECFRS to support with this objective, but it will be done alongside the Campaigns and Partnership Manager.

Fire Safety (England) Legislation 2022

The Fire Safety (England) Legislation 2022 come into force on January 23rd, 2023. The Regulations implement many of the recommendations Sir Martin Moore-Bick made in the Phase 1 Report of the Public Inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire.

The Regulations make it a requirement in law for Responsible Persons (RP) of High-Rise Residential Buildings (HRRB) to share information with the Fire and Rescue Service.

RP for HRRB will be required to supply FRS with electronic floor plans. In addition to supplying fire & rescue services with building plans, all existing HRRBs will now be required to have a Secure Information Box and inform FRS of any faults with essential firefighting equipment.

The BET has established a page on the ECFRS website with the relevant links for all required information from the RP to be shared, including floor plans and external wall designs. It will be the responsibility of the BET to quality assure the plans when they are received and liaise with the RP if the plans are not in the correct format.

Once quality assured, the BET will then forward these plans on to the Risk Information Team so they can be uploaded onto the MDT's and tablets of operational appliances.

The BET has also set up links on the ECFRS websites so RP's for HRRB can inform the fire service of any faults with firefighting equipment. These forms, once completed by the RP, will automatically go to the relevant departments for the appropriate actions to be put into place, but the BET will monitor activity from these forms to ensure faults are being repaired within an appropriate timeframe.

Performance/Reporting/Governance

Performance against this Business Engagement Strategy will be monitored by the Head of Protection, and a report on activity taken to the Performance and Resource Board in a quarterly performance report. As previously mentioned, this is a newly established area within the Protection Department, but the performance will be monitored over the next 12months, and clear KPI's created once the BET is fully resourced.

Review of the Business Engagement Strategy

The Business Engagement Strategy will be reviewed annually at this time, as it is a new strategy being delivered primarily by a new and evolving team. As the team embeds and develops, the true benefits of the BET will be recognised, and this will inform decisions around future resources and the future expectation set.

Relevant Legislation

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004

Fire Safety (England) Legislation 2022

Dangerous Substances (Notification and Marking of Sites) Regulations 1990

Contact Details

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