

Risk-based Planning and Management of Fire Service Resources Fire Research and Development Group, DTLR (formerly Home Office)

In 1995, the National Audit Office produced a report, 'In the Line of Fire' which criticised the approach to setting fire brigade resources against simple classifications of property types. In 1996, Entec was commissioned to start the process of updating the system used by the UK fire service to plan the provision of emergency fire resources. This system is one of the main determinants of the cost of the fire service and the standards of service provided to the public.

The work updates methods that have been in place since 1936. This is a critical project on which the achievement of government objectives and maintenance of appropriate standards of service depends.

The project incorporated a number of stages. Stage one - 'Demonstrating the risk assessment process', included:

- establishing the principle of risk assessment;
- demonstrating how risk assessment can be applied to plan fire stations; and
- producing and trialing example methods.

This work was sufficient to satisfy the Joint Committee on the Audit Commission Report (JCACR) that risk assessment can be recommended in principle to the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council (CFBAC).

In stage two - 'Development of national risk criteria', Entec developed a set of risk criteria for use in determining whether the level of risk warranted provision of emergency fire resources.

In stage three - 'Trials', we proceeded to complete the risk assessment methods and assist on a national trial of the process.

Stage four includes a 'Peer Review of the data and methods'.

As part of this process, a consultancy has reviewed the toolkits developed for use by fire brigades for undertaking their assessment of risks. The reviewer also examined the data and analysis supporting the toolkits. A financial consultant has also reviewed the costs of implementation, and how this may vary with different criteria on the thresholds of risk tolerability.

*Revising the plan
for provision of
emergency fire
resources*

