

## **The University of Cambridge take the lead in Fire Prevention and Business Continuity**

The University of Cambridge has always adopted a forward-thinking approach to fire prevention and business continuity. New legislation affecting fire safety, notably the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, which became law in October 2006, highlights the need for risk assessments and to advise attending fire crews of hazardous materials or structures. Yet prior to this date, the University of Cambridge had been working on progressive fire prevention policies and improved standards of resilience.....

In early 2004, the University initiated a comprehensive review of procedures to deal with emergencies which have the potential to endanger life or disrupt the core activities of teaching and academic research. In addition to updating the overarching strategic contingency plans, it was also agreed to introduce completely revised operational plans for each School, Faculty and Department making up the University Estate. Fundamental to success were the principles of consistency and security of advice and information as well as compatibility with the needs of the Emergency Services and other relevant Local Authority agencies.

Whilst rapid access to accurate information has always been important, security also remained a key consideration and following considerable research, the University selected Gerda Technology to provide 160 Premises Information Boxes in two differing security grades and to its own demanding specification. The Gerda Premises Information Box (PIB)<sup>®</sup> system originates from a concept design-led by fire fighters and was developed in conjunction with experts in the fire engineering field.

The rollout programme for the information system has been led by the University Fire Safety Manager, Gerry Dacey, and was completed in late Spring this year. Gerry commented on the importance of the exercise, not only for the University but also particularly for Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service. "This has been about developing partnerships – using a recognised system to safeguard our own interests and also provide access to essential information to enhance firefighter safety and, if necessary, expedite the conduct of operations. These aspects are important to us and we will continue to audit, develop and improve these arrangements to the benefit of everyone who needs to resort to our buildings."

Alastair Thompson, Managing Director of Gerda, advised: "It has been a privilege to be working in partnership with the University of Cambridge and the Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service. The leadership of the programme has been professional and exact and has enabled us to implement the installation and maintenance programme for the PIBs smoothly. We look forward to an on-going business relationship for new build projects with the University of Cambridge in the future."

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The Head of Organisational Safety Group, Dave Robertson, Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue service is positive about the implementation of the programme:

"The Premises Information Box is a fantastic example of what can be achieved by the Fire & Rescue Service working in collaboration and partnership within the business sector plus private & public organisations to vastly improve the protection of the people inside buildings and, importantly, provide the essential accurate information immediately for firefighters who are called to any emergencies that occur in them."

It is estimated that 80% of businesses affected by a major incident close within 18 months\* and the loss of important assets may take years to replace if at all. This being the case the implementation of the PIB system as part of the University of Cambridge's fire safety and prevention policy can only be a wise step and raises the fire prevention remit to a whole new level.



To find out more visit [www.premisesinfobox.info](http://www.premisesinfobox.info)

\*Source: London Prepared, Business Continuity, Kent CC