

Being Informed Is Being In Front – BS5588

Premises information and the Premises Information Box System™



Providing emergency services with reliable information on building layout, structure and risk offers significant advantages. This has been recognised in the recently published BS5588 part 12 ‘Management of Fire Safety’ Annex Q, and formalised as a recommendation to provide plans to the fire service.

The Fire Service have characterised an incident as consisting of three phases with differing information needs:

First response

The Golden Hour

Plans, life risk, firefighting equipment and hazards

Consolidation

Building plans – wider scale, structural information, areas of special operational need, other risks, fire manual

Recovery

Business recovery, salvage

(Group Commander, Fire Engineering Group, London Fire Brigade, Fire Times January 2005, page 35)

The Premises Information Box System™



Once the need for information has been recognised, a system for providing this information to fire fighters needs to be identified. Criteria for such a system is: simple to use in fireground conditions, reliable and available at the point of delivery.

London Fire Brigade initiated the design of the Premises Information Box, working with Gerda, to a system that met these criteria. The Premises Information Box harnesses the advantages of Gerda's tried and tested lock and key management technology to allow Fire Brigade access to on-site plans.

The Premises Information Box system holds the first responder information for the 'Golden Hour' as A3 plans. It has been designed so that it can also accommodate the detailed information that the Fire Service could use as an incident enters the consolidation and recovery phases. The CD-ROM pockets on the reverse of the door can provide information such as 'Asbestos Register' and 'As fitted drawings'.

Meeting demand in various commercial, industrial and service sectors, the PIB™ system has been well-received:

Peter Bishop of Mersy Tunnels, explains the need for such a system to be in place: 'We have had a similar system for the last five years using 'Wayfinder

Boxes' which contain information in a straight-forward format specifically for the needs of the Fire Brigade.'

However, the Premises Information Box system, a more formalised system, which provides access to the Fire Brigade, has now been adopted by Mersey Tunnels. " We have a huge subterranean world to consider- including 8 ventilation buildings serving the two tunnels – so it is important that the Fire Brigade, with whom we work closely, have plans specifically to advise how they navigate this area, which may involve the isolation of gas protected sumps and pumphooms".

With the danger of fires in road tunnels highlighted by disasters such as the Mont Blanc Tunnel incident in 1999, Peter Bishop underlines the need for effective communication with the Fire Service and views the Premises Information Box system as an important tool in assisting with this.

Kingston Hospital NHS Trust is one of several organisations in the hospitals sector, already using the system. Head of Estates, Allan Morley comments: "We take fire safety and the Organisation's continuity in the event of an incident very seriously and information to assist the Fire Service in attending an incident is of great benefit. As part of the Fire Risk assessment process the information is drawn up with the Fire Safety Officers . The Premises Information Box system is an ideal means of providing this securely whilst allowing direct access to the Fire Brigade."