



Case Study: Eliminating Thatch Fires Source: Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service

AIM

This was a project aimed at eliminating fires in thatched properties in Hampshire due to their negative impact on the environment, our heritage, the community and adverse financial implications.

BACKGROUND

In 2008/09 Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service attended seven thatched property fires. The average number of resources attending these types of incidents are significant and impact directly on the core business of HFRS as well as the community at large. Response costs are estimated on average as approximately £45K per incident. Total costs to rebuild each home are estimated by the National Society of Master Thatcher's at around £200K.

This project is holistic in approach and includes the analysis of incident types, frequency, causes, response types and techniques, building construction and engineering, and a new community safety communication strategy. Partnership working has included the following bodies;

- English Heritage
- Local Authority Building Control
- Insurance companies
- Manufacturers and suppliers of fire-fighting equipment
- Chief Fire Officers' Association
- Fire protection industry
- Construction industry
- Thatch industry representatives

PROJECT OUTPUTS/DELIVERABLES

- Thatch Information Pack (TIP) – Homeowners manual.
- Thatch Fire Safety Guide – a detailed booklet linked to aspects of the TIP.
- Educational DVD presentation – available online on HFRS YouTube page.
- Web-based advice for thatch owners where the above information can be directly accessed and downloaded.
- Toolkit to Service Delivery Group Managers to engage with owners of thatched properties – station visits, talks to parish groups, home fire safety visits. Posters and event invitation letters.
- Enhanced level of customer care post incident, including liaising with building control and architects during the rebuild phase.
- Improved training and response standards aligned to South East Region operating procedures.
- Meeting the corporate aim to reduce the number of preventable incidents by 20% by 2010.
- The project will be evaluated in March 2010 and the outcomes evaluated in March 2011.

BENEFITS & EVALUATION METHOD

- Potential £1 million savings over three years (cashable and non-cashable).
- Reduced risk to community and firefighters.
- Regional model for best practice.
- Maintenance of English heritage.
- Improved risk mapping of thatched properties.
- Meeting the service aim of making life safer for Hampshire residents.
- Evaluated through PIN methodology

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<http://www.hantsfire.gov.uk/yoursafety/athome/thatchfires/thatchinformation.htm>