

National Fire Chiefs Council establishes PPE and clothing committee

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) has recently set up a new committee to look specifically at personal protective equipment (PPE) and clothing within the fire sector. PPE and clothing represent over £20m per annum of influential third party spend for the sector.

Words: Brett Egan-Briers, National Technical Lead – Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Kent Fire and Rescue Service

Building upon the successful delivery of collaborative frameworks for firefighters' structural PPE and station workwear, which were both conducted through the National Fire Commercial Transformation Programme (NFCTP), the NFCC governance structure has been established to further increase national consensus and sign-off of standard specifications for the sector.

With the introduction of National Operational Guidance there is standardisation in both risk assessment and the policy and procedures to resolve operational incidents. This is the model that the new committee wishes to achieve with standardised PPE risk assessments and resultant performance related output based specifications.

Holistic view of requirements

The new committee will follow on the good work achieved by the previous collaborative projects, to continue to work extensively with all fire and rescue services to ensure that a holistic view of requirements across the fire sector is captured, considered and, if appropriate to current and emerging operational requirements, included within the output based specifications.

The committee will work to the NFCC Ops Committee to look to the future of PPE and clothing requirements and while these may be difficult to predict there are a number of indicators to suggest change maybe required, including: a more diverse range of incident types, including special services and emergency medical response; a continuing decline in traditional activity – structural fires representing less than 6% of

activity may re-class structural PPE as a specialist requirement as opposed to general wear; emerging issues such as exposure to fire ground contaminants and the outcome of further research programmes, which may include: low heat flux, long duration exposures, female fit and protection requirements and physiological impact of wearing PPE; the influences of new British, European and International Standards, such as the recently published BS 8617 Code of Practice for cleaning, maintenance and repair of Firefighters PPE and ISO 21942 Station Uniform for Firefighters; changes to legislation, such as the PPE at Work Regulations; plus budgets and saving requirements over the coming years.

Accredited representatives

The new committee will be chaired by Chris Colgan, Director of Operations for Kent Fire and Rescue Service and each fire and rescue service region will have representation similar to the make-up of other NFCC committees. Further to regional representation, the committee will seek additional end user representation from accredited representatives, Women in the Fire Service, AFSA and other relevant NFCC committees. It will also engage with unbiased and unbranded representatives from industry to ensure that there is a clear mutual understanding of direction of travel. The committee will act as the single voice to the supply network, strictly governing all engagement with industry to ensure that it is undertaken in a fully transparent and equitable manner.

Chris Colgan said, "I'm really looking forward to

working with colleagues across the sector along with many other valued stakeholders to deliver true technical and commercial transformation. The committee is the first of its kind for PPE and clothing for the sector and we are grateful to the NFCC for their endorsement and support."

Chris will also be accompanied on the committee by Tina Butler, NFCTP commercial lead for clothing category and Brett Egan-Briers, PPE subject matter expert and NFCC representative on British Standard committees.

Performance levels

One further important role of the committee will be the NFCC's continued involvement in the development and revision of British, European and International standards. Ensuring that the minimum levels of performance contained within each relevant standard are at least maintained and where the sector believes they should be improved, a robust case is put forward to effect change.

Chief officers across the country have now all been asked to nominate their own single point of contact to ensure that the sector is fully engaged, while also nominating a regional representative to join as committee members. It is hoped that the inaugural meeting will take place in late September (albeit virtually).

www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk

Further information about the committee can be obtained by e-mail: NFCCPPE@kent.fire-org

Essential equipment pack ensures frontline worker safety

BCB International is committed to supporting groups and charitable organisations throughout the pandemic. Its team, led by Directors Andrew and Janey Howell, has visited a number of organisations and donated personal protective equipment from face masks and visors to BCB's very own extra strength hand sanitiser. The hand sanitiser, named after Dr Brown (who pioneered Brown's Cough Bottle (BCB) to aid British troops in the Crimean War) kills 99.99% of viruses. With COVID-19 being a viral infection it is vital users ensure the sanitiser they use is effective against viruses.

To support our emergency services, BCB has developed the Personal Protection Pack (PPP). The Pack includes essential equipment to keep frontline

workers safe should they encounter a need to urgently use and apply protection equipment. BCB has a long and proud record of working with governments and public bodies and the company's commitment to quality and excellence is demonstrated by its established team, which is focused on ensuring the needs of its customers.

BCB's Continuous And Never-Ending Innovation policy (CANEI) has resulted in hundreds of quality innovative products, many of which were and continue to be developed in partnership with those who travel to the extremes. The company's mission is to protect the protectors and help save lives.

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BCB's personal protection pack was developed with the emergency services in mind.