

- Speaker 1: Welcome CRR Radio from the Vision 20/20 project.
- Ed Comeau: Welcome to CRR Radio, my name is Ed Comeau with the Vision 20/20 project. Today, we have Chief Fire Officer Phil Loach from the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service in the UK back on the show. You may remember that we talked with Phil last year about what they're doing for community risk-reduction in the UK, and he has come back to give us an update and talk about some new things that are happening. Phil, could you please take a minute and introduce yourself to our listeners?
- Phil Loach: Well firstly, thank you for inviting me back onto CRR Radio. As you said, we had a discussion last week - last year, sorry, and yes, I am Phil Loach. I'm Chief Fire Officer, as you said, of West Midlands Fire Service, but I'm also the vice-chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council. Which some of your listeners may have known in a previous life as the Chief Fire Officers Association. In the last couple of years, we've kind of reinvented ourselves to give a new focus to some of our strategic commitments. So we made the National Fire Chiefs Council, and I'm the vice-chair. Part of our thing we'll talk about today, also, is that, as part of that role, I am the Program Executive for the Community Risk Program.
- Ed Comeau: Can you tell us just real quickly, what is the National Fire Chiefs Council, what is it made up of, who's it made up of, and what's its purpose?
- Phil Loach: Yes, certainly Ed. So it's made up of the Chief Fire Officers of all the UK Fire and Rescue Services. It has a full-time chair now as opposed to a Chief Fire Officer just taking that role and it works on a four year cycle. Our chair, our first chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council is the ex-chief of Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Roy Wilsher, who I'm sure will be known to some, if not many, of your listeners.
- Ed Comeau: So let's talk about the National Fire Chiefs Council's Community Risk Program. When you were last on, you talked about it a little bit and, at that point in time, it was just kind of in the start-up stages. I know it's progressed a lot since then, so what can you tell us about it?
- Phil Loach: Okay, well, when the National Fire Chiefs Council was formed, it went through quite a process of looking for what are our commitments as fire chiefs, our strategic, kind of big commitments, that we need to look at to bring improvement? And we came up with five strategic commitments, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, is what was called interchangeably Community Risk Management, Community Risk Planning. In England, its referred to by a legislative name called "Integrated Risk Management Planning," but because it's a UK organization that involves Scotland, Wales, and northern Ireland, we called this program the Community Risk Program and it is designed to deliver the strategic commitment of bringing consistency to our risk management, analysis planning, and delivery.
- Ed Comeau: So as I mentioned, last time you were on, you started talking about it, but it was just a start-up. Where are you guys going now? What stage are you at?

Phil Loach: Well, great opportunity to give an update. Say, last year, roughly, kind of a year on from when we started this program. And what we commence by doing, we've engaged with an academic institution to carry out what we call the Research Project which called for all UK Fire and Rescue Services to submit the methodologies they use in fire and rescue service, to bring around Integrated Risk Management Plans. And that's what really, really kind of contributes to some enthusiasm in the UK where we had 43 out of the 50 UK Fire and Rescue Services submit their methodologies, which has allowed us to get a good flavor of where there's good practice, where there's some gaps in what we do, and allow us to focus the program on how we bring that consistency and resilience into our Integrated Risk Management process.

From there, now we're at a stage where we've commissioned five further areas of work, four of them in terms of projects, but firstly, because the methodologies revealed various guidance that was in place, we are now undertaking a review of current guidance and that is also going to be dependent on four main projects. Again, perhaps not unsurprisingly, one, to bring consistency and a refresh to the data that we use to underpin analysis.

We also are working with our central government departments to refresh and update some metrics that allow us to understand the economic cost of fire. What we mean by that is the cost of fire in a community and also the benefits we bring from our interactions through either preventing fires from happening, protecting buildings from fire, and people, and responding to incidents. We're also updating our overall "risk methodology" that we call it, so the sequencing of the elements to a good quality risk assessment. And then, finally, in those areas, we're looking at bringing a consistent, and accepted by a range of a range of stake-holders, methodology that allows us to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions we put in place.

Ed Comeau: And kind of as an aside here, I mean, we're facing this in the United States too. Being the fire service, a lot of times we're fire-centric when we look at risk. We focus on fire and fire safety, but risk goes far beyond that and I think a good example is just the very thing we were chatting about before we started. The dam that's having a problem there in the UK, that also a definition of community Risk, isn't it?

Phil Loach: Absolutely, and one of the areas of the strategic commitment [inaudible 00:06:49] statements from the National Fire Chiefs Council is understanding how best to utilize the core skills and competencies of a fire and rescue service. As we move through advancing society and become exposed to different types of risks -- in this case talking the dam weather-related risk. There's also different types of non-fire related risks, some even criminally motivated, but the fire and rescue service has a skill set that can be able to contribute to the resolution of those incidents either through the emergency response phase, or in that protection or prevention environment.

Ed Comeau: You mentioned that this is a UK project, but there's also a lot of international involvement in it as well, isn't there?

Phil Loach: Well, absolutely. Again, thanks for bringing that up. What we found in the research project, and as a result of the last podcast on CRR Radio, we invited international submissions, and we've been really, really excited by the number and quality of the submissions that we've had. We've had over 30 submissions, primarily from the US, but also including Canada, Europe, and Australia, which really gives us the feeling that this is something that is being tackled and considered world-wide. And what's rising out of this podcast in our work, in Vision 20/20, the National Fire Chiefs Council and beyond is that we can really come together and contribute to how to bring consistency and effectiveness throughout the UK FRS and beyond, the world-wide FRS can contribute to reduction of vulnerability and risk management.

Ed Comeau: So the Fire Chiefs Council has a symposium coming up that you're partnering with Vision 20/20 on. Do you want to talk about that a little bit?

Phil Loach: Yes, this has been a real exciting development from the engagement that we're achieving currently across the pond, so-to-speak, and following the Community Risk Program research project and the interest that was generated through those submissions and beyond. We had an approach from Vision 20/20 as to how we could actually build on this and there's been a desire and such a commitment for us to have an international symposium that would allow us to talk about wider risk management and then we can contribute internationally, as I've said previously, into some of the things that we're tackling in how we bring that effectiveness to our mutual risk management approaches.

Ed Comeau: So when you say international, Where are the attendees coming from, and the speakers? How far have you cast your net?

Phil Loach: Well, as I previously said, the responses -- we've got a lot of interest from the US, we've also got interest from Canada, we've had interest from countries within Europe, and we've had interest in Australia. And, currently, in terms of attendance for symposium, I think we've got confirmed attendees from all of those continents or countries, as well as a strong attendee list from the UK, so we're very hopeful, in the real definition of symposium that we are bringing together a group of people that can really produce a rich summary of conversation about a range of topics.

Ed Comeau: And I think before everybody gets really excited about jumping on a plane and heading to England, this is an invitation-only type of event, isn't it?

Phil Loach: Absolutely, it is an invitation-only event, and there's just a little bit more we can talk about in detail, but, as you say in managing expectations, it is an event that has a fixed number of people. There is still a small number of opportunities to sign up for involvement. What I would encourage people to do is to look up the links that you can look over the information. I think Community Risk Reduction Radio's webpage has got a link to some of that as well. The UK National Fire Chiefs Council website has information on this as well, And for the people who are listening who feel they can make a significant contribution and learn from other really well qualified people in the

[inaudible 00:11:40] then it encourages them to use the guidance on the webpages that I've mentioned. It's kind of made their pitch to join us.

Ed Comeau: So Phil, what are some of the objectives if the symposium, what sort of things are you going to be covering?

Phil Loach: Okay, just to give you a real tangible feel to the kind of things we'll be talking around is that will include emergency operations, we'll include health and vulnerability, including fire-based EMS, We'll be looking at risk identification and analysis, so data collection, and analysis for risk assessment and planning, and we'll also be including prevention-based activities and protection, which is a really relevant issue in the UK at the moment following the tragic Grenfell Tower incident.

Ed Comeau: And data's just such a critical part of it too, isn't it?

Phil Loach: Absolutely, I mean our whole Community Risk program, which I hope is predictable and no surprise to everyone is quickly recognized. You need good quality data to underpin that risk analysis so that the approach to digital technologies and the use of data to underpin will be a key feature of the symposium.

Ed Comeau: When and where are you holding the symposium?

Phil Loach: So the symposium will be held in the West Midlands, in Birmingham. It's on the 19th and 20th of September, although some guests will be arriving on the afternoon and evening of the 18th, which coincides with the emergency services show, which will be in Birmingham as well. The actual event itself will held at West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters, the symposium, and there will be other market-place type events going on around there, which is an opportunity for sponsors to engage, and also other things of kind of secondary interest. So, we want to make it a wide and varied event, but the core two days will the symposium on community risk management.

Ed Comeau: And what's going to be coming out of the symposium? Are you going to be generating a report, or producing papers, or what's going to be coming out the other end?

Phil Loach: Yeah, the symposium will obviously capture the discussion from the two days. We want to do that in the most technologically enabled way possible, so some of that will be through video and some of it will be through text, and some of it will be through live interactions in the day where we make use of technologies. We then also have engaged with a number of partners that will write up their views of the symposium in trade-journals. And hopefully we'll see this is a platform and a springboard to making this a more regular event, a regular event that will, hopefully, travel around the world of interest. So, it will be a good, rich day to set. [inaudible 00:14:48] We really look to make this an event that builds on current practice, year over year.

Ed Comeau: So, are you planning on doing it in the UK each year or maybe moving it around a little bit since it has an international focus to it?

Phil Loach: Oh absolutely, I mean, we hope to move this around the world, not confine it to the UK. It's been really, really well supported from the US this year, so we certainly look to return that compliment and bring it from the UK to a wider group of US experts and then, similarly, Europe, particularly around the Baltic states and Sweden -- there's been a lot of interest. And then the other side of the globe for us is Australia, which has generated interest as well. So, I think the more we can move it around, the more rich the content will be over time.

Ed Comeau: And I'll be sure to include in the show notes the link to the event as well so people can find out more information about it. And I have been talking to your staff about covering on social media during the event itself, so if people want to follow us on Facebook at @strategicfire, or Twitter, @StrategicFire, you can see it live as it's going on, as things are coming out of the UK.

Well we've been talking with Chief Fire Officer Phil Loach with the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services in the UK about the upcoming program they're doing in partnership with Vision 20/20 on Community Risk Reduction with an international focus, and Phil, I really appreciate you taking the time to join us again today.

Phil Loach: Well thank you for the opportunity to talk about again Ed, and extend my thanks to you and to CRR Radio for continuing to share this piece of work across the widest group of people possible, and look forward to seeing some of your listeners in the UK later this year and indeed continuing my engagement with the show, so thank you very much Ed.

Ed Comeau: And if you aren't already subscribing to CRR Radio, you can do it through your favorite podcast app, whether it's Apple Podcast, Stitcher, Overcast, or any other app. Just search for CRR Radio, hit the subscribe button, and you'll get automatically downloaded whenever we come out with a new episode, which is about every two weeks. CRR Radio is a production of the Vision 20/20 project and it's edited by Rich Palmer and produced by me, Ed Comeau. Thanks for listening, and we'll see you next time.

Speaker 1: Thanks for joining us on CRR Radio from the Vision 20/20 project. For more information on Community Risk Reduction, please visit us at "www.strategicfire.org".