

Sir Ken Knight praises Primetech's Cobra Rapid Response Vehicle

'Facing the Future', the efficiencies review by Sir Ken Knight, the former Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser for England, is a timely and thorough look at how the fire and rescue service will need to prepare itself for the challenges of the coming decades - technologically and organisationally - in an age of funding challenges and falling emergency response demand.

The report is also a tribute to fire safety success, in particular to reducing accidental fires and fire deaths by the post-war fire service and the fire safety sector overall. For both these reasons, the findings in Sir Ken's report are likely to have a huge influence on how the fire and rescue service evolves in the coming years.

Developing new technologies

One key feature of the report was a challenge to the fire sector industry to develop new technologies to support improved fire fighting effectiveness and a more efficient use of resources. One company in particular has responded to that challenge in a timely manner by creating a whole new class of fire fighting vehicle - the Cobra Rapid Response Vehicle, developed by Primetech.



Sir Ken Knight, the former Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser for England and author of 'Facing the Future'

Sir Ken Knight, following his review of England's fire and rescue services, has praised Primetech's Cobra Rapid Response Vehicle as a good example of the kind of innovative and positive response industry should be providing to help fire and rescue services deliver more effective and flexible fire fighting in the future.

This new vehicle deploys, on a Mitsubishi Trojan vehicle, a suite of powerful and innovative new fire fighting technologies, in particular the Cobra cold cutting system, which can cut through building walls and force high pressure water spray into fire spaces to suppress fires quickly, efficiently and with minimal property damage, whilst maximising firefighter safety. It also features the portable BacPac Watermist system, along with mobile satellite broadband communications and wireless body-worn cameras.

In his report, Sir Ken Knight states, 'My review found a significant move by a number of fire and rescue authorities in providing a variable level of



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response to differing types of incident and thus matching response to risk. One of the constraints on efficiency is the rigidity of dispatching a 'standard' fire engine to all types of incident. I was heartened to see that many rescue authorities have begun to invest in different types of response vehicles that can be crewed by varying numbers of firefighters, enabling a more flexible response.'

Cobra Rapid Response Vehicle

The Cobra Rapid Response Vehicle was conceived and created by Primetech, a long established UK provider of IT, mobile satellite broadband and other communications systems to the fire service and other emergency services. The company has pioneered the introduction of technologies such as high bandwidth, Ka satellite broadband, wireless body-worn and other cameras (delivering live incident ground high definition video back to command units and HQs) and the highly versatile Resilient Communications Trailer.

For its efforts, Primetech has received praise from Sir Ken Knight as a positive example of industry stepping up to the plate to support the fire and rescue service's drive for increased efficiency with innovative technical solutions.

The Cobra system delivers high pressure water mixed with a cutting agent (abrasive) that can cut through all known building and construction materials and allows firefighters to fight fires safely from the outside of the building. The lance delivers a precise mixture of water and abrasive through a 2.3mm nozzle, which allows the vaporised water to then be pushed into the building.

The Cobra Rapid Response Vehicle enables fire and rescue services to respond immediately, thus 'stopping the clock' or dealing with the event entirely. At a larger incident, Cobra can make a dramatic initial impact on the scene while the main vehicles are on the way, preparing the scene for their arrival, delivering safer access for breathing apparatus teams.

At a retained fire station, the Cobra Rapid Response Vehicle enables fire and rescue services to

respond immediately to calls, without a delay caused by waiting for a full crew required for a traditional fire engine.

Continual adaption

One of the key recommendations in 'Facing the Future' is the need for fire and rescue services to continue adopting new technologies and procedures in the same way that they have done in the past, which has led to such big reductions in fires and fire deaths.

The report states, 'There are still many opportunities to come together to develop innovation and change. In my report I have referenced the need for new fire fighting techniques and innovative solutions that the fire industry can provide. It is a really important part of change as fire fighting is very similar throughout the country and broadly it hasn't changed much from the post-war experience with lots of water and large numbers of firefighters, a pretty basic formula. Today we are much more conscious of environmental impact and the consequences of fire fighting, together with the focus on firefighter safety when tackling property fires.

'I recognise that the new high pressure systems such as Cobra and the Cobra Rapid Response Vehicle are two opportunities: firstly, an opportunity to do a different kind of fire fighting, firstly by avoiding the necessity to deploy firefighters into the fire risk area, where there are no lives at risk.

'And also, coupled with the fact that rather than have a solely large fire engine fleet based at every fire station, fire and rescue services can now intersperse smaller, more adaptable fire engines while still delivering a very effective fire fighting force with greater versatility. Thus providing a huge opportunity to move forward for both effectiveness and efficiency

'Regarding technical communications, it is moving forward, however I think there is still some way to go. In the military, I don't believe they would engage into any kind of operation without personal communications, speaking to each other and

speaking to the incident commander, which is still not common practice in fire incidents. I believe that it is absolutely the right direction of travel both for ensuring more effective operations and enhancing safety, but there is still more to do.'

'The role of the firefighter has dramatically changed. It is to the credit of the fire and rescue service that, as well as being a competent firefighter, it now must be prepared for an operational response to a range of emergencies. As the role of emergency response for firefighters has expanded to include incidents such as chemical spillage, road accidents, collapsed buildings and flooding, an enhancement of skills and competency has been required. It has also been important that the fire industry has risen to the challenge to find technical solutions for an effective emergency response for a range of incidents.'

Recommending the COBRA system, Martyn Emberson, Chief Fire Officer of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, says 'COBRA is the alternative way to fight fire. Imagine a scenario where you could fight a fire faster from outside the fire compartment, with less water, less damage to the environment and property, improve the survivability of casualties and significantly reduce the risk to firefighters – Utopia, maybe; bold statements, yes; achievable, yes, absolutely.'

In response to Sir Ken Knight's praise of the Cobra Rapid Response Vehicle, Henry Walker, Founder and Technical Director of Primetech, said, 'We are delighted that Sir Ken has recognised the work that our team at Primetech has done in developing the Cobra Rapid Response Vehicle to support UK fire and rescue services.'

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The Cobra Rapid Response Vehicle deploys a suite of powerful and innovative new fire fighting technologies, in particular the Cobra cold cutting system

