

# Fire-fighting like the professionals ....

A new year is often a time for resolutions, good intentions, plans and new goals. Yet, all too often, our good intentions and resolutions are sabotaged. 'Fires' come along that demand our immediate attention and divert our focus. Before we know it we have reverted to our old ways of doing things.

Over the Christmas holiday period we experienced an, unplanned, 'opportunity' to observe professional fire personnel in action. We were staying with some friends and, on returning to their home, were alarmed to discover a fire raging in and around their conservatory chimney and smoke starting to fill the house. Luckily the fire had not really taken hold and was quickly doused with some quick thinking and buckets of water. Just as the last flames were extinguished the two fire engines and crews arrived. However, rather than simply saying, 'It seems you have dealt with the fire so we'll be on our way' (which is what we initially thought was all that was required), the fire crews focused their whole attention on us and the need to ensure the fire was completely out; it could not restart; it had not spread and that the building was completely safe.

Working seamlessly as one team the fire crews doused the area to reduce the considerable heat, used thermal imaging cameras to check for hot spots in the cavity walls, removed panes of glass that had shattered with the heat and made the building safe and secure. During this time they radioed back to headquarters to advise that they were unavailable for any other job. Once the crews had cleared up the considerable mess, they carefully accounted for and gathered all their tools before turning their attention to future prevention. An additional smoke detector was installed there and then, with advice on how to maintain and test the alarm. A risk assessment visit was arranged for the following week and subsequently the whole incident was written up in the local paper to remind others of the importance of smoke detectors and not leaving fires unattended.

Reflecting later on the whole incident, I found myself wondering how often we think we have put out 'fires' and move on to something else without focussing our attention and ensuring:

- That the 'fire' can't flare up again
- There have been no knock on effects
- We have put everything back in its place
- We have reflected on what happened and what our own contribution might have been
- We have extracted the learning from the experience

Equally, how often do we stop and take time to ensure that 'fires' don't occur in the first place? Take a moment to ask yourself:

- What 'fires' are likely to flare up this year?
- What can I do to minimise the risks? Are detectors in place?
- What can I learn from fire-fighting professionals?

Finally, we may also need to reflect on whether we actually enjoy the adrenalin rush of fire-fighting rather than focussing on what may be important but not actually urgent at the present time.

Food for thought?

If you like this, find more at [www.iridiumconsulting.co.uk/links.html](http://www.iridiumconsulting.co.uk/links.html)