

# BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Fire & Rescue operation takes emergency pandemic action and builds foundation for the future



## AT-A-GLANCE

### Key Requirements

- Introduce business resilience in the face of impending flu pandemic
- Meet legislative mandates to continue operating whatever the circumstances
- Comply with government acts to protect sensitive data

### Solution

- Provide 250 support employees with flexible and secure remote access to the network
- Ensure audit trail for all remote user activity

### Results

- IT resources are more effectively deployed to proactively enable and protect the business
- Critical support teams have secure remote access to sensitive data when they need it
- Legislative requirements to continue operating in even the most adverse circumstances are met

**“We needed a business resilience solution – and quickly. The country was being threatened with a flu pandemic and we needed to deliver operations whatever the circumstances. We not only got what we need, in lightening quick time, we also got a compliance solution and a platform to accelerate our future plans, all in one go.”**

MURRAY BROUGHTON, HEAD OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS, BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Bedfordshire and Luton Fire & Rescue Service deliver services in the UK county of Bedfordshire which has a population of 580,000 and covers 124,000 hectares. It is a predominantly rural area which includes many market towns and two main centers of population, Luton and Bedford. The Fire & Rescue Service is also responsible for Luton International Airport and part of the M1, one of the UK’s busiest motorways.

## KEY REQUIREMENTS

In the spring of 2009, a potential swine flu pandemic was taking root across the world. As the summer unfurled the sense that the seeds of disaster were beginning to take root was widespread. In this particular situation, the pandemic did not materialize on the scale that was feared. However, if there were any positives, it spurred many organizations into re-evaluating their disaster recovery and business continuity plans.

Bedfordshire and Luton Fire & Rescue Service was one of these. With responsibility for Fire & Rescue Services across a wide area and at important locations such as Luton International Airport, the organization had a mandatory responsibility to remain operational whatever the circumstances.

In the event of a flu pandemic the organization’s 700 staff would be just as vulnerable as the rest of the population. As such, its ability to deliver critical services could be compromised leading to a failure of legislative duties. Consequently, the aim of Bedfordshire and Luton Fire & Rescue Service was to develop a business continuity operation that would permit it to continue functioning in even the starkest of circumstances.

CUSTOMER  
PROFILE



**“Remote access to our networks over the Internet actually meant it was easier and less costly to meet our operational resilience and compliance requirements.”**

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## SOLUTION

Bedfordshire and Luton Fire & Rescue Service turned to Polar Computer Communications (Polar), its trusted network service provider of more than six years, initially outlining both the operational and compliance requirements. Polar has provided professional network services to a broad cross-section of industry sectors since its inception in 1997. Given its extensive knowledge of the fire services network along with the compliances and regulatory requirements of the Public Sector, Polar was ideally positioned to provide Bedfordshire and Luton Fire & Rescue Service with an appropriate and effective solution.

Polar recommended a VPN-based solution integrated with RSA® SecurID® authentication, a two-factor authentication solution from RSA, The Security Division of EMC. The security of two-factor authentication is based on something the user knows (a password or PIN) and something they have (an authenticator or token).

The rationale for this move was to support legislative mandates that require the service to maintain operations in emergency situations. In this case, Polar designed, tested and implemented an SSL VPN solution combined with the RSA SecurID Appliance and hardware authenticators to provide anytime anywhere secure remote access. The SecurID Appliance was deployed with a primary and replica server to maximize resiliency while eliminating the complexity of deploying a 3rd party server. While hardware authenticators were selected for the initial deployment, Polar selected RSA because of the flexibility of authenticator options ranging from hardware, to software and SMS for future proofing.

The combined solution provides 250 staff with secure remote access to the organization's network. This is critical in the event of a pandemic where staff may be quarantined, or may be unable to travel to the office due to illness or caregiver responsibilities. While their work is not essential to the delivery of services, their duties are vital to maintaining operational services.

In addition to providing secure access to information to perform job functions, the SecurID solution ensures compliance with the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act. These are two pieces of legislature that require the protection of data that is held on systems. For example, the Fire & Rescue Service hold important floor plans for buildings such as Luton International Airport in order to execute rescue operations at these locations should it be required. SecurID protects access to the sensitive information, preventing unauthorized access.

## RESULTS

Murray Broughton, Head of Information Communication Systems, Bedfordshire and Luton Fire & Rescue Service, said: “Remote access to our networks over the Internet actually meant it was easier and less costly to meet our operational resilience and compliance requirements.”

The Fire & Rescue Service met its pandemic and operational resilience requirements in a cost-effective and timely manner. Its employees were able to work remotely within only a few weeks of the organization making the decision to adopt this approach. This short time scale was extremely important as the pandemic clouds gathered overhead.

By meeting its compliance requirements head on the organization has also benefited in other areas. In a bid to cut a spiraling public debt of over £900 billion, the UK government has introduced wide-ranging spending cuts some of which are falling on the public sector, including fire & rescue services.

Bedfordshire and Luton Fire & Rescue Service is planning to extend the use of its compliance tools to connect with partners in other areas. Broughton adds: “It only takes a few minutes to set up a new user so we can easily set up shared services over shared networks. It's a belt-tightening exercise in the face of impending cuts and we'll be planning this in the next few months. By addressing our legislative requirements we are now well placed to meet budget cuts.”

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