

Integrated Clothing Project

Q. What is the Integrated Clothing Project (ICP)?

A. The ICP contract provides for the supply of operational Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other clothing such as Station Wear, Corporate Wear and Sports Wear.

Q. What are the aims of the Integrated Clothing Project (ICP)?

A. The aims are to deliver a standard specification for a wide range of clothing, which will provide effective protection for firefighters, value for money and address equality and diversity issues. One of ICP's original aims was to provide a 'national identity' for the Fire and Rescue Service.

Q. Why was this colour scheme chosen?

A. The red/grey colour scheme offered via this project for station wear was recommended by the National Identity Working Group and was endorsed by the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) in 2007.

Q. Why was a red and grey colour scheme chosen and not, say, blue or black?

A. The aim of the new colour scheme is to help establish a unique identity for fire & rescue personnel, in the way that the Ambulance service paramedics achieved when changing to the familiar green workwear in the 1990's. **Red** is the colour most commonly identified with the service and so is the obvious choice. **Grey** was introduced into the colour scheme because it tones well with the red and is also a more practical colour for work trousers. **Blue** or **black** on the other hand, are colours adopted by many national organisations, such as the Police Service. In fact, blue is the most common choice of corporate colour in the country.

Q. So why isn't the protective clothing in red and grey too?

A. The public can easily recognise firefighters when they wear their protective clothing at emergency incidents, so a clear identity is not as important as it is with, for example, station wear. This is because nowadays the public are more likely to interact with firefighters dressed in station wear as they carry out home fire safety visits and other community safety work.

Q. Won't the red tee shirts fade to pink after a few washes?

A. Evidence from those who have worn the tee shirts regularly over the last 2 years supports the suppliers' claim that, provided you follow the recommended washing instructions, the tee shirts should remain red for the life of the garment.

Q. What are the benefits of the ICP?

A. The benefits of ICP are intended to be for firefighters. They will be provided with protective clothing systems that have been extensively tested. The kit is also intended to provide a new, professional image for the fire and rescue service to reflect its pro-active role in the community.

Q. How does the clothing address equality and diversity issues?

A. The clothing designs include a range of options and features to suit of the needs of a modern, diverse workforce.

Q. If ICP was so important for the FRS, why have so few FRAs actually signed up to use it?

A. FRAs are only in a position to sign up to the use of the ICP once their existing supplier arrangements come to an end. A number are now expected to now do this.

Some FRAs will chose to go outside national arrangements based on their specific operational requirements and at present they must seek CLG approval for this.

Q. Can FRAs get the kit cheaper elsewhere?

A. Before signing up to use the ICP contract or other arrangements for the provision of clothing and PPE, FRAs are required to satisfy themselves that their chosen supplier offers them the best value for money. This will be assessed individually by FRAs and decisions will vary depending on the FRA's particular requirements, including existing suppliers and contractual arrangements.

Q. What about national identity?

A. The Fire and Rescue Service is a local service. However, moving towards a nationally identifiable appearance of firefighters was one of the original aims of the ICP. The emphasis was on clothing that firefighters wear when engaged in community work which could help the public identify them in this proactive role and promote wider visibility & the professional image for fire and rescue service.

Q. What were the results of the general public survey on the new station wear?

A. The views of the general public questioned in the survey, conducted in July 2007 at 5 major shopping centres around the country, were very positive.

Q. Can FRS staff see the clothing for themselves?

A. Yes. A team from Firebuy can visit your FRS and give presentations about the clothing, providing an excellent opportunity for all staff to see the various options, ask questions and provide feedback. Afterwards, Firebuy will provide a feedback report based upon the staff responses. So far, feedback about the clothing has been very positive. To arrange a visit, e-mail Martin Fraser at Firebuy:

martin.fraser@firebuy.gov.uk

Q. Where can I see photos and find out more about the product range?

A. Go to http://www.bristoluniforms.com/index_icp.asp?id=93

Q. What are the contract options?

A. There are three different Arrangements for a Fire & Rescue Authority (FRA) to contract for:

1. Fully Managed Services (FMS): This Arrangement deals with the supply of core structural firefighting PPE and the full suite of managed services including stock and resilience management services, and ceremonial wear hire services.

2. Purchase with Managed Services (PMS): This is set up in a similar way to the FMS Arrangement. The principal difference is that the Authority owns the PPE and purchases it through the Purchase Only Arrangement. Only the managed services that the Authority elects to purchase are provided through the Managed Services Arrangement.

3. Purchase Only (PO): This covers the purchase and supply of PPE and non-PPE, including basic services such as measuring and fitting, training and delivery services. This would be appropriate where, for example, an FRA can carry out its own laundry and repair of items, routine inspection, stock resilience etc and only requires the supply of products on a purchase only basis.

Q. Has there not been a legal challenge against ICP?

A. Following the announcement of the award of the ICP contract to Bristol Uniforms in March 2007, one of the unsuccessful tenderers initiated a legal challenge on a variety of grounds over the conduct of the procurement and selection of the successful contractor.

Q. Is this still ongoing?

A. No the litigation has been settled.

Q. What were the terms of the settlement?

A. The terms of the settlement are set out in a confidential agreement between the two parties but the following statement has been included in the settlement agreement:

Official statement on settlement

Lion has withdrawn all of its claims against Firebuy in relation to the ICP and the related court proceedings commenced by Lion have been stayed with no orders for costs. In particular, Lion has withdrawn all claims and allegations including those on breaches of procurement law arising out of the ICP and both Lion and Firebuy accept that the ICP may now proceed without further challenge. Both Lion and Firebuy are pleased that this intense litigation has been resolved.'