

# IFSJ INTERNATIONAL FIRE & SAFETY JOURNAL

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# SUBCONTRACTING SERVICES

Chris Thain, Business Development Manager for Fire & Rescue Service at G3 Systems Ltd, talks outsourcing aviation fire and rescue services



↑ Chris Thain, Business Development Manager

**W**hen it comes to outsourcing a process to an outside organisation there is always a lot to consider in terms of how it will affect the business as it could affect staff numbers and impact existing management systems and processes.

To find out about the ins and outs outsourcing aviation fire and rescue services, International Fire and Safety Journal caught up with Chris Thain, Business Development Manager for Fire & Rescue Service at G3 Systems Ltd, a supplier of bespoke operational delivery of Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF) and Industrial Rescue and Firefighting Services (IRFFS) to airports and high-risk industrial facilities around the world.

Why should businesses consider outsourcing their ARFF and RFSS services?

Outsourcing fire and rescue services can enable organisations to concentrate on their core business, while continuing to maintain and improve safety, resilience, and regulatory compliance. It enables companies to focus on their own customers' needs while delegating essential but non-core requirements to external specialist providers. This releases internal resources that can be put to more effective use for other purposes, leading to greater overall efficiency and competitiveness.

It is unrealistic for airport operators to be experts in every business function, process, and discipline required to manage a modern airport, it is simply far too expensive to maintain this level of knowledge

and expertise internally. By utilising outsourced service providers, airport operators can leverage a global knowledge base and resource centre, accessing world class capabilities, skills, and expertise that they may have been precluded from previously.

What are some of the key benefits of outsourcing?

Managed ARFF service providers often have access to a wider, more highly skilled, and diverse talent pool than the client themselves and will already have in place the requisite interview and selection processes designed to select only the strongest, most appropriately qualified, and experienced staff.

Training and competence management can reflect global best practice, with industry and/



or site-specific risks recognised, evaluated, and reflected in the ongoing training provided to the ARFF staff members.

Shared experiences gained from a variety of different airports or industrial operations, coupled with specialist skill sets, ongoing education, learning and professional development and best working practices also enable the outsourced service provider to add value and resilience to and further reduce risk within the client's operation.

As specialists in their field, outsourced ARFF service providers are generally much better at deciding how to cost effectively avoid risk in their areas of expertise without compromising safety and response, than perhaps a fully employed on-site team might be.

What are the biggest concerns around outsourcing?

Firstly, there is issue of compliance. If we assume that the vehicles and equipment provided by or for the ARFF meet the ICAO standards for the airport Category and that they are well maintained and fit for purpose, then the only other variable affecting the service delivery and compliance standards is the ARFF officers and staff that are engaged on the contract.

The second issue often stems from concerns around management control and responsibility for delivery. By delegating and working as partners, communicating openly, honestly and in a timely manner, and through building close working relationships, we quickly overcome any feelings of doubt or concern.

Thirdly, the issue of cost versus benefit must always be addressed. While airport ARFF services may be seen by some as an expensive mandatory cost, in most cases the provision of an outsourced ARFF service can deliver cost savings in other areas of airport maintenance and management.

Finally, a common misconception is that outsourcing an existing airport ARFF service to a third-party provider will result in firefighters losing their jobs. This is simply

*“It is unrealistic for airport operators to be experts in every business function, process and discipline required to manage a modern airport.”*

not the case. In most situations, it makes sense for the outsourced provider to retain as many of the incumbent staff as possible on the contract.

What are the cost considerations involved in outsourcing?

People and equipment form the largest elements of cost for any ARFF service. Labour costs, including the costs of employment, vary from country to country and from role to role within the ARFF itself. The mix of officers to firefighters, the availability and recruitment of ex-pat staff versus local staff and the contractual conditions of work all influence the final cost of labour for the end customer. It is also very important to consider local employment terms and conditions and to ensure that costs such as social insurance, pensions and contractual stipends are captured and included.

Similarly, emergency vehicles and the technical equipment required to effectively fight fires and rescue



people in modern aircraft and airport incidents can be very expensive. For example, a typical airport crash rescue tender can range in price from \$500,000 to more than \$1.2 million depending upon the age, technical specification, and the category of airport the vehicle is required to protect.

Other ancillary costs for the ARFF service will include staff travel, training and certification costs, communications, IT and data costs, licenses, and permit costs, insurances, medical support and, in some extreme cases, security and life support costs.

What should businesses consider when selecting a partner organisation?

The first consideration should be around timing – when is the new service required to be at full operating capacity and is there enough time work through the tendering and selection process to ensure a successful outcome? The earlier that engagement can begin with potential partner organisations, the better for all parties.

The next consideration is to know what ARFF services you require – being clear on the full scope of requirement early in the process will ensure clarity for all parties and will deliver a smoother, more cost-efficient service in the longer term.

Finally, be realistic about the budget for delivering a fully compliant

ARFF service for your aerodrome – manage the expectations of those responsible for allocating and approving the budget and ensure that the safety of travellers, airport staff and firefighters always remains the highest priority.

“It makes sense for the outsourced provider to retain as many of the incumbent staff as possible on the contract.”

What are the main services you offer for customers looking to outsource their aviation fire and rescue services?

G3 systems offer the following main services for our customers:

- Structural & industrial rescue & fire fighting service
- Aviation crash/rescue & fire fighting services
- Emergency dispatch & control
- Incident command & control
- On-site fire safety, fire inspection & service

- Emergency vehicle management & maintenance
- Fire & rescue equipment and facilities management & maintenance
- Fire & rescue training
- Emergency medical services

How do you analyse the needs and requirements of potential clients?

Assessing the needs of a potential client begins with a conversation to determine what kind of airport they are operating (Civilian, Military or both, or Heliport/Seaplane Airport etc.) and what the ICAO Category for the airport is or will be. This immediately helps determine the number and type of emergency vehicles that are required to meet the regulations (ICAO Annex 14 Document 9137 Part 1: Rescue and Fire Fighting) and therefore the minimum number of staff that will be required to effectively deliver the ARFF service.

We determine if the airport is already operational, with an incumbent ARFF service, or if the airport is a new development requiring a first time ARFF presence. The geographic location of the airport is also important as we need to understand the local operating conditions, both physically and environmentally as well as commercially. We also need to understand the timing requirements for the airport and the process that the customer will undertake for competitive tendering.

A task resource analysis is conducted, and mobilisation and project management plans created to understand exactly how the new ARFF service will be implemented. We then also have our strict risk based internal process to navigate, ensuring that any responsibilities and liabilities that we take on are manageable and viable for us as an organisation.

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[www.g3-systems.co.uk](http://www.g3-systems.co.uk)

G3 Systems provide professional outsourced Fire and Rescue Services to industrial, aviation and high-risk critical infrastructure operators.

Reducing the risk of emergency situations by always being prepared, ready and able to respond instantly to any incident forms the core of G3 System's Fire and Rescue Services.

To find out more about how our teams can help you manage your on-site risk and resilience, contact us now on +44 1305 825300 or email [sales@g3-systems.co.uk](mailto:sales@g3-systems.co.uk)