

CASE STUDY

National Police Improvement Agency discovers immeasurable value

Emergency services – the power of true partnership

“Within a few weeks I had a fully functioning system, precisely the same as it was before the disaster”

Tom McArthur, Director of Operations, National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA)



The site of the Buncefield blast, showing the building housing the NPIA's disaster recovery centre in the smoking in the foreground.

The challenge

When the NPIA's mission-critical disaster recovery site was devastated by the blast at the Buncefield Oil Storage Terminal on December 11th 2005, Fujitsu pulled out all the stops to ensure the site was up and running again as quickly as possible.

The solution

Fujitsu started a Europe-wide search for a replacement of the out of production mainframe the NPIA was using within two hours of the blast. Once found, this was shipped to the UK and installed at the main site.

The operating systems were then installed and within a few weeks the NPIA had a fully functioning system, precisely the same as it was before the disaster - a development site, a test site and a back-up site.

From the time of the accident, this took only two months, including sourcing and installing an out-of-production mainframe.

Solution components

- S170 mainframe
- S190 mainframe

Customer benefits

- Rapid restoration of IT infrastructure
- Storage discs recovered holding vital data
- Unique insight into how IT was used within the organisation
- Increasing the efficiency and sophistication of operations
- Development of a real-time link between 2 sites to ensure data is backed-up continuously

The project

The fires at Buncefield burned for several days and it was a week after the blast before anyone from McArthur's team was allowed into the site. When they entered the building their fears were realised. The shock waves from the initial blast had tossed the NPIA's heavy eight foot cabinet servers through the air. The S170 mainframe computer was badly damaged.

However, Marks' prescience had paid off. Within a few days of his team accessing the destroyed site, Marks had not only located an out-of-production S170 but also had it shipped to the UK. Now the race was on to assess the extent of the damage, see what could be salvaged and then rebuild the disaster recovery site at the NPIA's main site.

Alongside NPIA staff, Fujitsu technicians entered the building and despite the wreckage and amid scorched and burnt rooms, they were able to recover some of the storage discs which held thousands of records. While a back-up of all the data existed, these salvaged discs provided snapshot data taken right before the blast – invaluable to the recovery process.

At the same time, Fujitsu began preparing NPIA's main site to temporarily house the disaster recovery site. This involved making space for the equipment as well as setting up power supplies that ran independently of the main site, even though they were now both in the same location, albeit temporarily.

A record of success

Fujitsu technicians understood the vital importance of restoring the systems as quickly as possible. The partnership had been in place for twenty years and the company had unique insight into how IT was used within the organisation. It was also extremely mindful of the fact that 52 police forces within the UK, as well as organisations such as the Serious Organised Crime Agency and the British Transport Police, relied on these systems to access intelligence information.

Fujitsu had also helped shape the delivery of police services which, in some cases, has had a profound effect on increasing the efficiency and sophistication of operations. For example, company technicians coded the search applications that permit checks on vehicles, via the PNC, and auto number plate recognition, to be completed in less than two seconds. This understanding of client needs and a driving urgency impelled Fujitsu to achieve something little short of a miracle.

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