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ISO Audits: Preparation is Key

When the Insurance Services Office (ISO) is coming to town, it typically means a fire department can spend hundreds of valuable man-hours to prepare for the visit. Anyone who has had a successful ISO audit will agree that being well-prepared is vital – but that preparation doesn't have to be overly stressful and time-consuming.



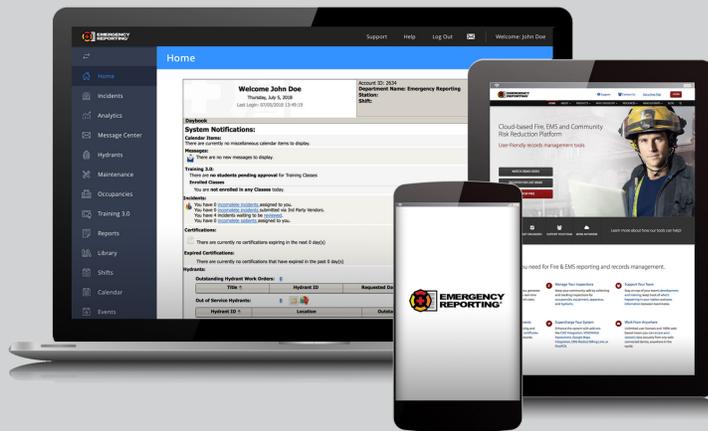
David Richardson, Administration Major, Midwest City Fire Department (OK)

Using a powerful Records Management Software (RMS) platform like Emergency Reporting (ER) is one of the best ways to be prepared for your next ISO audit. In this white paper, we'll discuss ways to use Emergency Reporting software to help you prepare (and stress less), and even improve your department's rating. We'll give you an inside look at how one ER customer, Administration Major David Richardson of Midwest City Fire Department in Oklahoma, led his department through three ISO audits and successfully used ER to achieve a top ISO Class 1 each time.

Not only has Major Richardson led his department through three successful ISO audits, but he was also an ISO rep for seven years prior to working in the fire service. His valuable advice can help you prepare for your next ISO survey.

“ER is going to help get ISO in and out quickly and get them out of your hair.”

- Major Richardson



ISO Public Protection Survey: The Basics



If you have never had a visit from the Insurance Services Office (ISO), it is good to know what to expect so you can be prepared when you do have an audit. We will discuss the basics of the ISO Public Protection Survey as well as ways to improve your department's rating.

ISO SCALE 1-10



- **Class 1** is the best
- **Class 10** is no recognized fire protection
- **Class 9** has a truck only (no water)
- **Classes 1–8** have a truck and water
- **Split Class** is a combination of truck and water or truck only for certain areas
- **All classes** only apply to those areas within 5 miles of a fire station and 1000' of a hydrant (unless water is being used)

ISO inspections or audits are conducted by field representatives who visit a community to determine the fire risk based on the Field Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS). Using the FSRS, ISO will evaluate many facets of your community's fire suppression and prevention efforts.

ISO updated the FSRS in 2013 and began citing specific NFPA standards. This has resulted in faster and more efficient surveys. A visit that might have previously taken two days can usually be completed in two hours. Your Community will be provided with a "pre-survey" packet, which contributes to cutting down on the visit time.

Upon completion of their assessment, ISO will issue the audited department a Public Protection Classification (PPC) rating from 1 to 10, with 1 being the best.



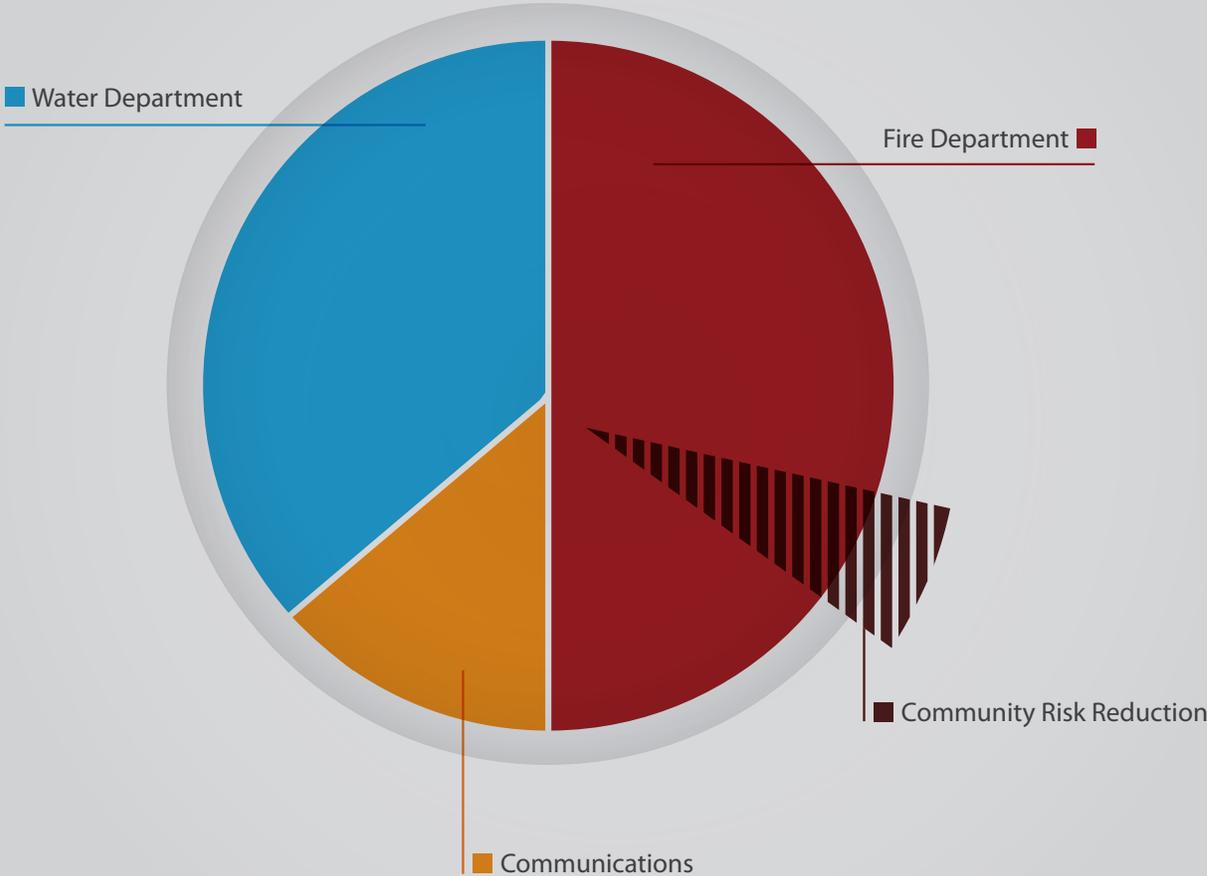
Every property owner with insurance in the United States can be affected by a community ISO Public Protection Classification rating.

A department can often help reduce their community's insurance premiums by improving their PPC. A lower PPC not only results in lower insurance premiums, it also reduces the fire risk to people and property.

Breaking Down the ISO Evaluation + ER Reports That Will Come in Handy

Here are the four areas that ISO will grade you on:

- Communications – 10% of your grading
- Water Department – 40% of your grading
- Fire Department – 50% of your grading
- Community Risk Reduction – 5.5% bonus points



Below is a useful chart, created by Major Richardson, that shows ISO item numbers from three of the grading categories, and the correlating ER reports to use. Sixty percent of your grading can be done with these reports in ER:

60% of ISO Items within ER Reports

%	ISO Item #	ER Report		
Fire Department 50%				
6%	Equipment on Engines	#512	#963	Equipment List for Assigned Apparatus for Category
4%	Equipment on Ladders	#542	#963	Equipment List for Assigned Apparatus for Category
10%	Deployment Analysis	#560	#1722	Incident Response and Apparatus Times
15%	Company Personnel	#570	#1193	Hours Worked per Activity Code
9%	Training Hours	#580	#1623	Code Hours Summary per Training Code
2%	Operational Considerations	#700		Use the ER Library to store SOP/G's
46%				
Water Department 40%				
3%	Hydrants - Size & Type	#620	#1243	Hydrants per Hydrant Type
3.50%	Hydrants - Inspection	#630A	#1246	Maintenance History per Hydrant for Date Range
3.50%	Hydrants - Flow Test	#630B	#1248	Hydrants Flow Tested for Date Range
10%				
Community Risk 5.5%				
2.20%	Inspections Conducted	#1022A	#1658	Occupancies Inspected by Inspector for Inspector for Date Range
	Inspections Conducted	#1022A	#727	Occupancies Inspected for Date Range (Gives total % complete)
	Inspector Certifications	#1023A/B	#1623	Code Hours Summary per Training Code
2.20%	Fire Prevention Programs	#1024A-E	#954	Daily Log Items for Activity Code
	Safety Educator Training	#1031A/B	#1623	Code Hours Summary per Training Code
	Public Education Programs	#1032A-D	#1108	Daily Log Items for Activity Code per Personnel Per Apparatus
	NFIRS Reporting	#1043		Be sure and submit your NFIRS reports!
4.40%				

Let's take a closer look at the fourth item as an example. This is in the Fire Department category – which accounts for fifty percent of the ISO assessment. Fire department personnel (ISO item #570) makes up 15 percent of that 50. In other words, fire department staffing is 7.5 percent of the entire ISO score.

ER can help departments prepare for this portion of the assessment by enabling them to account for the number of Existing Company Personnel (ECP). A component of the ECP is the number of On-Duty Firefighters at Fire Stations (ODF). This number is the average number of firefighters on-duty with companies at the fire station(s) (ISO FSRs 570.A, p.32). A volunteer or combination department can also earn credit for firefighters that spend time at the station (e.g., a scheduled station cleanup day)*. Any volunteer firefighter doing activities at a station where he/she can respond to incidents should log those hours with a code you can easily reference when running ER Report #1299.

Using Daily Rosters and Report #1299 Hours Worked per Activity Code for Personnel for Date Range, fire departments can easily generate a high quality, reliable report that will give them the ODF value.

*From ISO: Volunteer firefighters who are on duty at fire stations according to a predetermined assignment are credited as on-duty firefighters (ODF) for the time they are on duty; otherwise, volunteer firefighters are considered on-call (ISO FSRs 570.C, p.33).

Preparing for your Next ISO Audit

Goals for Surviving Your Next ISO Visit:

- Maintain your existing rating.
- Try to improve - if you have the resources to do so.
- Do not regress - if you have had an economic downturn, good record keeping is one thing you can fall back on to help prevent this from happening.

Major Richardson advises that the number one most important thing you can do to prepare is to ensure you are regularly and accurately submitting your data, and to have a person or a team of people who monitor it regularly.

Using ER helps make this an easier process. "With ER's trigger, you can't submit a incident report that hasn't been reviewed or completed, so you can easily see how many reports are outstanding – which is very helpful. And the Analytics module can help find errors," he says.

According to Major Richardson, there are twelve ER modules that Midwest City FD uses every single day and have helped them prepare for their ISO visits:

- Incidents
- Hydrants
- Maintenance
- Occupancy
- Training 3.0
- Reports
- Library
- Shifts
- Calendar
- Events
- Daily Roster
- Analytics

See What Other ER Customers Are Saying:

"We had our ISO visit in July of 2017, and as this was my first ISO audit in my current position, my stress level was at an all-time high prior to the audit. But with ER, the process was incredibly simple compared to the horror stories of years past. The function of running a search for the types of training ISO is concerned with and filtering out all others made my life easy."

– ER customer Scott Flitcraft, Training Chief, Panama City Fire Department (FL)

"While the men and women of Beaver Lake Fire Department put in the effort, without ER I do not believe we would have been successful in moving our department from a class SIX to a class FOUR. Since receiving our improved ISO audit documents, I have utilized ER to prepare for another rerate where we intend to improve to a class THREE ISO rating."

– ER customer John Whisenant, Fire Chief, Beaver Lake Fire Department (AR)

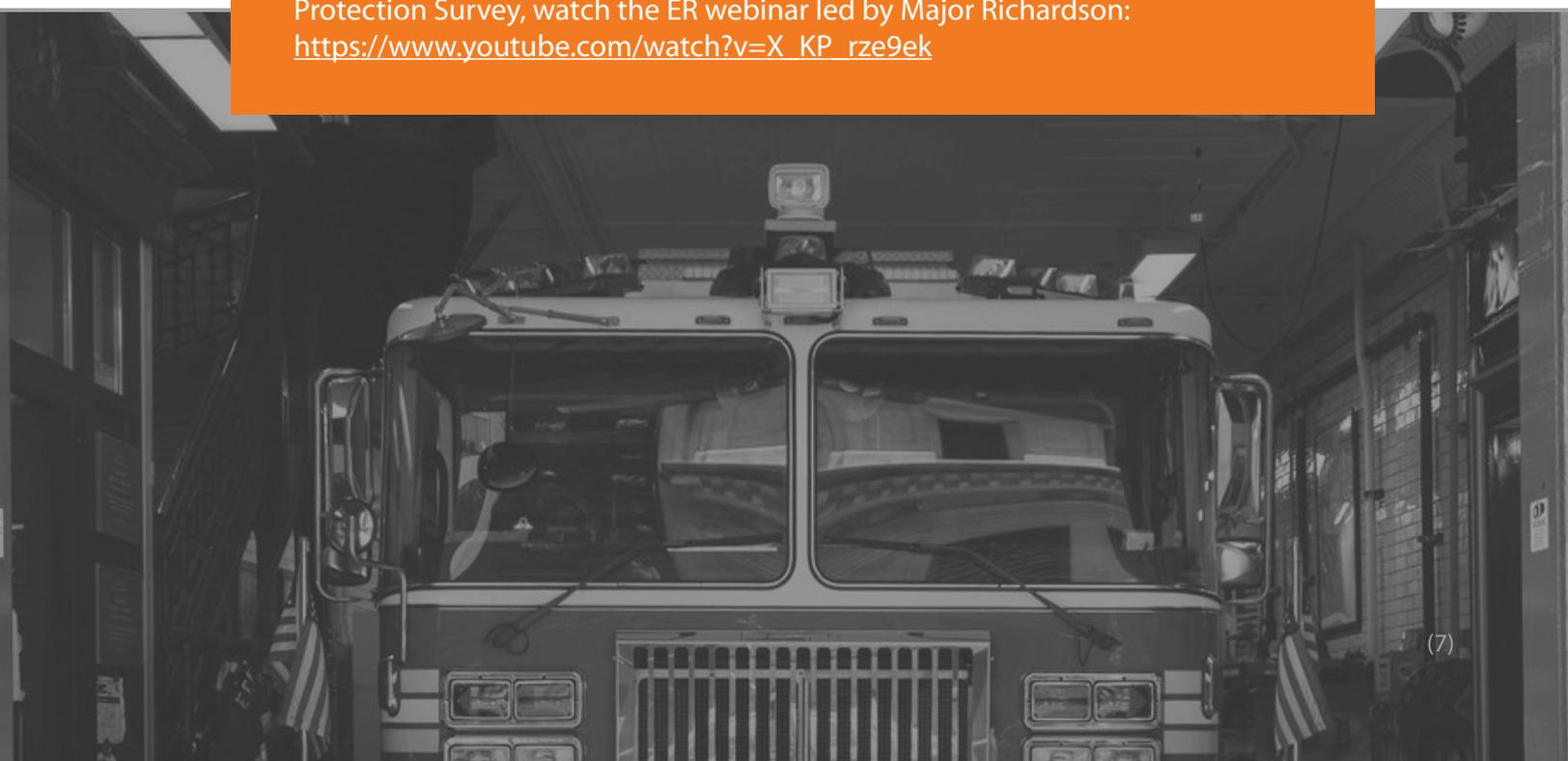
“All of those in some form have an impact on the data that I’m going to give an ISO field rep when he comes. All of these will help provide the data that ISO’s looking for,” he says.

For example, Richardson says, ER report #1722 in the Incidents module gives you all the data needed for 1710 response times for ISO use. ER report #1623 is the best report to summarize your annual records and is extremely helpful to the ISO rep.

According to Major Richardson, the report that works best for keeping track of personnel in ER is #1193 in the Daily Roster – which he says is extremely important. “Log your time and make sure you show all your manned hours. If you don’t do the work, you lose points,” he says. “If you can show actual staffing (down to the decimal), it can benefit you greatly. Personnel is the single highest point item in the entire FSRS.”

Whether your agency has been through several ISO audits or hasn’t had one yet, it’s important to make sure you’re accurately and consistently inputting and monitoring your data, as well as taking advantage of your ER software in preparation for a future ISO visit. As Major Richardson puts it: “Just having ER and your records will get you points. ER is going to help get ISO in and out quickly and get them out of your hair.”

To learn more about how to use ER data for your next ISO Public Protection Survey, watch the ER webinar led by Major Richardson:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_KP_rze9ek





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About Emergency Reporting

Emergency Reporting (ER) offers a powerful, cloud-based records management software (RMS) solution to Fire/EMS agencies worldwide. Founded in 2003, ER empowers first responders with secure, easy-to-use station management tools that offer one-report filing of NFIRS and NEMSIS data. ER's affordable SaaS solution allows Fire/EMS departments to run their entire operations efficiently and effectively, enhancing both firefighter and citizen safety. ER is proud to support more than 454,000 first responders at thousands of civilian Fire/Rescue and EMS agencies and DoD/military installations, as well as large entities with self-contained Fire/EMS services such as NASA, nuclear power plants, hospitals, and oil refineries.

Information

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www.emergencyreporting.com

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