

Sprinklers save logistics warehouse from potentially devastating blaze

WHEN A fire broke out at a food distribution warehouse in Hastings, an automatic sprinkler system activated and extinguished the blaze, duly minimising damage and ensuring that the business would be able to return to operations later that day with little disruption.

On Sunday 4 October at 6.00 am, fire engines and firefighters from the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service were called to the A.F. Blakemore and Son Ltd food distribution warehouse located on Ivyhouse Lane. A small fire located in a fan unit had been quickly extinguished by the sprinkler system in the 90,000 square foot facility. Had the blaze not been contained it would have caused significant damage to this logistics business which supplies food products to a network of Spar stores across South East England.

Commenting on the episode, a spokesperson from the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service explained: "This is a timely reminder to other companies to invest in a sprinkler system which could serve to protect their business from severe fire damage. A sprinkler system really can make a difference. In 2019, we attended a similar fire locally which resulted in the total loss of the business' facilities. Sprinklers would have made the difference."



That business was engineering firm Drallim Industries, based in St Leonards, which is only now returning with new premises some 20 months after the fire completely destroyed its factory. The fire last February meant that the company had to relocate to temporary facilities. In addition to the loss of business and the disruption realised across the local community, the fire necessitated the evacuation of nearby residents and road closures.

"Sprinkler systems are specifically designed to contain a fire, ensuring that businesses are often up-and-running again within a short period of time due to limited damage," added the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service spokesperson.

As one of the UK's leading family-owned food firms, A.F. Blakemore and Son Ltd has ensured that it's resilient to fire with sprinklers being a key component in the company's

safety strategy. The spokesperson added: "East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service would like to highlight the importance of such fire safety measures as they deliver benefits that really do far exceed the cost of their installation and maintenance."

Home Office figures show that the Fire and Rescue Service in England has attended 26,800 fires in industrial and commercial buildings in the past three years alone. From offices to industrial buildings and healthcare facilities through to hotels, the impact of a major fire can be devastating. Indeed, many businesses never recover.

The cost of fire in industrial and commercial buildings goes far beyond the expense and impacts on individual businesses and insured costs. Fires are the cause of significant economic, environmental and local community costs, many of which are ultimately going to be borne by the taxpayer.

The inclusion of a sprinkler system can prevent major financial and equipment losses, containing what could be a potential disaster and instead turning it into a minor inconvenience. Proven time and again with consistent reliability, the installation of these systems is a small price to pay in order to prevent a business from totally failing.