A new era for CROSS-UK and confidential safety reporting

PAUL LIVESEY
BEng, MSc, CEng, FIStructE
Head of Operations, CROSS

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Collaborative Reporting for Safer Structures (CROSS) – a significant milestone for the scheme, which has grown into a trusted and authoritative voice in the built environment.

Over the past two decades, the submission of confidential reports, including many from members of the IStructE, has had a tangible impact on improving safety and creating positive change.

Coinciding with this anniversary, and as you will hopefully have seen in the August issue of *The Structural Engineer*, CROSS-UK has now been appointed by the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) as the Voluntary Occurrence Reporting System (VORS) for fire and structural safety until at least 2028.

Why the appointment matters for CROSS

CROSS was established in 2005 by the IStructE and the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE). In 2019, following Dame Judith Hackitt's post-Grenfell *Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety*, the UK government funded an expansion of CROSS to include fire safety reporting. The scheme relaunched in 2021 with the Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE) as a key partner.

Over 20 years, CROSS has proven its ability to provide a safe, independent platform where professionals can share safety concerns without fear of blame. Our role in supporting learning, identifying risks and promoting cultural change is now widely recognised.

Being formally appointed as the VORS operator until 2028 reinforces this position and reflects the trust placed in CROSS to lead on safety reporting for the long term.

Why this matters for the industry

The Building Safety Act introduced strengthened legislation for building safety and construction products and

CROSS at 20: Key milestones

2005: The CROSS system is founded by the IStructE and the ICE to provide a confidential platform for sharing safety concerns in the built environment.
2018: CROSS goes international as CROSS Australasia (CROSS-AUS) is launched.
2019: Following Dame Judith Hackitt's post-Grenfell review, the UK government funds the expansion of CROSS to include fire safety reporting.
2019: The international network of CROSS grows as CROSS United States (CROSS-US) is launched.
2021: The scheme relaunches with support from the IFE, broadening its scope to cover both structural and fire safety.
2022: The Building Safety Act is introduced, requiring an independent Voluntary Occurrence Reporting System (VORS) as part of wider reforms to building safety and construction product regulation in the UK.
2023: CROSS-UK begins operating the VORS on an interim basis, providing a safe, confidential mechanism for reporting fire and structural safety concerns.
2025: CROSS-UK confirmed as the official VORS operator until at least 2028, solidifying its role as a driver of shared learning and improved safety standards across the industry.

How the Voluntary Occurrence Reporting System (VORS) works

Independent and confidential
Operated by CROSS-UK, VORS is completely independent of the Building Safety Regulator and government.

Simple to use
Reports can be submitted online through a dedicated portal.

Expert panel review
Every report is reviewed by an independent panel of respected professionals from across the built environment. Its role is to identify key lessons, trends and risks.

Shared learning
Findings are published anonymously on the CROSS website, providing practical case studies and insights from which the whole industry can learn.

Complementing mandatory reporting
VORS sits alongside the Mandatory Occurrence Reporting (MOR) system. While MOR places legal duties on certain duty holders for higher-risk buildings, VORS is open to all built environment professionals and captures broader insights.

mandated the establishment of an independent voluntary reporting system, separate from both the regulator and the government. The Act recognised that the industry change needed in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire cannot be achieved through rules alone; it must also be embedded in behaviours, values and shared responsibility.

As the operator of the VORS, CROSS-UK provides a practical mechanism to support this necessary industry change. We complement the Mandatory Occurrence Reporting (MOR) system that places legal duties on certain parties related to higher-risk buildings, but, in contrast, VORS is voluntary, open to all built environment professionals, and is for all types of structures and buildings. This wider scope ensures that valuable lessons, whether from design, construction, occupation or end of life, can be captured and shared.

Unlike whistleblowing schemes, CROSS and the VORS are not about blame. Our purpose is to foster openness and collective learning. Because CROSS operates independently from enforcement, the focus is on improving safety outcomes and sharing knowledge.

> **THE CONTINUED SUCCESS OF CROSS AND VORS WILL DEPEND ON THE COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT OF STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS**

By creating a trusted, independent, and confidential space for sharing concerns, CROSS, as the VORS, encourages people to speak up. Expert panels review the reports and publish findings anonymously on the CROSS website, turning individual experiences into collective learning.

In doing so, the scheme helps raise standards across the industry, improving both structural and fire safety.

Building a safer future together

As CROSS marks its 20th anniversary, the timing of this appointment reflects how far the scheme has come, and the role it will play in shaping the future.

The task ahead is clear: to ensure that CROSS becomes embedded across the sector and continues to be a trusted and widely used tool for learning and improvement.

The continued success of CROSS and VORS will depend on the collective commitment of structural engineers and other professionals across the built environment. By contributing to the system through confidential submissions (www.cross-safety.org/uk/submit-a-report-uk), learning from published reports, and embracing a culture of openness, you can help the industry improve and deliver lasting change.

Find out more about CROSS at www.cross-safety.org/.