



FIRE SAFETY:

UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS

GUIDANCE

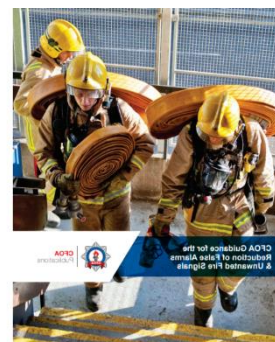
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INTRODUCTION

Fire and Rescues services (FRS) will continue to pursue a risk-based approach to Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) turnout, matching attendance to risk in conjunction with a Unwanted Fire Signal (UFS) prevention strategy. False alarms not only reduce the availability of fire appliances for real emergency incidents, they also result in the loss of production and the general disruption of your normal business activities. In addition, a system that generates false alarms may not be as effective, people will gradually lose confidence in the alarm system and therefore may not respond appropriately in a real fire situation.

All FRS are striving to ensure best use of resources through modified response to AFAs whilst ensuring that your premises risk is carefully monitored.



[Click photo to view guidance](#)

The methodology employed by this draft guidance to reduce UFS is the culmination of the following;

- Education through undertaking a range of generic and specific campaigns to highlight the moral and legal duties of premises responsible persons and other key stakeholders in the fire alarm industry.
- The use of a call challenging protocol by fire control staff. This means that when you, or your call centre contacts fire and rescue about fire alarm activation you will be asked a series of questions. In most circumstances the caller will be asked to establish the cause of the alarm. If there is a confirmed fire, fire and rescue resources will be mobilised. This will also apply to your alarm call centre staff contacting your premises to ascertain the situation before the signal is passed to FRS.
- The adoption of a robust offline policy by considering taking your fire alarm system offline during periods when the premises are fully occupied. This means that whilst the fire alarm will continue to warn persons within the building of a possible fire, the signal will not be transmitted automatically to the Alarm Receiving Company. This can be achieved by a risk assessment and be detailed in the premises Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and training to staff given before implementation. The offline period will normally be during the hours 07:00 to 19:00 but these times are variable according to risk and staffing levels.
- Unacceptable performance may result in the requirement for immediate remedial action and improvements may be time bound. A reduced attendance may be introduced until the poor performance is rectified. FRS will establish in advance the appropriate level at which changes in response are determined. Thus, advising you that your premises have exceeded the acceptable performance trigger.
- The Localism Act 2011 brings into force changes and allows FRS to charge for responding to a report of fire where the call is made within the following circumstances: There is a report of fire, The premises are not domestic, the report is false, the report is made as a direct or indirect result of warning equipment having malfunctioned or been mis-installed and there is a persistent problem.



You should be advised in advance of any changes to attendance levels and reminded that you should alert your Insurance Company to the changes to FRS attendance response. Furthermore, it will be incumbent upon you to review the Fire Risk Assessment/Emergency Plan.

FRS will also consider the use of enforcement powers under Fire Safety legislation. You must be aware that it is the Responsible Person (RP) as defined by the Fire Safety Order (Article 3) who has responsibility for the alarm system and all other fire safety measures within the premises. The RP is required by law to ensure that all fire precautions within the premises including the alarm system are managed and maintained effectively and that effective premises management is in place. Properly managed and maintained, an automatic fire alarm system with its fast response in the initial stages of a fire can be a significant factor in protecting life and limiting damage to your property. Unfortunately, the very features that provide this fast response can also produce false alarms arising from activities and events other than a fire situation.

An important factor in minimising the disruption to your business when the fire alarm actuates falsely is to have in place an effective emergency action plan that is appropriate to your premises.

In most premises, it is reasonable to develop procedures that limit the degree of unnecessary disruption due to false alarms. You may wish to consider that in the event of the alarm sounding you adopt an appropriate investigation strategy, false actuations of the fire alarm can be quickly identified, the system reset and the workplace return to normal state, thereby minimising the disruption to your business.

Finally, I must reiterate that where it is found the alarm has actuated due to a fire, the fire and rescue service should be called.



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