



Technical Fire Safety Policy

Fire Alarm/Detection Systems With Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) Facility

Policy Statement and Scope

This policy supports the Essex County Fire & Rescue Service (ECFRS) strategic aims and the outcomes of the Integrated Risk Management Planning process (IRMP). The response aspect of the policy considers levels of activity to Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) and the types of premises where these occur.

ECFRS is committed to using its resources to protect the community and our personnel in the most efficient and effective way possible. Responding to Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) does not achieve this.

This policy will reduce the risk to members of the public in three main areas as follows:

- Appliances, equipment and personnel are unavailable for incidents as a result of their mobilisation to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA), False Alarm Defective Apparatus (FADA)
- Specialist equipment is unavailable as a result of its mobilisation to incidents where it is not needed
- Unnecessary "Blue Light" road traffic movements.

ECFRS will make every effort to reduce the attendance to UwFS and the number of unnecessary UwFS it receives. Managers have a responsibility to support and promote this action when carrying out their operational and non operational duties. Every opportunity should be taken to enhance this work especially using Community Fire Safety activity (CFS) and Technical Fire Safety audits (TFS Audits).

The policy covers all commercial premises including those with and without a sleeping risk, schools and designated high risk premises including Top Tier CoMAH sites. It **does not** cover domestic premises which fall outside the scope of this policy.

Policy Wording

The British Fire Protection System Association (BFPSA) defines an UwFS as “any fire alarm signal other than a genuine fire or test signal”. BS 5839 -1 2002 also defines a false alarm as a fire signal resulting from a cause(s) other than a fire and further subdivides these false alarms into four categories:

- Unwanted alarms
- Equipment false alarms
- Malicious false alarms
- False alarms with good intent

The reduction of these unwanted alarms is both a Service and a national issue and was the subject of an HMI Thematic Review in 2001. For the purposes of this policy, any premises with a fire detection and alarm system should be classified as a “problem premises” if they are generating false alarm calls due to apparatus in excess of the stated criteria in the AFA management guidance.

Managers in Area Commands will have current and accurate ‘false alarm call data’ (FACD) available at their disposal to effectively monitor and manage the level of UwFS that occur within their area of responsibility. They will proactively support and advise on the standards of fire safety required in respect of premises and safety systems, and where necessary enforce the legal duties placed upon a premises responsible person, in order to achieve a safe environment.

Related Documents

Further Information

- Fire Service Manual Volume 1 'Communications and Mobilising'. (STN)
- Manuals of Firemanship Book 9, Part 2 'Fire Alarm Systems' (STN)
- Manuals of Firemanship Book 10, Part 5 'AFA Signalling System Arrangements'. (STN)
- Reducing false alarms – A thematic Inspection of unwanted fire signals from Automatic Fire Detection systems by HM Fire Service Inspectorate. (www.odpm.gov.uk)
- BS5839 (part 1) 2002 – Code of Practice for Fire Detection and Alarm Systems for buildings – Community Command/Service Delivery SHQ/Technical Index.
- A guide to reducing the number of false alarms from automatic fire detection systems – ODPM, BFPSA and CFOA – (www.odpm.gov.uk)
- Making a difference – A thematic Inspection of Community Safety by the HM Fire Service Inspectorate. (www.odpm.gov.uk)