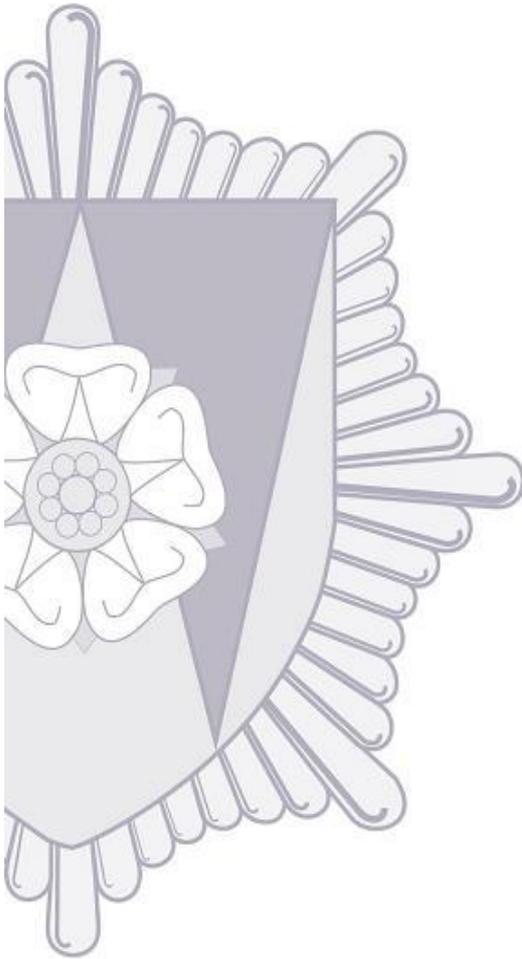


Fire Protection Policy

Reduction of False Alarms & Unwanted Fire Signals



West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service

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PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

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1. Foreword

- 1.1. In producing this policy, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (WYFRS). have established a carefully considered holistic approach to both improve premises fire safety and protect members of the public by maintaining valuable fire and rescue service resources. Whilst the increase in installations of automatic fire alarm and fire detection systems is welcomed, the rise in false alarms is not. Alarm systems are often less effective than design intended, putting people at risk, and placing an increasing burden on the resources of WYFRS.
- 1.2. Excellent guidance currently exists for the design, installation and maintenance of fire alarm systems for example BS5839. However, it is recognised that there is a need to introduce an approach capable of addressing all of the various influencing elements from the design through to the response. In this policy, a difference between managing the significant fire safety concerns of false alarms and the risk posed to the public when WYFRS are continually being asked to attend false alarms has been established. In applying the practices outlined in this policy, WYFRS are confident that there will be:
- Significant improvements in protecting persons from fire through improved fire safety measures.
 - Improved industry awareness leading to better servicing, maintenance and guidance;
 - Improved compliance with fire safety legislation; and
 - Significant reductions in attendance to false alarms – protecting valuable resources;
- 1.3. The approach contained in this document is underpinned by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO), and fully supports WYFRS's Integrated Risk Management Plan and Community Risk Management Strategy. The introduction of this policy will make a huge contribution to fire safety within West Yorkshire as it will reduce the complacency of the public when an alarm sounds by reducing the number of unnecessary calls to which WYFRS responds.

2. Background and Scope

- 2.1. Over many years WYFRS have been working with local and national businesses to reduce the number of Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) that are generated from premises protected by fire detection and fire alarm systems. The number of automatic fire detection and fire alarm systems (AFAS) installed is increasing and there is concern about the corresponding increase in UwFS from some of these systems.
- 2.2. This policy applies to all premises identified and regulated under the FSO which are or will be installed with automatic fire detection and automatic fire alarm systems.
- 2.3. The policy does not cover false alarms and UwFS generated from single private dwellings.

3. Introduction

- 3.1. This policy has been developed in co-operation with stakeholders representing various functions within WYFRS. The overall aim is to reduce the occurrence of false alarms from automatic fire detection and alarm systems and to manage the appropriate response to UwFS.
- 3.2. There are two distinct elements which this policy seeks to address:

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- false alarms which may contribute to fire safety issues; and
- protecting the public by reducing UwFS which impact on the resources of WYFRS.

3.3. Over a number of years WYFRS has addressed UwFS's and false alarms where the issue is one of system error with occupiers and owners by the use of Fire Protection visits to discuss current arrangements of the fire alarm. This process has helped to reduce the number of incidents of false alarms; however the figure is still high.

3.4. It is a known fact that if false alarms are reduced then UwFS will also reduce, however the reduction of UwFS does not necessarily reduce the number of false alarms and therefore this policy seeks to address this balance by targeting fire protection activities at premises that pose the highest risk.

3.5. The policy recognises that there is no single solution to the UwFS issue. It recognises that a holistic approach is required to encourage and ensure the cultural change required from the business community and the general public in order to promote a sustained reduction in the number of UwFS to WYFRS.

3.6. This policy provides a clear and structured strategy that will lead to sustained reductions in false alarms and UwFS and provides a robust framework in which to operate within.

4. The Aims of This Policy

4.1 To provide a clear process for those parties involved in managing the reduction of false alarms and UwFS.

- To reduce the number of false alarms generated by fire detection and AFAS.
- To reduce the numbers of UwFS attended by WYFRS.
- To provide the most appropriate response to an unconfirmed AFA actuation.
- Where attendance to AFAS's is persistent, costs are recovered for those attendances.
- To ensure that through transparent Integrated Risk Management Planning our resources, be it Operational or Fire Protection, are utilised to achieve our ambition of making West Yorkshire Safer.

5. Policy Operation

5.1. This policy recognises that key to the effective performance of automatic fire detection and alarm systems is the correct design, installation, commissioning, acceptance and maintenance process. If the protocols described in BS5839 are followed a false alarm issue is unlikely to occur.

5.2. It is important that the design takes into account the fire strategy, fire risk assessment, the practical use of the building by its occupants and the potential for false alarms to be generated at the earliest possible stage.

5.3. It is important to recognise the different ways in which the AFA signal is relayed to WYFRS control. Each relay method has its own distinctive features and each requires a separate approach in order to safely and effectively reduce the number of UwFS's that are passed to WYFRS. Further information on call handling is contained within Section 9 of this document.

5.4. Inevitably there are still going to be a large number of UwFS which are attended by WYFRS and a large number of false alarms which do not involve a response by WYFRS. These false alarms still demonstrate potential for inadequate fire safety

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management at the premises and therefore, this policy utilises the powers in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (as amended) to raise a charge against premises generating persistent false alarms. Further details can be found in Section 13.

- 5.5 Additionally the Authority may use the FSO where false alarms continue to have a detrimental impact on the safety of any relevant person.
- 5.6. There may be occasions when a fire prevention response or a combination of responses may be more effective.

6. The Responsible Person & False Alarms

- 6.1. The person designated as being responsible for the effective management of the AFAS has their responsibilities outlined in BS5839-1 Limitation of false alarms. This policy encourages all persons involved in AFAS management to make themselves aware of the commentary and recommendations of the aforementioned British Standard.
- 6.2. BS5839 -1 the responsibility for the limitation of false alarms for all parties involved in the specification, design, installation, commissioning, management at operational level and maintenance of the AFAS. Where alternative equivalent AFAS standards have been used the above standard may still provide invaluable guidance.
- 6.3. Responsible Persons should be aware of all aspects of the fire alarm and fire alarm monitoring system. It has become clear to WYFRS that Responsible Persons are often unaware of the limitations and possibilities of monitored systems e.g. the time delay relating to quality of communicators and number of lines available from the building, detector options, etc.

7. Filtering Measures On-Site

- 7.1 There are many circumstances in which it may be appropriate to apply methods of filtering false alarms to prevent continual evacuation of people or summoning of WYFRS. These methods range from automatically altering the detector type or sensitivity at different times of day to various forms of time related or staff alarm systems. Filtering measures are outlined in BS5839-1.
- 7.2. Implementation of filtering measures on-site should be introduced following a review of the risk assessment in line with the requirements of the FSO and relevant Government Guidance.

8. Regulatory Fire Safety Intervention

- 8.1. WYFRS has a statutory duty to enforce fire safety legislation and where appropriate should respond with regulatory fire safety intervention under the FSO where poor performance of the AFAS is detrimental to the safety of relevant persons.
- 8.2. The Fire Protection department will monitor the false alarms attended by the service through the utilisation of the Incident Reporting System and the Data Team.
- 8.3. Due to the attendance procedures within this document, Fire Protection will be able to utilise resources to identify, and improve the management procedures within high risk premises such as: Sleeping, Educational, Heritage, COMAH sites and other identified high risk premises.

9. Call Handling by Mobilising Control Operators

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- 9.1. Mobilising staff will handle calls from alarm receiving centres and apply the PDA's as set out within Section 10 of this policy where applicable. Guidance in line with this policy has been produced for control operators to ensure they effectively filter calls between commercial and domestic premises. For commercial premises the procedures enable the identification of sleeping, educational, COMAH, heritage and additional high risk premises, however, safeguards have been included within this guidance to ensure that if the operator is in any doubt as to the classification of the call/incident or premises type then mobilisation must be made.

10. Fire & Rescue Service Attendance Levels

- 10.1. This policy introduces a pre-determined attendance to unconfirmed AFA actuations within a variety of premises. It does take into account however that certain premises are historically of higher risk than others due to either the occupant's activities or specific processes within.
- 10.2. The pre-determined attendance for unconfirmed AFA actuations received either via an Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) or via 999 direct from the premises is as follows:

Between 08:00hrs and 19:00hrs – Unconfirmed AFA call received – No attendance from the Service¹. This level of response is only appropriate Monday to Friday

Between 19:00hrs and 08:00hrs – Unconfirmed AFA call received - 1 pump attendance¹. This minimum level of response will also occur 24 hours on Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays.

¹This will apply to all commercial premises with the exception of:

- Sleeping Premises (including such premises as hospitals, care homes hotels etc.)
- Educational Premises
- COMAH Sites
- Heritage Sites
- Specific risk premises as authorised by the Senior Operations Response Manager

- 10.3. The premises detailed within Section 10.2 will continue to attract a PDA as determined within Operational Procedure No.01A Mobilisation and Roles of Incident Ground Resources, which states:

Between 08:00hrs and 19:00hrs – 1 pump attendance²

Between 19:00hrs and 08:00hrs – 2 pump attendance²

²Unless specific risks have been highlighted resulting in an increase of these levels which must be authorised by the Senior Operations Response Manager.

- 10.4. Confirmed fires will attract a full or enhanced emergency response, dependent upon the information received.
- 10.5. Current procedures for responding to domestic premises are not affected by this policy.

11. The Role of Competent Persons

- 11.1. It is a recommendation of this policy that the Responsible Person shall nominate a competent person to respond to the premises at all times within 20 minutes of an

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alarm activation to facilitate entry to the building, resetting of the AFAS and post alarm procedures.

- 11.2. In the event of no sign of fire being apparent, the FRSs will not necessarily await attendance of the competent person before deciding on the action to take.
- 11.3. Whilst the FRSs may silence the alarm sounders when they have gained access to the premises, they will not be responsible for resetting the fire detection and fire alarm system. This will be the responsibility of the attending competent person.

12. Cost recovery for attendance to persistent false alarms

- 12.1 This section relates to the attendance of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service appliances at premises where the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies to either all or part of the premises.
- 12.2 The purpose of cost recovery is to drive down the number of false alarms and UwFS by encouraging those responsible for fire alarms to manage them in an appropriate manner.
- 12.3 The power to charge in order to recover costs associated with attending false alarms will be used independently to recover the costs incurred by the authority for attending such calls. This action is likely to occur before any enforcement action is taken and therefore will not preclude the provision of appropriate advice, to the Responsible Person which will still continue as detailed in Section 8.
- 12.4 The ability to recover costs through charging for persistent false alarms is done so through the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (FRSA) as amended by the Localism Act 2011. As a result fire and rescue services may now, under Section 18C of the FRSA, charge for reports of fire where:
 - a) The report is of fire at premises that are not domestic premises;
 - b) The report is false;
 - c) The report is made as a direct or indirect result of warning equipment having malfunctioned or been mis-installed; and
 - d) There is a persistent problem with false reports of fire at the premises that are made as a direct or indirect result of warning equipment under common control having malfunctioned or been mis-installed
- 12.5 WYFRS recognises the value of fire alarms in protecting people from fire and reducing the numbers of fire deaths and injuries. Our objective through recovering costs associated with attending false alarms is to encourage those responsible for fire alarm systems to manage them appropriately and to ensure they have adequate management systems in place, so as to reduce the number of false alarms caused by these systems. Additionally, where persistent false alarms do occur and where it is appropriate to do so, that filtering is applied to prevent unnecessary calls being made.
- 12.6 Fire alarms which actuate when there is no fire can be an indication of poor fire safety management on the premises and those false alarms that result in an attendance by WYFRS have a significant impact on the use of operational resources.
- 12.7 Section 18A(2) of the FRSA Act says that Section 18A(1) 'authorises a charge to be imposed on, or recovered from, a person other than the person in respect of whom action is taken by the authority.' It is therefore open to the Authority to decide who should be charged in respect of individual buildings. To establish an appropriate and consistent approach in this regard, the invoice will, whenever practicable, be issued to the Responsible Person as defined under the FSO. In the event this cannot be

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achieved for whatever reason, the charge shall be issued on the owner/operator of the fire alarm system.

- 12.8 A published appeals procedure is made available electronically and provided with each invoice by which recipients of invoices can appeal the charge. When an appeal is submitted, consideration will be given to the supporting evidence so that it can be determined whether the cause of the AFA meets the criteria for charging (set out in S18C FRSA, detailed above).
- 12.9 The purpose of applying a charge is to stimulate an improvement in the local management of automatic fire alarm systems. This is expected to have the following impact:
- a) An improvement in local alarm management practices.
 - b) An increase in the general standard of fire safety at the premises.
 - c) An improvement in the local response to potential emergency situations.
 - d) A reduction in the unnecessary burden on WYFRS resources.
 - e) An increase in the availability of appliances & staff for real emergencies and training.
 - f) An improvement in efficiency resulting in better value FRS service provision to the people of West Yorkshire.
- 12.10 The charging process is an added element supporting the Authority's existing Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals policy.
- 12.11 WYFRS will issue a charge to recover the costs on the fourth and all subsequent attendances to false alarms within a 12 month rolling period where the parameters of this policy apply. The 12 month period will be calculated on the first of every calendar month.
- 12.12 The charge issued for attendance to a false alarm will be the same as the current rate for an appliance for up to 1 hour as detailed in the scale of charges for special service calls and will be charged per actuation.
- 12.13 In order to ensure consistency when dealing with complex sites such as hospitals, Fire Protection Officers will meet with representatives from such organisations to determine a consistent approach across West Yorkshire. In support of this, any charge issued will be done in relation to an individual fire alarm system and not a collection of separate alarms managed by one organisation.
- 12.14 The cost recovery process is supported by the data recorded by attending operational crew. This data is processed by the Data Team in to regular reports of incidents. The reports are then considered by Fire Protection and an invoice is prepared and issued. Enquiries about charging and payment issues will be dealt with by Fire Protection.
- 12.15 Charges will be issued within a period of no greater than 60 days from the date WYFRS become aware that an attendance is chargeable; this is to ensure that the data is accurate and has been quality checked prior to the issuing of the charge. The invoice issued will be for a period of time which will be the preceding month ending with the last day of that month.
- 13. Certification Schemes for Automatic Fire Detection and Fire Alarm Systems**
- 13.1. WYFRS is committed to assisting and supporting users of fire protection products, systems and services to meet their legal responsibilities by encouraging such users to use only third party certificated companies.

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- 13.2. Third party certification schemes for fire protection products and related services are an effective means of providing the fullest possible assurances, offering a level of quality, reliability and safety that non-certificated products may lack. This does not mean goods and services that are not third party approved are less reliable, but there is no obvious way in which this can be demonstrated.
- 13.3. Third party quality assurance can provide confidence, both as a means of satisfying you that the goods and services you have purchased are fit for purpose, and as a means of demonstrating that you have complied with the law.
- 13.4. However, to ensure the level of assurance offered by third party certification schemes, you should always check whether the company you employ sub-contracts work to others. If they do, you will want to check that the subcontractors are subject to the same level of checks of quality and competence as the company you are employing.
- 13.5. A list of companies recognised as providing third party certification schemes for fire alarm design, installation, commissioning and maintenance can be obtained through UKAS. These companies will provide information on third party certificated companies approved to the schemes. It is important to ensure companies are certificated for the particular service provided e.g.: a company might be third party certificated for maintenance work, but not third party certificated for design work.
- 14. Certification Schemes for Alarm Receiving Centres & Telecare Service Providers**
- 14.1. A list of companies recognised as providing third party certification for FAMOs can be obtained through UKAS.

UKAS
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