



INTRODUCTION

The first consideration should a fire break out in a building is the safety of the occupants. On being given an early warning of the outbreak of fire they should have time to evacuate the premises in safety. Early warning of a fire should be integral to your fire risk assessment plan and in general it will be appropriate to install some form of fire alarm system in every type of building to give this early warning.

WHAT FIRE ALARM SYSTEM DO I NEED

As the type and size of buildings vary, so does the type and size of fire alarm system. To ensure you install the correct fire alarm system for your premises you need to refer to the Communities & Local Government Fire Safety Risk Assessment Guides particular to your premises. The guides are available on the government website.

You should also employ the services of a competent fire alarm company for all aspects of an automatic fire alarm system which would include design, installation, commissioning and maintenance. West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service recommend the use of third party certificated companies as a means of satisfying you that the goods and services you have purchased are fit for purpose and as a means of demonstrating you have complied with the law.

A list of companies recognised as providing third party certification schemes for fire alarm design, installation, commissioning and maintenance can be obtained through UKAS or a similar 3rd party certification scheme.

WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FIRE ALARM

The person defined under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 will be ultimately responsible for all aspects of the fire alarm. This person however may decide to nominate a 'Competent Person' who will have enough training, knowledge or experience to enable them to properly assist in the management and maintenance of the fire alarm system in line with the relevant British Standard.

TESTING, INSPECTIONS & MAINTENANCE

Fire alarm systems should be tested and maintained by competent persons in accordance with the manufacturer's instruction and in line with relevant British Standard. Your fire alarm installer / maintainer will be able to give you details.

RECORDS

A log book needs to be kept for the purpose of recording all events that occur in respect of the fire alarm system. This will include:-

- ❖ Details of the Responsible Person
- ❖ Details of the maintainer
- ❖ Details of all fire alarm signals, including, Tests, Fire drill, Fires, False alarms (also giving cause of false alarm)
- ❖ Details of all tests
- ❖ Details of all faults and defects
- ❖ Details of all testing, inspections and maintenance

This log book is essential and will help the maintainer on their inspection programme and will also provide some evidence during a fire safety audit under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, that the fire alarm is compliant with the legislation.

LIMITING FALSE ALARMS

If an automatic fire-detection and fire alarm system is used and maintained properly it is effective in reducing the risk to life and limit damage to property. However, features that provide this fast response can also cause false alarms.

WEST YORKSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE POLICY FOR THE REDUCTION OF FALSE ALARMS & UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS

Due to the increasing and unacceptable number of false alarms from fire alarms attended by the fire service, West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service have introduced a policy for the reduction of false alarms and unwanted fire signals.

Details of this policy can be found on our website which includes details of our policy to charge for the persistent attendance to false alarms.

ACTION TO TAKE FOLLOWING THE FIRE ALARM SOUNDING

When the fire alarm sounds, everyone in the building should immediately follow the fire action plan (this plan must be well publicised within your building).

Trained members of staff may then investigate the actuation in line with the fire risk assessment. Should the actuation prove to be a false alarm there will be no need to call the fire and rescue service.

Following a false alarm where there is no apparent cause for the actuation, follow the procedure described below.

- 1 Silence the fire alarm but do not reset the control panel, as this will get rid of the information you need to further investigate the cause of the false alarm.
- 2 Re check the message on the control panel and confirm where in the building the false alarm came from.
- 3 Re visit that area and locate the break glass box, heat detector or smoke detector that set off the alarm.
- 4 Try to find out why the break glass box or detector was triggered.
- 5 If you are having difficulty finding the detector that was triggered, it may be in a duct or above a false ceiling. You should have a plan showing where all detectors are located.
- 6 If you cannot find or access the detector that was triggered, call in the maintenance company as they should know where detectors are within the fire-detection system.
- 7 If the control panel does not show where the relevant detector is, or if no detector was triggered, call in the maintenance company as the problem may be due to faulty equipment.
- 8 **Accurately record all the information about the false alarm in the system log book. This is very important, as you may need the information at a later date.**
- 9 If false alarms continue and you cannot find the cause, analyse when the false alarms happen and where they come from. This will help you to see if there is any pattern that may help you to identify the cause (for example, cooking before meal times or a boiler switching on early in the morning).
- 10 Your investigations should show you that the false alarms are the result of faulty equipment, malicious acts, human error or activities near detectors.
- 11 Always liaise with the fire alarm maintenance company to rectify the causes of the false alarms as soon as possible.

