

UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS/RISK BASED INSPECTION POLICY AND STRATEGY UPDATE



REPORT OF CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

For Noting

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on progress with the Unwanted Fire Signals Strategy and highlight an associated change to the Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP).

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Members are asked to note this report.

3. THE AUTHORITY'S UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS STRATEGY AND POLICY

- 3.1 Cleveland Fire Authority takes a proactive approach in reducing the incidents that the Brigade attends to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) that are classed as Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS).
- 3.2 The existing UwFS Strategy commenced in October 2017 and since then, the Strategy has been progressed. Members will recall that as part of the Strategy, a number of measures have been implemented, including 24hr call challenging and a cost recovery option for repeat attendances at UwFS.
- 3.3 The cost recovery option was implemented on 1st April 2021 and to date, no charges have been made for repeat attendances at UwFS. It should be noted that five non-domestic premises are currently on the threshold of being charged for poor performance. These premises are a mixture of public sector organisations and private businesses. Fire Engineering staff continue to work closely with these organisations to reduce the likelihood of further UwFSs at those premises.
- 3.4 Attendances at AFAs are informed by a premises risk category, as defined by the Risk Based Inspection Programme.

4. RISK BASED INSPECTION PROGRAMME

- 4.1 The National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services in England 2018 sets out that fire and rescue authorities must make provision for promoting fire safety, including fire prevention, and have a locally determined risk-based inspection

programme in place for enforcing compliance with the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in premises to which it applies.

- 4.2 To ensure that the Fire Safety Order is effectively enforced in line with the expectations of the National Framework, a Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) is in place for premises which fall within the Order. Premises are prioritised according to their risk level, which are categorised very high to very low.
- 4.3 The RBIP informs the Brigades mobilising procedure to AFAs, on the basis of risk category. The Authority currently provides the following response to AFAs:
- **For premises that do not provide sleeping accommodation** - Cleveland Fire Brigade will not attend AFA's, unless a backup call is received from the premises via the 999 system, confirming there is a fire.
 - **Special Risk** - CFB will mobilise a single appliance to investigate the cause of the alarm
 - **AFAs received from Alarm Receiving Centres (ARC)** - If the call is received via an ARC, they will need to confirm that either the premises provides sleeping accommodation, or no persons are present on the premises to investigate the cause of the alarm prior to control mobilising a single appliance.
 - **Domestic premises are exempt from the strategy**
 - **On occasions where more than one device has actuated i.e. a 'Double Knock'** - CFB will treat this as a confirmed fire and the full pre-determined attendance will be dispatched.
- 4.4 In terms of performance, Table 1 below illustrates a continued reduction in AFAs that result in UwFS.

Non-Domestic AFA Performance							
Month	Year						
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
April	57	67	48	48	28	24	24
May	46	64	69	43	35	35	36
June	69	79	75	36	44	41	35
July	71	104	68	56	51	43	38
August	77	107	81	68	69	50	43
September	70	93	75	54	34	32	52
October	80	53	54	44	53	36	36
November	77	76	56	43	38	22	43
December	57	68	51	45	37	32	46
January	83	67	40	32	44	32	
February	61	51	35	39	33	38	
March	71	56	54	27	37	19	
TOTAL	819	885	706	535	503	404	353

Table 1: Non-Domestic AFA Performance

5. CHANGE TO RISK BASED INSPECTION PROGRAMME

- 5.1 At it's meeting of 22 December 2021, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) approved changes to the RBIP Policy and associated procedure. The main change is in relation to the stratification of risk for premises which fall under the scope of the RBIP.
- 5.2 The change is necessary to more accurately define the risk level of an individual premises, which takes into account wider risk factors, including the provision of sleeping accommodation.
- 5.3 As a result of the change to the RBIP, there has been a slight increase (+109) in the number of premises that the Brigade will respond to on receipt of an AFA. Table 2 below sets out the change by comparison to the previous RBIP.

Occupancy	Previous RBIP	New RBIP
Hospital	122	122
Care Home	233 (not 0900-1800)	233
HMOs	883	883
Flats	498	498
Hostels	50	50
Hotels	Call Challenge	109
Other Sleeping	1,096	1,096
Further Education	Call Challenge	Call Challenge
Public Building	Call Challenge	Call Challenge
Licenced Premises	Call Challenge	Call Challenge
Schools	Call Challenge	Call Challenge
Shops	Call Challenge	Call Challenge
Other Premises	Call Challenge	Call Challenge
Factories	Call Challenge	Call Challenge
Offices	Call Challenge	Call Challenge
other	Call Challenge	Call Challenge
Total	2,882	2,991

Table 2: Change to Risk Based Inspection Programme

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Cleveland Fire Brigade remains committed to reducing the impact of UwFS through its proactive approach. In addition, the revised RBIP will ensure that protection activities are targeted at buildings most at risk from fire. This includes enforcing compliance with the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in premises to which it applies.
- 6.2 Changes to the RBIP have resulted in a slight increase (+109) of premises that the Brigade will make an attendance to on receipt of an AFA. In the short term, this has the potential to slightly increase the number of attendances to AFAs. To mitigate this, dedicated staff will continue to work with the appropriate responsible persons to reduce any potential impact.

6.3 In summary, changes to the UwFS Strategy and RBIP policy have been made in order to:

- Ensure that the Fire Safety Order is effectively enforced in line with the expectations of the National Framework.
- Focus prevention and protection activities at buildings most at risk from fire.
- Reduce the number of false alarm activations generated by fire detection and alarm systems.
- Deliver significant reductions in appliance movements therefore reducing the disruption to operational crews undertaking other core tasks such as training and community safety activities.
- To provide the most appropriate response to an unconfirmed fire alarm actuation.
- Reduce the risk to the public and operational staff through unnecessary movement of emergency responses.

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