

Your Ref:

Our Ref: UwFS

Date: 1 May 2019

Chief Fire Officer
Ian Hayton

When telephoning ask for:
Fire Engineering Helpdesk
Tel: (01429) 872311 Ext. 4109
Email: fireengineeringhelpdesk@clevelandfire.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

Changes in responding to fire alarm calls generated by Automatic Fire Alarm systems

Cleveland Fire Brigade (CFB) is committed to 'Protecting Local Communities'.

As part of this commitment CFB will assist organisations in reducing the economic cost of lost productivity and business disruption due to false alarms generated by actuations of their Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) systems.

CFB class the actuation of an AFA which has not been caused by a fire as an Unwanted Fire Signal (UwFS). The reduction in the number of UwFS will have a positive economic impact on the business community and other sectors. The effect on the commercial sector alone in lost time, business disruption and productivity caused by false alarms is estimated, nationally to be in excess of £1 billion each year. (HM Government study 2004).

CFB have up until this point, responded to all AFA's generated with the full risk assessed Pre-Determined Attendance for each premises, treating each alarm as a full emergency.

This has an adverse effect on the premises in that each time an UwFS is generated an evacuation commences, together with the response time of CFB, the time taken to investigate the actuation and the time taken to repopulate the premises after the system is reset, all increases the economic cost to the organisation due to lost production/time and impacts upon business continuity.

There is no legal responsibility for any Fire and Rescue Service to respond to calls originating from an AFA system – to establish if there is a fire.

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It is the legal responsibility as detailed within the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order of 2005 of the 'Responsible Person' at the property to have in place a Fire Risk Assessment that details amongst other measures what actions are to be taken upon actuation of the AFA system.

One such action is to investigate the reason for the actuation of the AFA system and then notify the Fire Brigade via the 999 system if a fire is confirmed.

The Unwanted Fire Signals Strategy, in its original format, has resulted in a 24% reduction on the same period 2017-18 / 2018-19 and a reduction of 39% evident from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

Following the success of the strategy it is the Brigade's intention to further expand the scope of the strategy to incorporate Saturday and Sunday, having due consideration to the type of premises and times of opening/operation, will mean further reductions could be attained.

In March this year Cleveland Fire Authority resolved to amend the Fire Brigades response to fire calls generated by Automatic Fire Alarm systems.

I have made the following decisions in relation to implementation of the change in response:

- The change in response will commence with immediate effect.
- Cleveland Fire Brigade will not attend AFA's to low and medium risk premises between 07:00 and 18:00 Monday to Saturday and between 10:00 and 16:00 on Sundays (excluding Bank Holidays), unless a backup call is received from the premises via the 999 system, confirming there is a fire, or that physical signs of fire exist.

Risk Categorisation:

- Low or Medium Risk premises - This applies to the following premises;
 - Industrial premises
 - Business premises
 - Commercial premises
 - Schools
 - Public buildings
 - Leisure complexes
 - Hotels
 - Halls of Residence
 - Residential Care Premises
- Any premises determined as High or Special risk will receive one Fire Appliance for investigation purposes between 07:00 and 18:00 Monday to Saturday and between 10:00 and 16:00 on Sundays (excluding Bank Holidays).
- Cleveland Fire Brigade will not attend Automatic Fire Alarms from Alarm Receiving Centres (ARCs) between the hours of 07:00 and 18:00, Monday to Friday and again

between 10:00 and 16:00, on Sundays, unless they are backed up with a 999 call from premises to either ARC or to Fire Control.

- All premises will receive a full attendance on actuation of an AFA between the hours of 18:00 and 07:00 on week days, between the hours of 16:00 and 10:00 on Sundays in addition to full 24 hour cover on Bank Holidays.
- Premises whose fire alarm system is configured to 'double knock' principles may (following consultation with CFB Fire Engineering Department) receive full emergency response.
- Where the premises can demonstrate that there are exceptional circumstances for that premises to receive a full AFA PDA then an exemption may be granted. Any request for an exemption due to significant risk will be considered by CFB.

The onus is on the responsible person to submit the case to CFB. The case must be based upon the high risk to persons resulting from the CFB UwFS policy. The premises must demonstrate good management of their fire alarm systems.

All single private domestic dwellings and sheltered housing (including bungalows and flats) are exempt from the conditions outlined above.

For any further information please visit <https://www.clevelandfire.gov.uk/business/fire-alarms/> or contact Fire Engineering Helpdesk on 01429 872311.

Yours faithfully



CHIEF FIRE OFFICER