



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority  
Community Safety Committee

# APPROACH TO REDUCING UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS – UPDATE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

**Date:** 13 October 2023

**Purpose of Report:**

To update Members on the Service's approach to reduce the number of unwanted fire signals (UwFS) in line with current Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) commitments.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the update relating to the approach of the Chief Fire Officer in reducing UwFS.
- Support the continued work and focus to reduce the number of UwFS attended in line with the Service's CRMP.

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) responds to and investigates the causes of automatic fire alarm activations (AFA) in a variety of premises. Where these activations are from an automated alarm system, and have been apportioned to a cause other than fire, they are classified as Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS).
- 1.2 The Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) has set an objective to reduce the number of UwFS by 10% by 2025. This is against a base data year of 2021/22 which saw a total of 2256 UwFS occur.
- 1.3 In 2022/23, the Service responded to 2,450 UwFS which was an 8% increase on 2021/22. Of the 2,450 UwFS attended, 653 were at non-residential premises with 365 of these being at hospitals.
- 1.4 On 6 January 2023, Members received a report to this Committee which made several recommendations including a proposal to support the operational decision to not attend AFAs at hospital premises between 07:00 – 19:00 hours.
- 1.5 At the January meeting, Members requested further assurances regarding this proposal and requested further updates to the Committee.

## **2. REPORT**

- 2.1 The Service continues to work towards the target of reducing UwFS and the associated use of resources that could be more beneficially used elsewhere in the delivery of services to communities.
- 2.2 The January report to this Committee highlighted that, during the reference period, only 3.5% of AFA activations at hospitals resulted in a fire, all of which were minor in nature.
- 2.3 Members raised a number of questions and concerns in relation to the proposal and requested further consultation and engagement with key stakeholders prior to any change being progressed.
- 2.4 Following the Committee, the Service contacted respective NHS Trusts and private hospital providers in a consultation on the proposed changes and received responses from 86% of the NHS Trusts and companies responsible for hospitals within the City and County.
- 2.5 The consultation responses, and a review of further data, has shown that the number of UwFS from hospitals is attributed, in the vast majority, to the Queens Medical Centre and City Hospital campus sites.

- 2.6 The Fire Protection Team has strong relationships with these health care providers and continued focus will be placed on these relationships, with a priority in continuing to reduce the number of UwFS being attended.
- 2.7 It is highlighted that a risk-based, specific approach, in conjunction with these hospitals, under the delegated operational responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer, is now the preferred approach rather than a wide-ranging policy change.
- 2.8 Meetings will be held with the responsible management teams for these hospitals in order to progress steps to continue to reduce the number of mobilisations to UwFS and this performance data will continue to be closely monitored and reported.
- 2.9 The Service continues to monitor the levels of performance against this, and other metrics, through both the Service Delivery Evaluation and Assurance Group (SDEAG) and the CRMP Assurance Board. This monitoring has highlighted trends relating to UwFSs which include:
- A continued increase in the number of UwFS attended by the Service;
  - An increase of UwFS at hospitals;
  - A 50% increase in the number of UwFS from domestic dwellings, particularly those being sheltered housing and premises with independent living alarm system arrangements.
- 2.10 As reported, the Service has seen an increase in UwFS from single domestic dwellings and ‘telecare’ call systems. Further work will be undertaken with these providers to understand the best approach to ensuring that this vital provision is maintained and that false activations are minimised.
- 2.11 Work continues within the Service on the approved recommendation from January’s Committee meeting in relation to exploring chargeable calls as a mechanism to reduce repeated UWFS. Further updates will be provided to Members as this workstreams progress.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

## 5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because of the nature of this report.

## 6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

## 7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Service also has a legal obligation to respond to emergency incidents under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. No proposals within this report affect the statutory responsibilities under the Act.
- 7.2 NFRS has legal obligations under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, 2005, to enforce matters of fire safety within the City and County. Issues relating to inadequacies with a premise's fire alarm system fall within the scope of this order.

## 8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The Service's Corporate Risk Register highlights a number of risks that are implicated by the proposals within this report:

Corporate Risk	Implication
Inability to Set a Balanced Budget	The inefficient use of resources associated with attending unwanted fire signals presents a risk to the Service in relation to being efficient and effective and maximising the use of its resources. The Service will continue to review how UwFSs can be reduced to mitigate this risk.
Employee Engagement	Engagement with representative bodies (RBs) has indicated an objection to the previously proposed changes. Proactive engagement with the RBs will continue in relation to addressing the area of UwFS and ensuring the best use of resources.

Corporate Risk	Implication
Preventable Deaths	The non-attendance at AFAs presents a risk that the incident may relate to a saveable life, however data shows that the occurrence of this is extremely low. Conversely, while resources are committed at a UwFS, they are not available for other mobilisation to potential life-risk incidents. The Service will continue to address the attendance at UwFSs to ensure the best use and availability of resources for communities.
Health, Safety and Welfare	The associated risks of 'road risk' and attendance at UwFS continues to be present whilst the Service attends these incident types. The Service will continue to address the attendance at UwFS to ensure that associated risk is reduced.
Availability of Resources	While resources are committed at a UwFS, they are not available for other mobilisation to other, potential life-risk, incidents. The Service will continue to address the attendance at UwFS to ensure the best use and availability of resources for communities.
Service Reputation	There is a reputational risk to not attending AFAs that transpire to be incidents. The occurrence of this is low, however this still presents a risk to the Service. Work will continue to understand the data and propose the best solutions to mitigating this risk whilst reducing the number of UwFS attended by the Service.

## 9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

The recommendations within this report present a continued collaborative approach across Leicestershire, Derbyshire, and Nottinghamshire in dealing with UwFS.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Note the update relating to the approach of the Chief Fire Officer in reducing UwFS.
- 10.2 Support the continued work and focus to reduce the number of UwFS attended in line with the Service's CRMP.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)**

None.

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