



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

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

REDUCING THE NUMBER OF UNWANTED FIRE ALARM SIGNALS

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 21 June 2019

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on progress made since the introduction of a collaborative approach to reducing the number of unwanted fire alarm signals.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Unwanted fire alarm signals (UwFS) are defined as a false alarm fire signal from an Automatic Fire Detection system (AFD) resulting from a cause other than fire.
- 1.2 In 2018, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) responded to over 3000 false alarms caused by 'apparatus' which are classified as UwFS.
- 1.3 The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) has published guidance to support fire and rescue services (FRS) in reducing the number of false alarms received and the number and weight of responses to UwFS, considering local risk.
- 1.4 The number of AFD systems installed across Nottinghamshire is unknown, NFRS has no control over these systems. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO) places a duty on the responsible person (RP) for the alarm system and for all fire safety measures in the premises.
- 1.5 False alarms become UwFS at the point a FRS is requested to attend. However, they are avoidable through good system design, management practice, procedures, maintenance and the appropriate use of space within premises.
- 1.6 In June 2018, Members approved a policy change to enable a collaborative approach between the Tri-Service Control (Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire) to reduce the number of UwFS. This process was implemented and went 'live' from 3 December 2018.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The three Services now have an UwFS policy in place which standardises the approach to dealing with calls from AFDs. This includes a local interpretation of elements of the NFCC guidance including call challenging, amended response to calls received from Alarm Receiving Centres (ARC), response to unoccupied premises where alarms are sounding and dealing with premises where there are frequent false alarms.
- 2.2 The policy includes proactive engagement with RPs and premises to advise and ensure accountability is clear in relation to effective system maintenance, staff training, procedures and management arrangements.
- 2.3 The key elements of the tri-service policy are:
 - Call challenging 24 hours a day, 7 days per week;

- Hotels are call challenged during the day, but not during night time hours, 21:00 – 08:00;
- A standard level of attendance after call challenging to AFD calls is of one appliance.

2.4 Certain premise types are exempt from call challenging, these are:

- Domestic premises including houses in multiple occupation (HMO), residential flats, sheltered housing;
- Residential care and nursing homes;
- Local Primary Care Trust hospitals and private hospitals which have sleeping on site;
- Hotels during night-time hours only 21:00 - 08:00. During the day, hotels will be call challenged;
- Other sleeping risks;
- Sites that are subject to the national Provision of Risk Information System (PORIS) approach to gather site specific risk information (SSRI) resulting in a Level 4 and 5;
- Heritage sites listed as Grade I or Grade II* by Historic England;
- High rise premises with sleeping risk;
- Premises not conforming to the above criteria, but is locally determined to be unsuitable for call challenging.

2.5 In addition to the exempt list detailed above, local crews continue to assess risks in their local areas to ensure that attendance at AFD calls enables a thorough and safe approach. This has seen some premises – for example some high-rise premises – have an amended attendance of resources to ensure an effective search can be undertaken in a timely manner.

2.6 Furthermore, Tri-Service Control retains the discretion to apply the principle of 'dynamic mobilising', which allows the Control staff to manually amend the pre-determined attendance at the time of the call, based on the information received. This means increasing or decreasing the attendance made by the FRSs in the tri-service area.

2.7 Since the introduction of the revised policy, NFRS has attended 1065 calls from AFDs. This compares to 1278 calls attended in the same period of the previous year. A reduction of 17%.

2.8 Of the 1065 calls attended, 989 were found to be UwFS upon arrival. Additionally, 625 of these incidents were attended by only one appliance,

increasing efficient use of time and effective use of resources. This reduced the total mobilisations during this period, to AFD calls, to 1886 from 2462 in the same period last year; a reduction of 24%, further reducing the risk to road users and personnel.

- 2.9 During the same period, in addition to the above incidents, a further 986 calls relating to AFDs were challenged, by Fire Control in line with the policy, and not mobilised to. Had the Service mobilised to all AFD calls during this period, the Service would have attended 2051 incidents; an increase of 92% year on year.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The reduction in attendances at these calls creates a more efficient service. Cashable savings will be realised when on call crews are not required to attend UwFS incidents.

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

There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

Work continues to ensure a collaborative approach to applying this policy, however no further collaborative implications are arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the content of this report and the reduction in UwFS.

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

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER