



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

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

UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS UPDATE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 17 January 2020

Purpose of Report:

To present Members with an update on the implementation of the Tri-Service Unwanted Fire Signals Policy.

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of this report and support the continuation of the Tri-Service Unwanted Fire Signals Policy.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name: Craig Parkin
Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Tel: 0115 967 0880

Email: craig.parkin@notts-fire.gov.uk

Media Enquiries Contact: Therese Easom
(0115) 967 0880 therese.easom@notts-fire.gov.uk

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 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 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 the 3 December 2018.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 Certain premises 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 Level 4 or 5 site specific risk information (SSRI);
 - Heritage sites listed as Grade 1 or Grade II by Historic England;
 - High rise premises with sleeping risk;
 - Premises not conforming to the above criteria, but that are locally determined to be unsuitable for call challenging.
- 2.3 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 enable 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.

- 2.4 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 fire service in the Tri-Service area.
- 2.5 Since the introduction of the revised policy, NFRS has attended 2510 calls from AFDs. This compares to 3051 calls attended in the same period of the previous year. A positive reduction of 18%.
- 2.6 Of the 2510 calls attended, 2169 were found to be UwFSs upon arrival. Additionally, 1365 (54%) of these incidents were attended by only one appliance; further reducing the risk to road users and our personnel, increasing efficient use of time and effective use of our resources.
- 2.7 Upon arrival at the AFD call, 128 incidents involved a fire. 146 incidents required additional resources to deal with the incident. The greater number of additional resources that fire incidents is related to several incidents where further crews were required to explore the cause of the alarm in complex buildings, or where crews have requested further assistance due to local knowledge of the building type.
- 2.8 Of the 2169 UwFSs, hospitals continue to present the greatest number of calls. Queens Medical Centre and Nottingham City Hospital recorded 490 calls to AFDs that were false alarms between the two sites; this is down from 543 in the same period in the previous year. Work continues with these sites to further reduce the number of calls and improve procedures.
- 2.9 In addition to the above incidents, further calls relating to AFDs were challenged and not mobilised to during the same period. Unfortunately, this information was not originally gathered by Fire Control, however procedures have now been put in place to collect this data.
- 2.10 Following every UwFS incident, the premises owner (for non-domestic premises) receives a letter from the Fire Protection Team outlining their requirements in relation to fire safety. Following a fourth occurrence, the premises is contacted by the Business Education Advocate. A sixth occurrence initiates a full audit of the premises by a Fire Protection Inspecting Officer.
- 2.11 Since the instigation of the revised policy, 919 letters have been sent to 519 premises owners, 115 contacts have been undertaken for fourth occurrences and 14 audits have been undertaken for sixth occurrences.
- 2.12 The Service continues to review all sites to ensure their co-operation and compliance and is proactive in the use of its statutory powers, as referenced in the Service Delivery performance update report with regards to enforcement.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The reduction in attendances at these calls alone can be equated to non-cashable efficiency savings of over £162,000 in this 12-month period. However, beyond the notional £300 per call per appliance, further savings and efficiencies are not possible to quantify (eg: more efficient use of resources, less appliances attending).

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 the information contained in this report does not relate to a change in policy or procedure.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 places a duty on NFRS in respect of the delivery of its services to communities.
- 7.2 The Local Government Act 1999 places a statutory duty on NFRS to '*secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised*'. The reporting of Service Delivery's performance ensures that the Service is focusing on key objectives as set by the Fire Authority and continuous improvement. This ensures that Members can apply effective scrutiny to be satisfied that statutory obligations are being met.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

An effective performance culture and regime ensures that the Service focuses on key objectives which contribute to the management of strategic and corporate risks. Robust performance information and analysis supports effective decision making and efficient use of resources.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

The Service continually seeks opportunities to work closely with other partner's services to maximise efficiency and to provide the highest level of service to the public.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report and support the continuation of the Tri-Service Unwanted Fire Signals Policy.

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

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER