



Changes to Fire and Rescue Service response to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs)

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) has reviewed its response to Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) call-outs as around 95% of these turn out to be false alarms.

Over a third of the 8,000 callouts the Service receives each year are to AFAs, and crews lose an estimated 4,000 hours attending these false alarms. HWFRS have attended over 6,000 incidents from AFAs in the last two years, resulting in over 7,000 vehicle mobilisations with associated financial and capacity costs. False alarms caused by AFAs also divert essential services from real emergencies, potentially putting life and property at risk.

There are many tangible benefits to a reduction in attendances by Service personnel to AFA activations. By reducing attendance at AFAs the risk to the public and firefighters during emergency response will be reduced, and enable more resources to remain available for **confirmed emergency calls**. Capacity that is freed from these AFA attendances can be utilised to deliver community safety activities, training, or maintaining equipment in readiness for emergencies.

Most premises will have someone available to investigate (if safe to do so) the cause of the alarm, who can then confirm if a fire has occurred. HWFRS will then be able to respond to a confirmed fire, not just an alarm sounding, and send the appropriate number of firefighters and fire appliances immediately, confident that there is a real incident to deal with.

Premises with AFA systems may be affected as follows:-

- Where an attendance is made to an AFA, this will be with one fire appliance
- Where a fire is confirmed via a 999 call a full emergency response will be mobilised

In order to achieve this, the following may be carried out:-

- Fire appliances will be returned en-route if the caller confirms a false alarm
- Fire Appliances will usually respond to these calls as an emergency response, unless a reasonable risk assessment suggests otherwise
- AFAs at unoccupied premises will not normally be attended, unless a fire is confirmed

The Fire Authority will not charge for attending automatic fire alarm calls. However, where repeat offender premises continue to generate false alarm calls, even after support and advice from the Fire and Rescue Service, HWFRS may choose not to attend these premises, unless a fire is confirmed.

What should the premises occupier do when actuation of the automatic fire Alarm occurs?

Premises – occupied and **not linked** to an Alarm Receiver Centre

1. On actuation of alarm, evacuate immediately or investigate alarm and then evacuate, if necessary (dependent on local evacuation procedures)
2. As part of the investigation, attend the Fire Alarm Panel to identify possible location of incident
3. Investigate cause, if any signs of fire are evident **evacuate immediately** (if not already done) and call Fire and Rescue Service (999) to confirm a fire
4. Appropriate number of appliances will be sent
5. If obvious false alarm, identify cause of alarm, correct fault/condition (consider if a service engineer is required) and complete alarm log with details of event

Premises – occupied and **linked** to Alarm Receiver Centre

1. On actuation of alarm, evacuate immediately or investigate alarm and then evacuate, if necessary (dependent on local evacuation procedures)
 2. As part of the investigation, attend the Fire Alarm Panel to identify possible location of incident
 3. Investigate cause, if any signs of fire are evident **evacuate immediately** (if not already done) and call Fire and Rescue Service (999) to confirm a fire
 4. Appropriate number of appliances will be sent
 5. If obvious false alarm, call Fire and Rescue Service (999) and confirm false alarm, any mobilised appliances will be returned to duties and will not attend the premises. (Also call Alarm Receiver Centre to notify them)
- Identify cause of alarm, correct fault/condition (consider if a service engineer is required) and complete alarm log with details of event

The full Automatic Fire Alarm Policy has not yet been implemented; full details will be provided in the future

Fire Safety Advice for Businesses may be obtained 9am-5pm Monday to Friday by calling FREEPHONE **0800 032 1155**.