


	County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service 
Service Policy No. OP-1-24	Service Response to Automatic Fire Alarm Systems Policy
Document Overview	
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Sign-off process

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New Policy

Version	Date	Author
002	Jan 2019	Chris Hockaday

Reason for change

Amended to include cost recovery option

Version	Date	Author
003	Nov 2020	Chris Hockaday

Reason for change

Amended due to service restructure and minor amend to appeal process

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Traditionally, the Fire and Rescue Service have responded to automatic fire alarm calls (AFA) by sending a predetermined response to every activation. County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) have decided to introduce a policy whereby fire appliances respond to commercial or non-domestic premises that experience AFAs based on a risk-based approach.
- 1.2 CDDFRS are committed to improving the service that the public within County Durham and Darlington receive and in-line with the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 CDDFRS will continue to provide advice to the commercial sector regarding how to reduce false alarms and unwanted fire signals. CDDFRS will take every opportunity to proactively promote “best practice” during fire safety visits.
- 1.3 Despite the improvements in the numbers of UwFS attended, the service appreciate that these types of incidents will continue to occur and therefore a policy covering the risk assessed approach to attendance is required.

2. Terminology

- 2.1 To understand fully the problems experienced by both the fire and rescue service and the commercial sector it is important that all stakeholders use and understand our terminology. The National Fire Chiefs Council use the following definitions:
- (a) AFA – Automatic fire alarm (AFAs indicate the plural form);
 - (b) ARC - Alarm Receiving Centre. A continuously staffed remote centre to which information concerning the status of one or more systems is reported;
 - (c) FAMO – Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisation. A combined term developed to include all remote fire alarm monitoring organisations e.g. ARC or Telecare Service Provider (TSP);
 - (d) False Alarm – A fire alarm signal resulting from a cause or causes other than a fire, in which a system has responded, either as designed

or as the technology can be reasonably expected to respond to any of the following;

- (i) A fire like phenomenon or environmental influence (e.g. smoke from a nearby bonfire dust or insects, processes that produce smoke or flame or environmental effects that can render certain types of detector unstable, such as rapid air flow);
 - (ii) Accidental damage;
 - (iii) Inappropriate human activity (e.g. operation of a system for test or maintenance purposes without prior warning to building occupants and/or a FAMO);
 - (iv) Equipment false alarms, in which the fire alarm has resulted from a fault in the system.
- (e) TSP – Telecare Service Provider. A service that enables people, especially older and more vulnerable individuals, to live independently in their own home. It can be a simple community alarm service, able to respond in an emergency and provide regular contact by telephone. It can include detectors or monitors such as motion or falls and fire and gas that trigger a warning to a response centre staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, e.g. Carelink, Redcare, Careconnect;
- (f) UwFS – A fire alarm actuation due to a mechanical or electrical fault, or false activation by non-fire conditions (e.g. cooking fumes, dust, cigarette smoke etc) where the Fire Service is summoned;
- (g) CDDFRS also use the term ANT (Alarm Not Attended) which refers to an UwFS that the Service did not attend.

3. Policy Statement

3.1 The service will provide a response to AFA's as set out below:

- (a) Between 09:00 and 17:00 Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) the Service will not attend AFAs to low and medium risk premises unless accompanied by a confirmation that there is an actual fire;
- (b) High risk, Special risk and domestic properties will receive a response.

- 3.2 Examples of High-risk properties include COMAH sites, factories with dangerous processes, any premises with a 'sleeping' risk for example hospitals, care homes, hotels, halls of residence or HMO (houses in multiple occupation).
- 3.3 Special risk properties will include those buildings that have a heritage factor for example Durham Cathedral, Auckland Castle or Darlington Crown Street library. Special risk also includes those premises that contain equipment or data that is of significant importance to the Nation or Region.
- 3.4 The level of risk designated for each premise will be documented within the fire risk assessment for that premises and will include the appropriate emergency action plan.
- 3.5 The Service will provide advice to the business community (in-line with resources available) to ensure that all non-domestic premises are aware of their responsibilities under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 3.6 In order to minimise the impact from UwFS the Service will send a letter to each premises that have an UwFS in the first instance. This letter will state that a charge will be made upon the third activation within a rolling 12-month period and for any subsequent activation within the rolling 12-month period. The attending operational crew will also leave an UwFS form at the premises which will outline the procedure for charging.
- 3.7 The charge referred to in 3.6 above will provide cost recovery and will be equal to the Service charge for a Special Service Incident.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Legal Responsibilities

- (a) Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 Part 2 Section 6 (1) and (2) places a responsibility on the Service to promote fire safety and provide advice to the County Durham and Darlington community.
- (b) Section 7 (1) of the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004 ensures that a fire and rescue authority must make provision for the purpose of (a) extinguishing fires in its area, and (b) protecting life and property in the event of fires in its area.

- (c) The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 places a duty on the Responsible Person to carry out a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment and ensure that the Relevant Persons within the premises are made aware of fire conditions.
- (d) Chapter 2 of the Localism Act 2011 makes amendments to the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and introduces a new power in section 18, which allows the Authority to charge for attendance at unwanted fire signals due to an automatic fire alarm. Section 18C sets out the criteria when a charge may be applied.

4.2 Service Leadership Team (SLT)

Will ensure that this Policy is applied consistently throughout the Service by providing sufficient resources to enable the processes detailed in this policy and any associated procedure to be carried out.

4.3 Performance and Programme Board (PPB)

Will scrutinise performance to confirm that the policy is addressing risk and ensure appropriate corrective measures are taken if necessary.

4.4 The Business Fire Safety Manager

The Business Fire Safety (BFS) Manager will monitor the UwFS activity and initiate any remedial actions deemed necessary and ensure that an internal audit of the policy and procedures are carried out in-line with the ISO9001.

4.5 Operational Crews

- (a) Will complete the AFA/UwFS Ops documentation (blue forms) at every appropriate incident.
- (b) Provide support and advice to the business community during attendance at UwFS.
- (c) Report AFA issues to the Business Fire Safety Central Team.
- (d) Provide suitable advice during fire safety inspections.

4.6 Business Fire Safety Manager

- (a) Will manage the process of cost recovery for UwFS.
- (b) Will monitor all UwFS on a weekly basis and ensure that letters are sent to all relevant businesses in line with this policy.

- (c) Will raise an invoice with the Finance section to ensure that any charges are sent to the appropriate premises Responsible Person.

4.7 Finance

- (a) Will issue the invoice to the appropriate premises Responsible Person.
- (b) Will monitor the payment of invoices.

4.8 Business Fire Safety Officers

- (a) Monitor the UwFS within their areas and forward any cost recovery documentation to the BFS Manager.
- (b) Organise specific inspections to premises that generate numerous AFAs.
- (c) Consider enforcement actions dependent upon the outcome of a fire safety inspection.

4.9 Community Risk Management Admin

- (a) Will add details of any UwFS blue forms from Ops crews to the CFRMIS database.

5. Right to Appeal UwFS Charges

5.1 Once a charge has been made for an UwFS, the Responsible Person may make an appeal by writing to the Head of Community Risk Management (CRM) stating the reason for the appeal.

5.2 The Head of Community Risk Management should respond to the appeal within 28 days of receipt with their findings.

5.3 Should the Responsible Person wish to contest the result of the appeal then a final appeal can be made in writing to the Deputy Chief Fire Officer who should respond to the appeal within 28 days of receipt with their findings. The result of this appeal should be final with no further mechanism for appeal available.

6. Audit and Monitoring

6.1 The BFS Manager will carry out an internal audit of the policy and procedures in-line with the ISO9001 annual audit programme.

6.2 Any recommendations resulting from policy audits will be implemented into the existing policy and related procedures/guidance.

7. Further Documents

- i. CPP ISO9001 Procedure 4 – Reduction of Unwanted Fire Signals and False Alarm Procedure
- ii. CFOA Policy for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals
- iii. CFOA Guide on response to Remotely Monitored Fire Signals
- iv. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- v. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 as amended by the Localism Act 2011.



19 January 2021

Deputy Chief Fire Officer