



"An Excellent Authority"

The Service and Unwanted Fire Signals

Welcome to
Merseyside Fire & Rescue
Headquarters



2004-2005
Services for Older People
2006-2007
Early Intervention (Children at Risk)
2008-2009
Reducing Health Inequalities



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The Service and Unwanted Fire Signals

Group Manager
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Prevention and Protection



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Background



In 2000 MF&RS had:

- One of fastest response rates in the UK
- 1500 fire-fighters & 42 Fire Appliances
- One of the busiest fire stations in Europe
- Little community fire prevention focus
- One of the **highest** rates of accidental dwelling fires and deaths in England

What Happened Next?

MFRS embarked on the following:

- Intervention policies
- Prevention strategies
- Home Fire Risk Assessments
- Specialist Advocates

Resulting in:

- **A 33% fall in accidental dwelling fires**
 - against a 20% drop nationally
- **Fire casualties down 60%**
 - against 20% nationally
- **Casualties per fire reduced by 40%**
 - nationally; no change
- **Fire deaths down from 20 per year to a single figures:**
 - 5 last year - was the equal lowest ever
- **Significant expansion of operational capabilities and role**
 - New Dimension, CBRNe, Urban S&R, Water Rescue ...
- **Every home on Merseyside visited or risk assessed**

UwFS Trend

- National and Local Rising Issue
- Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) costs the British Economy over £1 Billion per annum.
 - Lost Productivity
 - Evacuation
 - Investigations
 - Fire Service response times
 - Premise re-population time

Unwanted Fire Signal?

Definition:

A call that the **F&RS responds** to
as a result of
an **Automatic Fire Alarm** actuation
which has **not** been caused by a **fire**

Rising Trend - Factors

Reasons for continuing increase:

- Increase in systems (cheaper technology)
- Requirement by Insurance Companies
- Ageing systems becoming less reliable

MF&RS Peak (2011)

- **5802 UwFS**

UwFS Response

5802 UwFS -

3922 to Non Residential premises

1880 to Residential premises

= **9,000** emergency fire service appliance responses to a false alarm to a premise which has 'Responsible Persons'

Key Drivers: Cuts

- Reduced revenue **2011/13** round 1
- Reduced revenue **2013/15** round 2
- Reduced revenue **2015/17** round 3
- Reduced number of **staff**
- Reduced number of **Fire Appliances**
- Reduced number of **Fire Stations**

*MF&RS will provide a FRS based upon
Best Value principles to **Reduce Risk.***

Key Drivers: Road Risk

MF&RS attendance at 5802 UwFS is equivalent to:

- **13,054** 'blue light' mobilisations
- **13,054** return journeys

= **26,000** journeys of unnecessary road risk to traffic, pedestrians and fire crews

MR&RA New Protocol

- In January 2012 MF&RA decision to move to a **risk based approach** to responding to the actuation of Automatic Fire Alarms
- Following consultations at last years seminars MFRA decided to 'Phase' the implementation of the protocol.

Rationale

To optimise the resources of MF&RS to deliver its mission – Safer, Stronger Communities, Safe Effective Firefighters:

- Road risk
- Training
- Prevention duties
- Ensures availability of fire appliances for emergencies

Protocol

Between **07.30 and 19.30hrs** MF&RS will no longer provide an emergency response to calls generated by Automatic Fire Alarm Systems **UNLESS** a confirmation call is received via the '999' system **confirming a fire or physical sign of fire exists.**

For a period of up to **one year** MF&RA will still respond to all calls generated by AFA systems between **19.30 – 07.30hrs** and send the full pre-determined emergency response.

Protocol

Premises whose fire alarm system is capable of being configured to a 'Double Knock' principals will (depending on consultation with MF&RA) receive emergency responses

All **single private domestic dwellings** and all dwellings where the **responsibility for the safety of the occupiers rests with individuals who reside there, WILL BE AUTOMATICALLY EXEMPTED** from this protocol

First Stage

On the 1st November 2012 the response to fire calls generated by Automatic Fire Alarm systems changed between 07.30 and 19.30 hours.

Effect to date

- Last year: Unwanted Fire Signals accounted for more than a quarter (**31.1%**) of calls to MFRS.
- Since the introduction of the new MF&RS protocol this figure has been reduced to **15.5%**
- In real terms: a reduction of 1975 Unwanted Fire Signals on the same nine month period the previous year (November – July)
- **Thank you**

Second Stage

On Monday the 9th September 2013 Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will reduce its Operational capability by **33%**.

Our Fire Appliance fleet will reduce from **42** appliances to **28**.

A loss of **14** appliances.



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The Impact
Unwanted Fire
Signals
have on our ability
to maintain this
service.



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Unwanted Fire Signals

- The average attendance to an UwFS = 2.25 Fire appliances (2/3 appliances per call)
 - Average time taken to respond; manage; and return = 35 minutes
 - Hours of productivity which can be better utilised for training, community safety activity etc.
- Totals over **20,000 hours.**

Our legal Responsibility?

There is no legal responsibility
placed on the Authority
to respond to calls
originating from an AFA system
to establish if there is a fire.

Responsible Person

The Responsible Person, as defined under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, has overall responsibility for the management & performance of the fire detection & fire alarm systems.

IRMP 2012-15

States:

"We are proposing to implement a new procedure to ensure that this type of incident will reduce substantially in the future"

What do the public say?



The issue of UwFS has been debated during 2 periods of consultation, one in May 2011 and one in November 2011 conducted by ORS (Opinion Research Services)

- “ The forum unanimously rejected the policy of treating all AFA’s as emergencies. There was a general feeling that this pattern of response is wasteful and diverts emergency resources from more important incidents as well as fire prevention work and training”.

Current protocol



- Between the hours 07.30 – 19.30, MFRS will only send a response when a fire is confirmed.

**Alarm Actuation → Investigation →
Fire/Physical signs → Fire call via 999.**

- All calls will be challenged by our MACC staff

Automatic Exemptions



The following exemptions apply:

- All single private domestic dwellings
- All other dwellings where : 'The occupier is responsible for the safety of the people who reside there'
- All Sheltered Housing, HiMO, and Multi-storey accommodation
- British Standard for Fire Alarms BS 5839 part 1 coincidence actuation systems, if installed, will generate a full attendance.

Exceptional Exemptions

Any request for an exemption due to significant risks will be considered by the Community Fire Protection exemption panel.

MF&RA will consider the management of significant risks with the Responsible Person/s directly.

Exemptions process

- **Onus** is on Responsible Person to submit case to MF&RS.
- Case must be based upon **high risk to persons** resulting from the new MF&RS UwFS protocol.
- Exemptions will not be granted where MF&RS believe that **reasonable action** can mitigate the risk.
- Exemptions will only be a **temporary** measure, MF&RS expect work towards permanent satisfactory solution

What will now Change?

On **1 November 2013**

MFRS will extend the time from

07.30-19.30hrs

to include

the full **24 hour** period.

Change requirements?



- RP's Review of Fire Risk Assessments
- Update your Corporate Risk Register
- **Accurate identification exempted premises:**
 - Fire call to MF&RS from FAMO/ARC.

Automatic Fire Alarms



On 1st November 2013
Merseyside Fire and
Rescue Service will adopt
the second phase on
responding to fire calls
generated by
Automatic Fire Alarms



Questions / Feedback?

Further feedback please email:
AFAenquiries@merseyfire.gov.uk