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Prevention & Protection**

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Your ref:

Our ref:

Date: 8th October 2012

Dear Sir/Madam

Responding to fire calls generated by Automatic Fire Alarm systems.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MF&RS) is committed to “Safer Stronger Communities; Safe Effective Fire-Fighters”

As part of this commitment MF&RS through its Community Fire Protection Department will assist organisations in reducing the economic cost of lost productivity and business disruption due to false alarms generated by actuations of their Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) systems.

MF&RS class the actuation of an AFA which has not been caused by a fire as an Unwanted Fire Signal (UwFS). The reduction in the number of UwFS will have a positive economic impact on the business community and other sectors. The effect on the commercial sector alone in lost time, business disruption and productivity caused by false alarms is estimated, nationally, to be in excess of £1 billion each year. (HM Government study 2004)

MF&RS have, up until this point, responded to all AFA generated Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) with the full risk assessed Pre--Determined Attendance for each premises, treating each alarm as a full emergency. This has an adverse effect on the premise in that each time an UwFS is generated an evacuation commences, and, together with the response time of MF&RS, the time taken to investigate the actuation, and the time taken to repopulate the premises after the system is reset all adds up to an economic cost to the premises due to lost production/time and impacts upon business continuity.

There is no legal responsibility for any Fire and Rescue Service to respond to calls originating from an AFA system - to establish if there is a fire. Rather, it is the legal responsibility as detailed within the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 of the ‘*Responsible Person*’ at the property to have in place a Fire Risk Assessment that details

amongst other measures what actions are to be taken upon actuation of the AFA system. One such action is to investigate the reason for the actuation of the AFA system and then notify the FRS via the 999 system if a fire is confirmed.

In January this year Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority resolved to change the Services response to fire calls generated by Automatic Fire Alarm systems.

Communication and consultation events have been held at MF&RS headquarters explaining the Authority's intent to change the response.

Since this decision was made, several consultation meetings have taken place with different stakeholders and continue to do so.

After listening to and considering the points raised by stakeholders at each stage of the process I can conclude that I have made the following decisions in relation to implementation of the change in response:

- The change in response will commence on **31st October 2012**.
- As of 31st October 2012 MF&RS will **no longer** respond to calls generated by Automatic Fire Alarms between the hours of 07.30hrs and 19.30hrs unless a back up call is received via the 999 system confirming there is a fire, or that physical signs of fire exist.
- For an **interim** period MF&RS will provide an attendance (when available) at normal road speed to offer advice and guidance to 'Responsible Persons'.
- For a period of up to **one year** MF&RS will provide an emergency response generated by Automatic Fire Alarms between 19.30hrs and 07.30hrs and send the full pre-determined attendance for which the premises has been assessed for.
- MF&RS will consider the management of significant risks with the responsible persons directly. Any request for exemption for significant risks will be considered by the Community Fire Protection exemption panel.
- MF&RS will aim to implement the Policy **in full** by October 2013 and will work with stakeholders towards this.
- Premises whose fire alarm system is configured to 'double knock' principles will (following consultation with MF&RS Community Fire Protection Department) receive a full emergency response.

All single private domestic dwellings and dwellings where the responsibility for the safety of the occupiers rests with the individuals, who reside there, will be exempted from this policy.

For any further information and guidance visit www.merseyfire.gov.uk or contact the Community Fire Protection Department on 0151296 4000.

Yours faithfully

Area Manager Myles Platt
Prevention and Protection.

FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

