

Unwanted Fire Signals: Who foots the bill?



MERSEYSIDE
FIRE & RESCUE
SERVICE



When an Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) actuates for any reason other than a fire condition, this is referred to as a false alarm. When the Fire and Rescue Service is

requested and responds to a false alarm, it is called an Unwanted Fire Signal (UwFS).

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 enables the Fire Service to charge for attendance to incidents of unwanted fire signals.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will look to recoup costs from premises where we regularly attend due to incidents of false alarms and who are failing to address the issue.

UwFS are estimated to cost businesses and Fire and Rescue Service authorities up to £1 billion a year. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) attends an average of 3,500 UwFS a year.

Let's have a look at the costs involved:

Based on a minimum attendance of 2 fire appliances at a cost of £552 + VAT per appliance equates to £1104 + VAT per attendance. This could easily result in a bill of thousands of pounds in 1 month for our attendance to multiple UwFS incidents.

(Current charge, subject to annual review)



Our average attendance to around 3500 such incidents per year, each resulting in a minimum of two appliances attending (or more), equates to a minimum of 7046 blue light runs in Merseyside could have been avoided. This puts firefighters, other road users and pedestrians at increased risk.

Whilst attending UwFS, MFRS fire engines are not available to attend lifesaving incidents.

For more information visit:
www.merseyfire.gov.uk



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Preventing false alarms

Did you know that the vast majority of signals from automatic fire alarms are not actual fires?

Fire alarm and detection systems react to an increase in heat or the presence of smoke.



They can also react to things such as steam, cigarette smoke, aerosol sprays and light smoke from cooking, or sometimes simply because the system wasn't taken off-line when being tested. Tragically, people have died thinking a real fire was 'just another false alarm'.



Reducing false alarms:

- Make sure the fire alarm design suits the premises design and use.
- Investigate false alarms and work with maintainers to build in measures that prevent unnecessary recurrence.
- Make sure the alarm system is properly and regularly maintained.
- Talk to us if you're struggling to resolve the problem and need guidance.



Your legal responsibilities:

If your premises have an automatic fire alarm system, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires that it is tested and maintained to be in good working order.



You also have a duty to manage false alarms and to take appropriate steps to reduce them. This ranges from calling out an engineer to replace a faulty detector, to enforcing a non-smoking policy. Any actions you take need to be recorded in your fire logbook alongside the date and cause of the false alarm. These records can then be used to help you identify why false alarms are happening on your premises.

For more information visit: www.merseyfire.gov.uk

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