



Kent Fire &
Rescue Service

Service Delivery Service Orders

Automatic Fire Alarms

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Introduction

The Authority receives a large number of calls as a result of automatic fire alarm (AFA) systems, but over 98% of these calls are known to be false alarms. Unwanted calls from AFA systems cause a significant disruption to building users and potentially divert firefighters away from real emergencies.

The Authority has had call management processes in place for AFA calls for some years and has been successful in reducing the number of false alarms. From April 2012 these arrangements were strengthened further and as a result all calls reporting an AFA sounding are challenged and filtered by the Authority's control staff. For the majority of premises, the caller is asked to confirm if there is a fire or signs of a fire before the Authority will send an emergency response.

Scope

This policy is applicable to all Members in relation to their role in performance scrutiny and all staff in terms of application of the policy by the Authority.

Effective management of calls relating to Automatic Fire Alarms relies on clear policy and procedures as well as appropriate training and experience to allow call handlers to make appropriate judgements based on risk.

Policy

- 1 The Authority will call manage all emergency calls relating to Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) systems. This means that the Authority will not automatically respond to AFAs but will apply a filtering system to reduce the number of false alarms it attends.
- 2 In the majority of premises callers reporting an AFA system sounding are required to confirm that there is a fire or signs of fire other than the alarm, before Control staff will mobilise an emergency response.
3. The Authority will continue to provide advice and support to businesses and premises managers in order that AFA systems are well managed and the number of false alarms continues to decline. The Authority will continue to respond to AFA incidents over its

borders passed to it by other Fire and Rescue Authorities where a mutual aid (Sections 13 and 16) agreement is in place

Guidance

- 4 The Authority will not send any emergency resource to investigate an AFA system sounding. If it decides to respond to an AFA call it will send the same response as it would to a fire.
- 5 Callers reporting an AFA system sounding via a care-line or callers reporting a self-contained (domestic) smoke alarm sounding will be asked if they can confirm that it is a false alarm. If they are unable to confirm a false alarm then the call will be treated as a fire-call and an emergency response will be sent.
- 6 Where the Authority has undertaken an assessment of individual premises which highlights a specific need for a response to AFAs then callers from that site will be asked if they can confirm that the call is a false alarm. If they are unable to confirm a false alarm then the call will be treated as a fire-call and an emergency response will be sent.
- 7 To help businesses adjust to the new policy, until April 2013 the Authority will continue to respond to AFAs at night between the hours of 18:00 and 06:00 if the business concerned does not have a procedure for confirming a fire when reporting the alarm sounding.

Regulations

Roles and Responsibilities

- 8 All staff working in the Authority's control centre will adhere to the policy set out above and the specific operating procedures relating to their posts.
- 9 The Group Manager, Control will ensure that control staff receive adequate guidance, training and support in order that they can adhere to the AFA policy and operating procedures.
- 10 The AFA policy will be regularly reviewed to ensure its effectiveness in reducing false alarms and managing risk.

Political Leadership

- 11 The Authority will review performance against the AFA Policy to ensure it supports the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan.

Guidance for Control Staff

- 12 The Automatic Fire Alarm operating procedure provides further guidance for Control staff.

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