

Appendix B

Title of policy:	Unwanted Fire Signal Reduction Policy
Department:	Prevention and Protection
Date:	16th November 2010. (reviewed 15th September 2011)

Appendix 1 Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
Equality Impact Assessment

You identified this policy as needing a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). You should complete sections 1 – 5 below (where appropriate) before sending to DiversityTeam@merseyfire.gov.uk for inclusion on the next DAG meeting agenda.

1: Identify the aims and purpose of the policy

This should identify “the legitimate aim” of the policy (there may be more than one)

To substantially reduce the number of Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) received and responded to by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service by adopting a robust call challenge policy.

To ensure the most vulnerable people within our community are not disadvantaged by the introduction of this strategy

2: Identify the individuals and organisations that are likely to have an interest in, or be affected by the policy.

This should identify the persons/organisations who may need to be consulted about the policy or procedure and its outcomes (There may be more than one)

Strategic Management Group
Fire Authority
Business Community
CFOA Regional UwFS Committee

3. Monitoring

Summarise the findings of any monitoring data you have considered regarding this policy. This could include data which shows whether the policy is having the desired outcomes and also its impact on members of different equality groups.

The reduction of Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) has been the goal of the Legislative Fire Safety Department for the past decade. Despite numerous strategies and guidance from both CFOA and CLG and its predecessor the Department of the Deputy Prime Minister, UwFS have continued to rise.

This is mainly due to the following reasons:

- A reluctance by 'responsible persons' to take ownership of the problem,
- Lack of cooperation by Alarm Receiving Centres in using 'Call Filtering'
- Lack of specific legislation by government to deal with the problem

Whilst CFOA has recently published its latest guidance on the subject, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will use this guidance and strategies of its own to reduce UwFS.

Fig 1. Actual Figures

Year	All Fire Incidents	UwFS	Total Fire calls (UwFS & Fire Incidents)	% of Fire calls that were UwFS
2007	15795	5776	21571	26.8%
2008	12743	6119	18862	32.4%
2009	12306	5944	18250	32.6%
2010	11059	5802	16861	34.4%

Source: KIM

Fire calls in general have fallen over the past 4 years whilst UwFS have risen. In 2007, 26.8% of all MF&RS fire calls were to UwFS but by 2009 this figure had risen to 32.6%, and last year, 2010, the figure has reached 34.4%. Obviously, it is unsustainable for the service to respond in this manner, as if this situation were to remain MF&RS would soon be responding to more UwFS than fires.

Fig 2. Estimated Figures

Year	All Fire Incidents	UwFS	Total Fire calls (UwFS & Fire Incidents)	% of Fire calls that will be UwFS
2014	7,741	5850	13591	43%

If the same percentage drop in fires were to remain over the next 4 years then MF&RS would respond to 7,741 fires as against 5850 UwFS, this would then mean 43% of all fire calls would be UwFS.

Once the new strategies are introduced, they will be subject to a monthly review to ensure that none of the protected groups are adversely affected.

4: Research

Summarise the findings of any research you have considered regarding this policy. This could include quantitative data and qualitative information; anything you have obtained from other sources e.g. CFOA/CLG guidance, other FRS's, etc

Using CFOA guidance 'Protocol for the reduction of false alarms & Unwanted Fire Signals' and also 'Best Practice for summoning a Fire Response via Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisations' MF&RS consulted with various other Fire and Rescue Services including, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Cheshire, Warwickshire and Nottingham to establish 'Best Practice' in establishing a response to reducing UwFS.

Whilst most services have used guidance from CFOA as the basis for their own strategies each individual Service has 'tailored' the guidance to best suit their own Authorities policies.

MF&RS have used CFOA guidance as the basis of the new strategy and have established a close working relationship the other Fire and Rescue Services within the region, by means of an UwFS working party, to monitor each individual Services approach in the event of developing 'Best Practice' and working together to establish a regional strategy.

Summary of new strategy

Under current working practices, all Alarm Receiving Centres and Telecare Associations, collectively referred to as Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisations (FAMO) should be adopting a process known as call filtering.

Figures from Knowledge and Information confirm that of all the calls received from these organisations in 2010, over 90% were in fact Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS).

These calls (UwFS) amounted to 5802, clearly an unsustainable amount for the Service to respond to, especially in light of the proposed cut in funding indicated by HM Government.

To resolve this problem and to substantially reduce the amount of UwFS it is proposed to implement a rigorous and robust 'call challenge' procedure at the Mobilising and Command Centre (MACC). i.e. All calls received by MACC will be challenged, and appliances will only mobilise on confirmation of an actual fire, or sign of fire (Smell of smoke, increase in temperature, sign of flames etc.).

It is estimated that this policy will substantially reduce UwFS and as a long term effect allow the Authority to potentially realise over £3.2million in savings.

5. Consultation

Summarise the opinions of any consultation. Who was consulted and how? (This should include reference to people and organisations identified in section 2 above) Outline any plans to inform consultees of the results of the consultation

Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Cheshire and Cumbria along with MF&RS meet quarterly and consult with each other as regional members of the CFOA Regional UwFS Committee to establish 'best practice' in dealing with UwFS. All the Fire and Rescue Services are using CFOA guidance as a base for their individual strategies, and sharing results with each other.

Whilst MF&RS has not followed guidance in reducing responses to UwFS (from two to one appliance) or manner of our response (non 'blue light' response) other Fire and Rescue Services have, and report that whilst they have recorded lower mobilisation figures, UwFS have not reduced.

6. Conclusions

Taking into account the results of the monitoring, research and consultation, set out how the policy impacts or could impact on people from the following protected groups? (Include positive and/or negative impacts)

6.1 Age

The proposed changes may have a negative impact on the grounds of age. Research shows that a higher proportion of elderly, due to their life style and/or health, are more vulnerable to fire. They are also more likely to live in sheltered and managed accommodation where fire alarms are fitted. By only responding to confirmed fires via the '999' system may be seen as a reduction in the services delivered to this group. Detailed analysis will be needed to ensure the outcomes for this group are maintained i.e. that when there is a genuine incident the fire service will respond.

6.2 Disability

The proposed changes may have a negative impact on the grounds of disability. Research shows that a higher proportion of disabled people, due to their life style and/or health, are more vulnerable to fire. They are also more likely to live in sheltered and managed accommodation where fire alarms are fitted. By only responding to confirmed fires via the '999' system may be seen as a reduction in the services delivered to this group. Detailed analysis will be needed to ensure the outcomes for this group are maintained i.e. that when there is a genuine incident the fire service will respond.

6.3 Gender

No negative impacts can be found on the grounds of gender with the proposed changes.

6.4 Race

The proposed changes may have a negative impact on minorities groups. Research shows that those from minority groups are less likely to call on public services. To counter these risk areas the project will need to consider means to manage the risk by engaging with those communities. This will include information and guidance that is clear to understand.

6.5 Religion or Belief

The proposed changes may have a negative impact on the grounds of faith. There are a number of important faith premises across the county. These are key buildings and by

only responding to confirmed fires via the '999' system may be seen as a reduction in the services delivered to those groups.

MF&RS will engage with the responsible persons for places of worship to ensure suitable and sufficient risk assessments are in place, ensuring the engagement, including information and advice, is available in a form that reflects culture and language.

6.6 Sexual Orientation

No negative impacts can be found on the grounds of sexual orientation with the proposed changes

6.7 Other

The proposed changes may have a negative impact on the grounds of economic deprivation. Research shows that a higher proportion of economically deprived people, due to their housing conditions and life style, are more vulnerable to fire. They are also more likely to live in poor quality or multi-occupancy accommodation where fire alarms are fitted. By only responding to confirmed fires via the '999' system may be seen as a reduction in the services delivered to this group. Detailed analysis will be needed to ensure the outcomes for this group are maintained i.e. that when there is a genuine incident the fire service will respond.

7. Decisions

If the policy will have a negative impact on members of one or more of the protected groups, explain how the policy will change or why it is to continue in the same way. If no changes are proposed, the policy needs to be objectively justified as being an appropriate and necessary means of achieving the legitimate aim set out in 1above.

Prior to the inception of the new strategy MF&RS will consult with, and work with, the wider business community on the effects that the strategy may have, to ensure that no group or diversity strand is adversely effected.

It is proposed that prior to inception each of the premises whom historically have generated high volumes of Unwanted Fire Signals will visited by a Fire Safety Inspector, to explain the new strategy, and how it will impact on that premises. Each of the 'Responsible Persons' will be given assistance in how to comply with there responsibilities in order that they are not disadvantaged.

Additionally, MF&RS will publicise the new strategy and the potential effects on all groups, and strands of diversity, on our Web Site and in the local press.

Each premise, once identified by means of excessive UwFS, will be contacted by the UwFS team and given the opportunity of receiving advice and guidance in order to avoid being disadvantaged.

Telecare Associations are Fire Alarm Monitoring Associations who protect the most vulnerable people within our communities, whether by age, disability or health (general and mental). The vulnerable within our community are the very people we serve to protect and as such will always receive an emergency response from MF&RS. If a premise protected by a Telecare Association, is identified as having the potential for being targeted within the parameters of the strategy, the Unwanted Fire Signals Manager will deploy a Fire Safety Inspector to advise the 'Responsible Person', and offer advice and guidance to reduce the potential for further UwFS.

In the event of a premise being identified, which may have the potential for communication difficulties, i.e. language issues, then the Unwanted Fire Signals Manager will deploy a Fire Safety Inspector, along with the respective bilingual advocate, to advise the 'Responsible Person', and offer advice and guidance to reduce the potential for further UwFS and consequently reduce the potential for the premises to advance to the final stage of the strategy.

8. Equality Improvement Plan

List any changes to our policies or procedures that need to be included in the Equality Action Plan/Service Plan.

Action Planned	Responsibility of	Completed by

Risk Assessment (Appendix C)				Ref no.	TBC
Activity	Unwanted Fire Signal Protocol			Status	DRAFT
Location	Various across the service			Initial assess.	Nov 2010
Section	Operational Activity (Emergency)			Reviewed	N/A
Assessed by	Kevin Longshaw	Specific	√	Next review	TBC
Role /No/Dept	T/SM/5229/H&S	Generic		Version no.	0.1



"An Excellent Authority"

Severity	Likelihood					Risk Rating	
	1. Rare	2. Unlikely	3. Possible	4. Very Likely	5. Almost Certain		
1	No Injury	1	2	3	4	5	Low Risk 1-8 No Further action Required
2	First Aid	2	4	6	8	10	Medium Risk 9-15 Action Plan Required and Implemented Before Proceeding.
3	3 Day Injury	3	6	9	12	15	High risk 16-25 Do Not Proceed
4	Major Injury	4	8	12	16	20	
5	Fatality	5	10	15	20	25	

Activity	Hazard	Risk	Person at Risk		Existing Control Measures	Risk Rating			ACCEPT (Y or N)	Further control measures implemented from action plan - re-score	New Risk Rating			ACCEPT (Y or N)	
			Staff	Other		L	X	S = RR			L	X	S = RR		
As a direct result of the Financial constraints placed on the Authority by Central Government and, the Authorities commitment to "manage our emergency response flexibly, with an emphasis on those most at risk" (IRMP 2011/14), MF&RS will no longer respond to actuations of Automatic Fire Alarm Systems unless a call is received confirming there is a fire, or sign of a fire.	MF&RS not responding	The Responsible Person not creating a suitable and sufficient Fire Risk Assessment		√	Responsible Persons must be cognisant to the response from MF&RS upon activation of their Automatic Fire Alarm systems, and reflect such awareness in their Fire Risk Assessment						Rigid Call Challenging procedure to be introduced at MACC - Informing caller MF&RS will not be responding Media advertising campaign to publicise new policy Consultation exercise with all Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisations who have direct line facilities to MACC Identify the current 'Top 50' most prolific generators of Unwanted Fire Signals and write to them explaining the consequences of the new policy.				

Activity	Hazard	Risk	Person at Risk		Existing Control Measures	Risk Rating			ACCEPT (Y or N)	Further control measures Implemented from action plan - re-score	New Risk Rating			ACCEPT (Y or N)
			Staff	Other		L	X	S = RR			L RR	X	S =	
	MF&RS not responding	Confirmation calls of fire situations not being received from premises which are unoccupied outside of 'normal office hours'		√	Responsible Persons must ensure that their Fire Risk Assessment identifies all potential risks and initiate control measures to negate the risks.	5	1	5	N	Advise all Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisations that their clients Fire Risk Assessments need to reflect the fact that MF&RS will no longer respond to actuations of their Automatic Fire Alarm Systems Media advertising campaign to publicise new policy, alert 'Responsible Persons' their FRA needs to reflect MF&RS will not attend unconfirmed actuations of their AFA System	4	1	4	y
	Longer response times	Fire development being at a more advanced stage on arrival of MF&RS appliances thereby endangering occupants of the premises.	√		Fire Risk Assessment to detail appropriate action with regards to evacuation procedures. Responsible Person is to ensure all employees are trained (Article 21) in relation to procedures to adopt in fire situations	3	4	12	N	Fire Safety Inspectors to ensure when Auditing a premises that the following: Article 13 Premises are equipped with appropriate fire detectors and alarms. Article 17 Maintenance, and Article 21 Training	2	4	8	Y
	Longer response times	Fire development being at a more advanced stage on arrival of MF&RS appliances	√	√	Fire Fighter training:	3	2	6	N	Issue new Service Instruction to all Operational Personnel explaining the new procedure and the likely impact it may have in relation to fire development in unoccupied premises	3	2	6	Y
Responding to AFA's under blue light conditions. (Normal Response)	Other road users/ pedestrians present whilst operating vehicle under emergency conditions.	RTC's, collisions with other road users	√	√	EFAD qualified appliance drivers. Appliance emergency warning signals to be utilised as appropriate. Assessment of nature of call and urgency of	1	5	5	Y	MF&RS will only respond to AFA's if a call is received from the premises confirming a fire, or sign of a fire	0	0	0	y

Activity	Hazard	Risk	Person at Risk		Existing Control Measures	Risk Rating			ACCEPT (Y or N)	Further control measures Implemented from action plan - re-score	New Risk Rating				ACCEPT (Y or N)
			Staff	Other		L	X	S = RR			L	X	S =	RR	
					response required to be undertaken. SOP 1.1 – Responding to Incidents.										
Responding to UwFS under blue light conditions.	Other road users/ pedestrians present whilst operating vehicle under emergency conditions.	RTC's, collisions with other road users	√	√	EFAD qualified appliance drivers. Appliance emergency warning signals to be utilised as appropriate. Assessment of nature of call and urgency of response required to be undertaken. SOP 1.1 – Responding to Incidents.	1	5	5	N	Implementation of UwFS protocol, - MF&RS no longer responds to UwFS. Provision of on site fire safety advice to assist premises/responsible persons in implementing enhanced controls for their site.	1	5	5	Y	
Receipt of fire alarm calls in to MACC.	Consistent failure/lack of on site controls to identify causes of and/or reduce fire alarm activation.	Unnecessary deployment of front line resources.	√	√	MACC action plans for dealing with calls. PDA limited to the existing risk profile of the premises concerned.	3	4	12	N	MACC operatives to establish if call is from the public, the premises or a Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisation (FAMO) and challenge appropriately. If call from FAMO – MACC to ensure call has been filtered. MACC operatives to implement robust call challenge principles to ascertain if the presence of fire is known/unknown.	2	4	8	Y	
	Failure of FAMO/ARC to filter the call and ascertain if a fire is confirmed.	Unnecessary deployment of front line resources.	√	√	Existing arrangements and procedures between MFRS and FAMO's PDA limited to the existing risk profile of the premises concerned.	3	4	12	N	Liaison and guidance provided to FAMO's to promote the filtering process. MACC operatives to implement robust call challenge principles to ascertain if the presence of fire is known/unknown.	2	4	8	Y	

Activity	Hazard	Risk	Person at Risk		Existing Control Measures	Risk Rating			ACCEPT (Y or N)	Further control measures Implemented from action plan - re-score	New Risk Rating				ACCEPT (Y or N)
			Staff	Other		L	X	S			=	RR	L	X	
										MFRS will inform FAMO's that calls received from premises either directly or indirectly, that do not confirm a fire situation, then MF&RS will not respond. Delayed signal from FAMO's to MACC so as to facilitate the filtering process.					
Response to sites within the top 20 poor performers list.	Consistent failure/lack of on site controls to identify causes of and/or reduce fire alarm activation.	Unavailability of front line resources for genuine emergencies.	√	√	PDA limited to the existing risk profile of the premises concerned. SOP 1.1 - Responding to Incidents.	3	4	12	N	Premises within the top 50 list will be given advanced warning of the change of policy, to enable them to update their own internal procedures and seek advice from MF&RS to avoid unnecessary UwFS.	2	4	8	Y	
Response to vulnerable person sites.	Repeated calls to premises of this nature due to commitment to provide full PDA response.	Unavailability of front line resources for genuine emergencies.		√	PDA limited to the existing risk profile of the premises concerned. SOP 1.1 - Responding to Incidents.	3	4	12	N	Full PDA will be mobilised for all confirmed/suspected fires regardless of source of call. Fire safety inspector to audit any commercial premises and provide on site advice and guidance so as to reduce further UwFS.	2	4	8	Y	
None attendance of front line resources.	Lack of/reduced response to genuine fire calls.	Persons/premises affected by development of incident.		√	Premises informed of potential for a reduced level of response and emphasis on the need to ensure robust measures are in place with regards to the monitoring, maintenance and recording of fire alarm activity. All premises will receive a full PDA for confirmed fires. Full assistance and advice will be afforded to all	1	5	5	Y						

Activity	Hazard	Risk	Person at Risk		Existing Control Measures	Risk Rating			ACCEPT (Y or N)	Further control measures Implemented from action plan - re-score	New Risk Rating			ACCEPT (Y or N)
			Staff	Other		L	X	S = RR			L	X	S = RR	
					premises in order for them to manage their Automatic Fire Detection Systems Advice given on 'double knock' alarm systems and delayed transmissions.									
Receipt of AFA calls during out of office hours for the premises.	No persons on site.	Inability for MACC/FAMO's to effectively call challenge and ascertain if a fire is confirmed.		√	PDA limited to the existing risk profile of the premises concerned.	2	5	10	N	If call received from a member of the public, call challenge protocols can be implemented to confirm or otherwise the presence of fire. All premises will have to reflect in their Fire Risk Assessment actions to be taken if AFA system actuates when premises are unoccupied.	1	5	5	A