AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO:	**MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY**
DATE:	**19th JANUARY 2012**
REPORT NO.	**CFO/015 /12**
REPORTING OFFICER:	**DCFO Garrigan**
CONTACT OFFICER:	**AM Platt Prevention and Protection**
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	**GM Keen WM Martin**
SUBJECT:	**UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS (UwFS)**

APPENDIX	**A**	Case studies
	B	Equality Impact Assessment
	C	Risk Assessment

ATTACHED - HARD COPY

Purpose of Report

1. To request that Members approve the adoption of the risk based approach to dealing with Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) actuations and any resulting Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) as advanced in this report.

Recommendation

2. Members approve the adoption of the risk based approach to dealing with AFA systems and any resulting UwFS as advanced in this report.

Executive Summary

In order to reduce Unwanted Fire Signals MFRS will, subject to Authority approval, adopt a risk based response to AFA actuations which will include a rigorous call challenging procedure.

MFRA will, in adopting the protocols advanced within this report maintain a full emergency response to all domestic premises, where the responsibility for the safety of the occupiers is on the individuals who reside there.

MFRA will continue to provide the appropriate predetermined emergency response to premises that utilise an AFA system, upon receipt of a call via

the'999' system confirming a fire or where there is reasonable belief that there may be a fire.

Any premises that provides a "Double Knock" AFA system as detailed in paragraph 25 will receive the pre determined attendance from MFRS.

Adoption of this protocol will reduce the number of mobilisations by approximately 4,200 per year.

Adoption of this protocol has the potential to realise 20,790 additional 'staff' hours for the Service to utilise for operational response, operational preparedness, prevention and protection.

MFRA will continue to meet its legislative enforcement requirements in relation to the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order (RRO).

MFRA will ensure that changes in relation to the mobilisation to AFA's is communicated effectively to the Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisation (FAMO's) and respective *Responsible Person's* – provision of advice and support in the management of AFA systems and RRO compliance will still be provided.

Introduction & Background

3. When an Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) actuates for any reason other than a fire condition, this is referred to as a false alarm. The point at which the Fire and Rescue Service is requested to respond to this false alarm is referred to as an Unwanted Fire Signal (UwFS).

4. Between the 1st of January 2010 and the 31st of December 2010, MFRS received a total of 5802 AFA calls of which 95% were UwFS.

5. There is no legal responsibility for MFRA 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 the 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.

6. Despite the various strategies employed by the Authority to reduce the impact of such incidents, the amount of UwFS over the past five years has risen by 13.7%, from a total of 5105 in 2006 to 5802 last year.

7. Unless addressed it is envisaged that the number of UwFS generated across Merseyside will continue to increase resulting in a significant impact on service delivery, community safety engagement activity and essential risk critical training.

8. Attendance at such incidents also increases the risk to Firefighters and other road users through unnecessary vehicle movements under emergency response conditions.

9. At the Fire Authority meeting held on 21st July 2011 (Fire Authority Report CFO/ 074/11 Dynamic Reserve) Members, in response to the unprecedented financial challenges faced by the Authority agreed to place 5 appliances in a dynamic reserve which results in them being crewed on a recall to duty basis.

10. Appendix 1 of CFO/074/11 Dynamic Reserve provided an analysis of Local Performance Indicator (LPI) 60: The number of occasions that MFRA meets its attendance times, stating that between April 2008 and March 2011 MFRA met those attendance times on 92.8% of occasions. The report identified that crewing these appliances using the recall to duty system would result in a potential reduction in response performance of 0.35%.

11. Whilst the predicted performance outcome is still above the Authority target of 90%, the adoption of the UwFS protocol advanced within this report will significantly offset the reduction in performance from placing 5 pumps permanently in the dynamic reserve.

12. Furthermore the adoption of the protocol will reduce the impact on our operational response, service delivery, community safety engagement activity and essential risk critical training capability which will result from the inevitable cuts in funding in years 3 and 4 of the spending review.

Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisations (FAMO)

13. FAMO is a new acronym given to Alarm Receiving Centres and Telecare Organisations by the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) in all articles relating to the reduction of UwFS.

14. MFRS currently has 25 FAMO's provided with Direct Line facilities into the Mobilising and Communication Centre (MACC), at Derby Road.

Fig 1.1 UwFS as % of FAMO Calls 2007 – 2009

Category	2007	2008	2009	Grand Total
UwFS	3912	4320	4296	12528
Fire	306	345	315	966
UwFS as % of FAMO Calls	92.7%	92.6%	93.2%	92.8%
Grand Total	4218	4665	4611	13494

15. As can be seen from Fig 1.1 UwFS received from FAMO's have averaged 92.8% of all calls from these organisations in each of the past three years.

UwFS Rates

16. The amount of UwFS over the past five years has risen by 13.7%, from a total of 5105 in 2006 to 5802 last year.

17. In every area of MFRS core business activities over the past 5 years with the exception of UwFS there has been a reduction in the number of incidents. This is due to many reasons but the two main factors contributing towards this trend are:

- The increase in premises installing AFA systems due to cheaper technology making systems more affordable
- Ageing systems becoming more unreliable

18. MFRS has tried a number of different approaches to reduce the amount of UwFS however as can be seen from the figures none of these strategies has proved successful.

Recording

19. For the purposes of recording false alarms and UwFS within the FSEC model, three categories are used:

Code 15 – used for malicious calls, where an individual maliciously requests the attendance of the service to an alleged fire situation, or, actuates an alarm system maliciously by using a break glass call point.
Code 16 – used for false alarms where the caller genuinely believes there to be a fire but on investigation, proves to be no fire, e.g. steam from a boiler system being mistaken for smoke.
Code 17 – used for UwFS, when an AFA system detects what it believes to be a fire, goes into alarm mode, and the fire service is requested to attend, but the incident proves to be a false alarm.

UwFS per Station Area

20. The annual UwFS figure is for each station area expressed as a percentage of overall calls is detailed below:

Fig. 1.2 UwFS as a % of all calls per Station Area

Station	Emergency Incidents with FA (FSEC 01-18)	Unwanted Fire Signals	UWFS as % of FSEC 01-18
10 - Kirkdale	1078	282	26.2%
11 - City Centre	1527	848	55.5%
12 - Low Hill / Kensington	1094	277	25.3%
13 - Allerton	509	171	33.6%
14 - Speke-Garston	821	177	21.6%
15 - Toxteth	873	263	30.1%
16 - Old Swan	1280	301	23.5%
17 - Belle Vale	602	138	22.9%
18 - Aintree	1080	399	36.9%
19 - Croxteth	953	102	10.7%
20 - Brikenhead	1436	378	26.3%
21 - Bromborough	634	228	36.0%

22 - Heswall	204	58	28.4%
23 - Upton	824	205	25.0%
24 - West Kirby	233	32	13.7%
25 - Wallasey	877	176	20.1%
30 - Bootle & Netherton	852	188	22.1%
31 - Crosby	1074	268	25.0%
32 - Formby	225	32	14.2%
33 - Southport	1082	430	39.7%
40 - Huyton	806	128	15.9%
41 - Whiston	662	167	25.2%
42 - Kirkby	898	131	14.6%
50 - St Helens	1205	214	17.8%
51 - Newton-Le-Willows	357	60	16.8%
52 - Eccleston	544	149	27.4%
Grand Total	21730	5802	26.7%

Notably:

- 55% of all calls to Station 11 - City Centre are UwFS
- In over half of all stations more than a quarter of all calls are UwFS
- Every station is effected by UwFS
- 26.7% of all calls to MFRS (5802) are UwFS
- By not responding to UwFS MFRS would be required to mobilise less than 16,000 times a year

Turnouts from all stations would be substantially reduced - by the total of UwFS plus the associated strategic appliance movements in 'covering' areas, if the protocols advanced within this report are adopted.

Fig. 1.3 Total calls per station less UwFS

Station	All Emergency Incidents (FSEC 01-18)	Unwanted Fire Signals	All Emergency calls minus UwFS
10 - Kirkdale	1078	282	**796**
11 - City Centre	1527	848	**679**
12 - Low Hill / Kensington	1094	277	**817**
13 - Allerton	509	171	**338**
14 - Speke-Garston	821	177	**644**
15 - Toxteth	873	263	**610**
16 - Old Swan	1280	301	**979**
17 - Belle Vale	602	138	**464**
18 - Aintree	1080	399	**681**
19 - Croxteth	953	102	**851**
20 - Brikenhead	1436	378	**1058**
21 - Bromborough	634	228	**406**
22 - Heswall	204	58	**146**
23 - Upton	824	205	**619**
24 - West Kirby	233	32	**201**
25 - Wallasey	877	176	**701**
30 - Bootle & Netherton	852	188	**664**
31 - Crosby	1074	268	**806**

32 - Formby	225	32	**193**
33 - Southport	1082	430	**652**
40 - Huyton	806	128	**678**
41 - Whiston	662	167	**495**
42 - Kirkby	898	131	**767**
50 - St Helens	1205	214	**991**
51 - Newton-Le-Willows	357	60	**297**
52 - Eccleston	544	149	**395**
Grand Total	21730	5802	**15928**

Proposed Approach

21. As previously explained it is evident that the Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisations are not filtering the calls they receive from their clients/end users.

22. This has had, and is still having, a profound effect on MFRS in that the Service is having to provide sufficient resources to cope with the additional demand placed on it by having to respond to UwFS.

23. To reduce this burden and thereby enable MFRS to maintain appliance availability for operational response and preparedness, the only realistic option open to the Authority is to adopt a risk based response to UwFS whereby unless a back up call is received, appliances will not be mobilised to the actuation of an AFA system.

24. Modern AFA systems utilise the "Double Knock" approach whereby if a detector operates then the alarm will not be raised until a second detector operates thus confirming the likelihood of a fire and reducing unwanted actuations. The provision of such systems lies with the responsible person. Where such a system is provided it is proposed that MFRS should respond in accordance with the pre-determined attendance.

25. It is proposed however that MFRA maintain a full emergency response to all domestic premises, where the responsibility for the safety of the occupiers is on the individuals who reside there. An example of such premises is Sheltered Accommodation. Appendix A provides case studies of the impact of UwFS on different types of premises.

26. If the protocols advanced in this report of attending only genuine fire calls and calls to domestic premises had been adopted in 2010 this would have seen a reduction of 3922 or 67.6% of the total number of UwFS.

Fig. 1.4 Total number of UwFS in non domestic premises

Year	UwFS	FSEC - Code 02 domestic premises, where the responsibility for the safety of the occupiers is by the individuals who reside there	Total UwFS minus Domestic Premises	% of UwFS to 'other buildings' that were **NOT** Domestic premises
2010	5802	1880	**3922**	**67.6%**

27. Should Members approve this proposal Officers will undertake an extensive and all encompassing communications exercise to inform all relevant stakeholders

including FAMO's, and premises who generate UwFS of the risk based approach to AFA actuations that the Service will adopt. This will serve to reinforce their responsibilities under the RRO and provide absolute clarity as to what actions they are required to undertake in order to ensure the full pre determined attendance from MFRS is received on the actuation of an AFA.

Equality & Diversity Implications

28. A Full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached to this Report at Appendix B.

Staff Implications

29. The adoption of the protocols advanced in this report creates no additional staffing burden.

Legal Implications

30. Section 7 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 states a Fire and Rescue Service has a duty to make provision for the purpose of extinguishing fires in its area and protecting life and property in the event of fires. Such provision is to include making arrangements for dealing with calls for help and summoning personnel. The wording provides latitude in the arrangements made to discharge that function.

31. The adoption of the protocols advanced in this report places emphasis on the duty of the "Responsible Person" for premises, as defined in the Regulatory Reform Order (Fire Safety) 2005.

32. MFRA has no legal responsibility to respond to UwFS however, the Localism Act 2011 will give a power to charge for responding to UwFS (subject to stringent criteria). This aspect of the Localism Act is not yet in force and in any event, in many cases it is not in the public interest to charge for this as additional charging would not necessarily resolve the issue.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

33. Research shows that from mobilisation to an appliance booking available again, takes on average almost 35mins per UwFS. Assuming four persons per appliance this equates to 2.2 'staff' hours of lost productivity per appliance per UwFS.

34. The average attendance at an UwFS is 2.25 appliances (the number of UwFS attended by 3 appliances and the number of UwFS attended by 2 appliances divided by the total number of UwFS's).

35. If the new protocol reduces UwFS and re-enforcing movements by 4,200 (UwFS and 're-enforcing movements) calls per year, (5 year average) as anticipated, then this would equate to the following:

2.25 appliances per UwFS x 2.2 (hours per appliance) = 4.95 staff hours x 4,200 = 20,790 hours of productivity which can be better utilised by further training, community safety activities, etc.

36. Whilst this saving cannot be directly realised in cash terms 21,000 hours is equivalent to about £1m in staff time. In addition there are costs associated with vehicles. Allowing for all service costs (in the way a special service call charge does) would indicate an absolute total cost in excess of £3m.

37. Higher numbers of mobilisations are likely to mean more accidents and injuries for the Service. These are potentially costly in terms of claims against the organisation as well as actually costly in terms of time spent dealing with them and insurance costs

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

38. A risk assessment on the protocols advanced within this report is attached at Appendix C.

39. The new protocol will have a direct positive impact on the environment by reducing the number of appliance movements undertaken unnecessarily and reduce the number of accidents involving appliance movements due to the reduction in calls.

Contribution to Achieving Our Mission:

"Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters"

40. Adoption of the protocol advanced within this report will reduce the impact on business continuity through disruption caused by false alarms. The policy will reduce risk to firefighters by reducing the number of appliance movements on the roads of Merseyside.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Fire Authority Report CFO/074/11 Dynamic Reserve

Glossary of Terms

AFA	Automatic Fire Alarm
UwFS	Unwanted Fire Signal
MFRA	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
MFRS	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
RRO	Regulatory Reform Order
FAMO	Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisation
FSEC	Fire Service Emergency Cover