

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO: Meeting of the	MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
DATE:	22ND OCTOBER 2013
REPORT NO.	CFO/123/13
REPORTING OFFICER:	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
CONTACT OFFICER:	AM MYLES PLATT – DIRECTOR OF PREVENTION & PROTECTION, EXTN; 4644
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	GM GUY KEEN
SUBJECT:	RISK BASED RESPONSE TO AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARMS PHASE 2

Appendix A Consultation Briefing Note (included within Report)
Appendix B Equality Impact Assessment

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Authority on the progress of the phased implementation of the new Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) protocol.
2. To report on the outcome of the stakeholder consultations regarding go-live of Phase 2.
3. To report the outcomes of the revised risk assessment and seek Members approval for the implementation of Phase 2 resulting from the above.

Recommendation

4. That the Authority approves the implementation of Phase 2 of the UwFS protocol for November 1st 2013 as advanced in this report, notably that:
 - (a) The current protocol be extended to cover the 24 hour period and exempt sleeping risk, such as hospitals, hotels and hostels, due to the risk to the safety of the Community and to responding Firefighters in the event of any delay in response arising from the failure to develop a timely back-up call to the Authority.

(b) Significant sleeping risk premises (e.g. Hospitals, Care Homes, Hotels and Hostels) are automatically exempted during night-time hours.

(c) The decision to charge for Unwanted Fire Signals be reviewed and that further work be completed to identify a suitable methodology.

Executive Summary

Phase 1 of the new protocol for responding to Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) actuations was implemented on 1st November 2012 for day-time hours only.

Phase 1 resulted in a **49.95%** reduction in UwFS.

Phase 2 Go-live will be 1st November 2013. From that date the Authority will only make an emergency response to premises if a back-up call is received via the 999 system regardless of the time of the day.

Automatic exemptions and the facility for exceptional exemptions established during Phase 1 will still apply.

The risk based approach to the new protocol has been revised following outcomes from Phase 1, stakeholder engagement and feedback.

The key recommendation arising from this risk assessment is that significant sleeping risk premises (e.g. Hospitals, Care Homes, Hotels and Hostels) are automatically exempted during night time hours.

Stakeholder engagement has resulted in a number of positive suggestions put forward for consideration for example, charging for repeat offenders and partnerships with stakeholder groups.

Consultation highlighted the following requirements:

- Greater engagement with FAMO's/ARC's;
- Greater engagement with Small and Medium Enterprise's (SME's);
- Identification of exempted premises.

Introduction and Background

5. At the Authority meeting held on 19th January 2012, (CFO/015/12) Members agreed to change the Services response to fire calls generated by Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) systems, in an attempt to reduce the burden of Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS).

6. Previous reports established that UwFS's increase risk to firefighters and the public due to a number of factors including:

- a. Increased road use (including emergency response);

- b. Lost productivity for business
 - c. Lost productivity for the Service. Calculation based upon 2011-12 data indicated lost productivity in the region of 20,000 hours which would otherwise have been applied to activities to enhance community and firefighter safety.
7. Following consultation seminars in June 2012 the Authority agreed to implement the change in protocol in phases. Phase 1 was implemented in November 2012 with the second phase due to commence in November 2013.
 8. Phase 1 of the protocol distinguishes between 'night-time' (19.30hrs-07.30hrs) and 'day-time' (07.30hrs-19.30hrs). With emergency response only being committed to certain categories of premises upon receipt of a back-up call from the premises confirming a fire or suspicion of a fire during the daytime.
 9. As a result of this change in response, the first nine months (1st November 2013 – 31st July 2013) delivered a **49.95%** reduction in UwFS compared to the same nine month period the previous year.
 10. Day-time UwFS have reduced by 1751 from 2680 to 929 for the same period the previous year, a fall of **65.33%**. In comparison night-time UwFS have reduced by 224 from 1270 to 1046 for the same period the previous year, a fall of **17.64%**.
 11. Call Volume; - the amount of calls received at MACC to actuations of Automatic Fire Alarm actuations has fallen by **25.37%** overall - indicating that premises are now taking ownership of their AFA systems more than they have done in the past.
 12. Stage 2 is due to commence on the 1st November 2013.
 13. Two, one day consultation events (4th and 5th September 2013) have been completed the first being for generic stakeholders (i.e. Responsible Persons, Premises Managers and Facilities Managers) and the second for Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisations (FAMO's) / Alarm Receiving Centres (ARC's).
 14. Day one was well attended and the audience actively engaged with the briefing both in raising their concerns and making a number of positive suggestions. A full outline of the points raised are detailed in Appendix A.
 15. Whilst the FAMO's and ARCs were invited to attend day 2, the limited turn out indicates the need to engage more effectively with this group.
 16. The key concern from the FAMO's and ARC's who did attend was the difficulties created by significant inconsistencies in AFA responses by different FRS's.
 17. Table 1 below shows all UwFS for the past nine months. The available data shows 'day time' and 'night time' performance figures for each of the FSEC codes with a brief summary as to the types of premises contained within each FSEC band.

18. Further details regarding the refresh of the risk assessment are included in the briefing note at Appendix A. Three options were considered:
- a. Full implementation of Second Stage to include night time hours – ie non-attendance at all premises included in the present 'day time' schedule to be extended to the 'night time' period.
 - b. Extend current scope of protocol with a view to delaying the second stage implementation until a future date, as yet determined.
 - c. Full implementation of Second Stage to include night time hours; Exempt all sleeping risk during night time hours. This option maintains the current Risk Based Response to Automatic Fire Alarm Actuations for premises during the day; 0730hrs to 1930hrs, and extends the approach to non-sleeping risk premises at night time 1930hrs to 0730hrs.

Recommendations

19. To extend the current protocol to cover the 24 hour period and exempt sleeping risk such as hospitals, hotels and hostels due to the risk to the safety of the Community and to responding Firefighters in the event of any delay in response arising from the failure to deliver a timely back-up call to the Authority. Stakeholder engagement provided consistent and clear evidence that given the complexity of challenges in such environments that a delay in sending a back-up call in the event of a real fire was a foreseeable risk.
20. Based upon existing data, Protection officers have calculated that whilst still providing full emergency cover to fire calls generated by AFA systems during 'night time' hours to all sleeping risks, a further annual reduction in UwFS Nov 2013 – Oct 2014 of **21.7%** is predicted.
21. The figures highlighted in red in Table 1 below are the potential reductions in UwFS for particular premises should the recommendations be adopted. This would deliver an overall reduction of UwFS of **70.65%**.
22. This report concludes that the additional risks identified in point 13 above outweigh any potential performance gain and the risks identified in point 2 above. Therefore this report recommends that significant sleeping risk premises (e.g. Hospitals, Care Homes, Hotels and Hostels) are automatically exempted during night-time hours.
23. For matters of consistency the night-time hours should remain as 19:30 to 07:30 hours however, sleeping risk concerns relate to hours where people are asleep and staff levels are low. This could arguably be refined to a shorter time period subject to review at a later stage.

Table 1 UwFS for nine month period 01/11/12 – 31/07/13

FSEC	Day	Night	Total	Brief Description
02 01	17	110	127	Hospitals and Prisons
02 02	86	52	138	Elderly Persons, children's, mentally handicapped homes
02 03	11	13	24	HiMO's (Houses in multiple occupation)
02 04	70	57	127	High Rise Flats – 4 storeys and above
02 05	9	12	21	Hostels – Youth, bail, and YMCA
02 06	0	21	21	Hotels, B+B's, Guest Houses
02 07	48	47	95	Houses converted to flats
02 08	614	307	921	All other sleeping – sheltered housing , flats under 4 storey
02 09	1	15	16	University, colleges
02 10	15	39	54	Public buildings – libraries, museums, courts, art galleries
02 11	9	68	77	Licensed Premises
02 12	2	55	57	Schools – including occupational training centres
02 13	13	69	82	Shops – including. Petrol Stations
02 14	7	32	39	Other premises open to public – Stadia, halls, cinemas etc.
02 15	8	85	93	Factories/Warehouses
02 16	15	42	57	Offices
02 17	3	23	26	Other workplaces
Total	928	1047	1975	

Source: Vision Boss.

24. The protocol from November 2013 would be:

- The Authority will no longer respond to calls generated by Automatic Fire Alarms unless a back-up call is received via the 999 system confirming there is a fire, or that physical signs of fire exist.
- All single private domestic dwellings, Care Homes, Sheltered Housing schemes, HiMO's and dwellings where the responsibility for the safety of the occupiers rests with the individuals, who reside there, will be exempted from this policy.
- **All** sleeping accommodation will be exempted between (19.30-07.30)
- The Authority 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.
- Premises whose fire alarm system is configured to coincidence actuation principles ('double knock') will, following consultation with MFRA Community Fire Protection Department, receive a full emergency response.

25. At present the Authority has a policy of not charging for UwFS. Part of the argument behind this decision is the belief that it would not be in the public interest, however suggestions for MFRA to charge repeat offenders during stakeholder briefings were widely supported during the consultations.

26. The Localism Bill enables Fire & Rescue Authorities to charge Responsible Persons for UwFS; this approach has already been adopted by other FRS. Managed appropriately, this could become a viable deterrent encouraging Responsible Persons to take ownership of their AFA systems and reduce the number of UwFS produced. This report therefore recommends that the decision to charge for UwFS be reviewed and that further work is completed to identify a suitable methodology.
27. The Localism Bill does not allow for Fire Services to levy a charge for UwFS against domestic properties (Localism Act s18 paragraph. (3) (a)).
28. Sheltered Housing schemes (See table 2 below) are classed as domestic premises and are exempt from charging but are now the largest group producing UwFS. Partnerships with both Prevention and Protection officers with Responsible Persons (Registered Social Landlords) will be developed to reduce the numbers of UwFS in Sheltered Housing schemes.

Table 2 UwFS in Sheltered Housing schemes
(Sorted by station ground having most occurrences)

Station	Nov-12	Dec-12	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13	Total
20 - Birkenhead	7	13	9	5	8	9	11	4	6	72
31 - Crosby	6	11	1	7	11	3	6	4	6	55
10 - Kirkdale	5	6	7	4	6	6	7	8	4	53
25 - Wallasey	5	9	4	4	12	8	6	3	1	52
33 - Southport	8	7	5	4	3	6	6	5	8	52
15 - Toxteth	2	7	6	8	4	3	7	2	7	46
19 - Croxteth		1	6	1	3	4	3	1	6	25
12 - Kensington	3	3	2	6	3	2	1	1	2	23
18 - Aintree	2	3	3	1	6	1	3	2	2	23
16 - Old Swan	4	3	2	1	2		4	3	3	22
30 - Bootle/Netherton	1	6		1	2	1	3	3	3	20
50 - St Helens	3	3			3	2	4	1	4	20
11 - Liverpool City	2	2	3	4	2	1	2			16
17 - Belle Vale	3		2		3	3	2	1	2	16
52 - Eccleston	2	2	1		2	1	3	3	1	15
14 - Speke/Garston	3	3		3		1	2	2		14
21 - Bromborough			1	2	1	4	2	4		14
23 - Upton			3	1	2	1		2		9
41 - Whiston		1		1		1	1	2	2	8
13 - Allerton		1		2			1	1	2	7
22 - Heswall	1				2	1		1		5
40 - Huyton		1		1		1	1		1	5
42 - Kirkby			1		1		1	2		5
51 - Newton		1	1				1	1	1	5
24 - West Kirby								1	1	2
32 - Formby		1	1							2
Grand Total	57	84	58	56	76	59	77	57	62	586

Source: IRS

Further Challenges

29. Mobilising appliances to alarm activations at night will depend on the type of premises the call is received from. To respond to all 'sleeping accommodation' can only be achieved if the quality of information currently held is both available and more importantly accurate.
30. In 2008 the Vision gazetteer was cross-matched to the NLPG by an external party. 6% of properties could not be matched by the external party. These records were therefore processed in-house between 2009 and 2010. Any matches made in-house were quality checked. Matches by the external party have not been quality checked.
31. Information held on Community Protection's Premise Record files (Sophtlogic) total more than 30,000 premises and at present is more reliable than the NLPG.
32. Consideration must be given to cross mapping information held on Sophtlogic on individual premises with current records held on the Vision mobilising system.
33. To improve further the identification of sleeping risks throughout Merseyside the introduction of a declaration within informative messages passed by operational crews at every incident could be utilised. Appliance commanders stating whether a premise is either 'Residential' or 'Commercial' can be added into the message then retrieved by Data Management and cross referenced to the Vision system.
34. Information gathered by the SSRI process to be cross referenced with information in the Vision mobilising system.
35. The amount of work generated by cross referencing of information and recording on Vision will have to be considered should the recommendations be approved.

Equality & Diversity Implications

36. A full Equality Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix B.

Staff Implications

37. Additional staffing will be required to cross reference all premises data held within the Authority against individual premises records held in the Vision mobilising system.

Legal Implications

38. 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.

39. 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.
40. The Authority 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).

Financial Implications & Value for Money

41. 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. The average response to an UwFS is 2.25 appliances.
42. The new protocol has reduced UwFS by 1975 compared to the same period the previous year. This equates 1975 UwFS x 2.25 Appliances x 2.2 'staff' hours per appliance = 9,776.25 hours. Therefore, MFRA have increased the time available for other areas of productivity which can be better utilised by further training, community safety activities, etc.
43. Additional funding may be required to resource data management.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

44. The second stage of the 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.
45. Based on the number of calls received and responded to in all FSEC coded premises in the 09 – 17 categories (non-residential) from November 2012 – July 2013 compared to the total number of UwFS received during the same period, there is a potential for a further reduction of **21.7%** in UwFS next year, compared to this year. This figure would be achievable while still responding to all sleeping accommodation at night time.
46. Quality assurance on the information held in the Vision mobilising system will ensure that the correct response is made to fire calls generated by AFA systems particularly to sleeping risks at night time and exempted groups during day time hours.

Contribution to ****Our Mission – To Achieve; Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Fire-fighters****

47. A further reduction in UwFS of a potential **21.7%** will increase availability for genuine fire calls. There will be fewer appliances conducting 'blue-light' runs thereby making the roads of Merseyside safer for other road users and pedestrians alike. Additional time will be available for Community Safety, training and SSRI visits.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

48. CFO/015/12

***Glossary of Terms**

AFA - Automatic Fire Alarm
ARC - Alarm Receiving Centre
FAMO- Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisation
FRS – Fire and Rescue Service
FSEC - Fire Service Emergency Cover
HiMO - House in Multiple Occupations
MFRA - Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
NLPG - National Land and Property Gazetteer
SME – Small and Medium Enterprise
UwFS - Unwanted Fire Signals
SSRI – Site Specific Risk Information

Appendix A Community Protection Team Briefing Note

Briefing Note Number:	001CH	Date:	25/07/2013
Risk Based Approach to AFA Actuations Update and Way Forward.			

To	GM GUY KEEN
From	SM CHRIS HEAD.

Summary

MFRS Risk Based Response to Automatic Fire Alarm Actuations was introduced on 31st October 2012. A review of this protocol has focused on the following areas

- i.) Data analysis of the effect of the protocol on UWFS and call volume
- ii.) Changes in British Standards and relevant Case Law
- iii.) Updated Risk Assessment.
- iv.) Communication strategy/Engagement with Stakeholders

Protection managers have conducted a risk-benefit review of three options for implementation from 1st November 2013 which identifies Option 3 (Full implementation, with exemption for all sleeping risk at night time hours requires further consideration) as the optimum solution which best balances the risks.

Review Findings

- i.) Data analysis of the effect on UWFS and call volume.

On 19th January 2012 the Fire Authority passed a resolution to change the way MF&RS responded to fire calls generated by Automatic Fire Alarm systems. The new protocol was introduced on 1st November 2012.

In the first nine months since implementation (1st November 2013 – 31st July 2013) there has been a **49.95%** reduction in Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) compared to the same period the previous year.

This is due primarily by the adherence of MF&RS staff to the new protocol, especially the control room operatives at MACC in issuing the Call Challenge instigated as part of the protocol.

The protocol distinguishes between 'night-time' (19.30hrs-07.30hrs) and 'day-time' (07.30hrs-19.30hrs). UwFS have reduced by a greater percentage during day-time hours than night-time as the staged implementation of the protocol only affects MF&RS's responses during the day-time hours. The second stage – 24 hour Call Challenging - is due to commence 1st November 2013.

For the first nine months of the protocol day-time UwFS have reduced to 929 from 2680 for the same period the previous year, a fall of **65.33%**. In comparison night-time UwFS have reduced to 1046 from 1270 again for the same period the previous year, a fall of **17.64%**.

Additionally, 'Call Volume'; - the amount of calls received at MACC to actuations of Automatic Fire Alarm actuations has fallen by **25.37%** indicating that premises are now managing their AFA systems and safety procedures far better than they have done in the past.

To conclude the first stage implementation of the protocol has yielded the following reductions:

UwFS have dropped by 49.95%

Day-time UwFS fell by 65.33%

Night-time UwFS fell by 17.64% and

Call Volume has reduced by 25.37%

Attached Doc. 1.

ii.) Changes in British Standards and relevant Case Law.

BS 5839-1:2013 "Fire detection and fire alarm systems for buildings. Code of practice for design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of systems in non-domestic premises", has been amended this year and includes the following "In residential care premises, where early extinguishing action by the fire and rescue service is critical to life safety, it is not appropriate to delay the summoning of the fire and rescue service when the fire alarm system operates."

Please note that residential care homes are currently exempt

Attached Doc 2.

A recent legal case; Grand Pier Limited vs. System 2 Security Limited 21st. December 2012 before His Honour Judge Havelock – Allan QC cited BS 5979 : 2007 Remote centres receiving signals from fire and security systems. Code of practice. His Honour referred specifically to the practice of filtering automatic fire alarm actuations by Alarm Receiving Centres and quoted BS 5979 " Fire alarm signals should usually be passed without delay and without the application of filtering procedures" Albeit with the acknowledgement that " Filtering procedures should be implemented if required by the emergency fire service"

His Honour also cited CFA Protocol for the Reduction of False Alarms and unwanted Fire Signals 2008 (Superseded 2010) " The default for all call filtering should be: if in doubt, a FRS response should be made."

Attached Doc 3.

Attached Doc 4

iii.) Communication Strategy.

External and Internal Communication was carried out prior to the implementation of the protocol.

This will need to be repeated and / or modified for implementation of the second phase. Key activities will include

- Stakeholder presentations.
- Information Bulletins in Trade and Service Sector publications
- Updated website information

Attached Doc 5.

iv.) Updated Risk Assessment

Risk assessment includes levels of risk resultant from implementation of second stage option.

Whilst the risk assessment calculates risk based on 'Likelihood X Severity', it is also important to see loss in terms of organizational, financial and reputational terms.

Implementation of the second phase

Service Instruction 0039: Risk Based Response to Automatic Fire Alarm Actuations. States "MF&RS will aim to implement the protocol to include 'Night' time hours (from 19:30 to 07:30 hours) from October 2013 and will work with stakeholders towards this"

In view of points (i.) and (ii.) Consideration is now required as to this implementation.

Options:

1. Full implementation of Second Stage to include night time hours
2. Extend current scope of protocol with a view to introducing second stage at a determined future date
3. Full implementation of Second Stage to include night time hours; Exempt all sleeping risk eg Hospitals, Hotels during night time hours. This option maintains our current Risk Based Response to Automatic Fire Alarm Actuations for premises during the day; 0730hrs to 1930hrs, and extends the approach to non-sleeping risk premises at night time 1930hrs to 0730hrs.

<u>Option</u>	<u>Key Risks</u>	<u>Key Benefits</u>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased risk of multiple fire fatalities in the event of a delayed response to a fire in a large sleeping risk e.g. Hospitals • Increased risk of property loss and to fire-fighters conducting fire-fighting operations in the event of a delayed response to a fire in a building that would otherwise have received a fast response under previous years UwFS protocols. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum potential to reduce UwFS
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited potential for further reductions in UwFS • Potential to reduce the momentum gained through the new protocol in giving stakeholders greater ownership of the risk and the consequential reduction in UwFS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No added benefit over current position
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will not achieve maximum potential to reduce UwFS • Increased risk of property loss and to fire-fighters conducting fire-fighting operations in the event of a delayed response to a fire in a building that would otherwise have received a fast response under previous years UwFS protocols. • Potential for signals from AFA's in sleeping risk premises to be filtered out due to a failure to identify the property as a sleeping risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to achieve substantial further reductions in UwFS by a further 10-15% over current reductions (2012/13). • No increased risk of multiple fire fatalities in the event of a delayed response to a fire in a large sleeping risk

Conclusion.

Significant reduction in UWFS has already been achieved by the first stage of the protocol, against our mission statement of Safer, Stronger Communities, Safe, Effective Firefighters, i.e.:

Reduction in UWFS through a risk based approach;

- Releases operational capacity to attend emergency incidents.
- Increases capacity for prevention and protection activities.
- Increases capacity for operational training.
- Reduces road risk through reduction of Appliance mobilizations.

Based on the above risk-benefit review Option 3 provides the optimum choice for overall risk reduction, however to maximise the effectiveness of this option it is essential that MACC are provided with a mechanism to identify which AFA calls relate to sleeping risk premises.

Experience since the implementation of the new protocol on 1st November 2012 have demonstrated that Call Handling centres regularly fail to identify details regarding premises that are exempt from the protocol when they are passing AFA calls through to MACC, this has led to failures in MF&RS responding to premises that are entitled to an emergency response e.g. regular failures to identify residential premises. Therefore experience suggests that Call Handling centres cannot be relied upon to identify whether or not a premises is a sleeping risk.

Protection are able to provide MACC with data from Sophtlogic that will accurately identify sleeping risk premises, however, the Sophtlogic list does not include all sleeping risk premises in Merseyside, it only includes premises that we have identified on the system. Additionally our enquiries have indicated that the Sophtlogic data is likely to be incompatible with MACC systems. Therefore, for Option 3 to be effective, Protection will be required to work with MACC to provide data in a usable format and further to this additional options should be explored that will influence Call Handling centres to clearly identify sleeping risk premises when passing AFA calls.

Attached Documents

1. UwFS Data Nov. 2012 to July 2013
2. BS 5839 PT. 1. Amendments 2013
3. Court Ruling Grand Pier Ltd vs. System 2 Security Ltd. 21-12-2012
4. CFOA Protocol for the Reduction of False Alarms and unwanted Fire Signals 2010
5. Draft Communications Strategy.
6. Service Instruction 0039: Risk Based Response to Automatic Fire Alarm Actuations Flow Chart v2.0
7. Updated Risk Assessment.

Stakeholder Briefing

Comments made regarding agreeing with the principle, but the timescales are very short. It was confirmed that the plans remain as per the consultation period earlier last year and that the phase were put in to allow more time for premises to make any necessary changes.

Comments that the exemption policy needs to be clear, there is confusion regarding premises that are exempt, not realising that they are exempt.

Query raised about if there will be a 'Phase 3'

It was confirmed there are no plans to implement a 'Phase 3', only possibly tweaks to 'Phase 2'.

Query raised regarding what the MFRS definition of 'Double Knock' is.

Comments from an audience member regarding updating risk assessments, and changing company's policies/purchasing equipment etc. to fit in with the new MFRS AFA policy.

Southport/Formby General Hospital raised point that they have vulnerable people (i.e. on ventilators, cancer patient etc) as a sleeping risk at night time with a low staff. They are concerned it could take notable time for the RP to locate if/where a fire was actually occurring. This concern was shared by other hospitals and care providers.

Suggestion made from audience regarding if the firebike can be used to attend premises following AFA's to verify fires.

Possibility of charging was discussed for repeat offenders.

Discussion ensued regarding different fire services having differing policies regarding AFA's, which can be confusing, especially for Housing Trusts etc, who have premises across County's – it is difficult for them to co-ordinate the various policies, and it adds to money invested/man power. Asked about the possibility of having one policy across all premises, in all County's.

Comments were made regarding the timescale of implementing the change – can people with a lot of buildings to look after have a longer period of time prior to implementation in order to redo risk assessments? All who believed they needed additional time for this to remain behind after the meeting were invited for to stay behind for further discussion and to arrange meetings to discuss justification for this, only Wirral Health Trust stayed behind, a meeting has been set in place.

Concerns were raised regarding the effectiveness of the previous communication strategy, particularly by the Knowsley Chamber of Commerce regarding Small – Medium Enterprise businesses.

Concerns were raised regarding the upcoming industrial action will affect the implementation of the new AFA policy.

The point was made the no managing agents have attended the briefing.

Post meeting Protection officers held a debrief.

Suggested advertising the change to policy on fire engines.

Include Chamber of Commerce in communications strategy.

Discussed a financial contract involving charges for exemption/penalties. I.e. an accumulating charge, which for the first 3 UwFS at any location the fee would be suspended, but on the 4th occasion they would be billed for all 4 occasions.

Suggested organisations short-staffed at night can form local partnerships to spread the cost of a fire warden who would have responsibility for the checking of fire alarms.

Note – the slide on the budget cuts described *3 Phases of cuts*, in hindsight this terminology caused some members of the audience to confuse the *3 phases of cuts* with the *2 phases of implementation of the new protocol*. This led to a number of stakeholder asking anxious questions over *Phase 3* of the protocol (see 2.3 above). Hence the presentation for the following day and for the website was amended to describe *3 rounds of cuts*.

This point should be reinforced in any follow up communications.

Unwanted Fire Signals Seminar

05.09.13

Q *Monitoring Station:* We now have 7 weeks to notify our customers that there will no longer be a response to unconfirmed AFAs. If the customer already has double knock system in place, will you still attend?

A *GK:* Double knock systems that have been approved by MFRS will receive an immediate response without a secondary confirmation. Persons looking to invest in any new system should contact MFRS for advice on suitable systems. There is currently a written policy on the MFRS website including information on the BS5839 Part 1 double knock system.

Q *Attendee:* Can customers use CCTV to confirm signs of fire when a fire alarm is actuated?

A *GK:* Yes.

Q *Attendee:* If we have the recommended double knock system (BS5839 Part 1) installed, actuation receive an immediate response?

A *GK:* We will continue to provide an immediate response so long as this system remains reliable. If there is continuing actuation resulting in unwanted fire signals, this will be reviewed.

Q *Attendee:* Where would you draw the line on attending false alarms?

A *GK:* We will adopt a risk based approach to false alarms and are unable to provide generic advice. Installed systems (British Stands systems are recommended) require reliable confirmation of fire.

Q *Attendee:* Is there a formula for cut off point?

A *GK:* No. We can continue to work with persons so long as progress is being made and MFRS resources remain available for emergencies.

Q *Attendee:* Have there been any deaths during the trail?

A *GK:* Not in Merseyside.

Q *Attendee:* Part of the industry, namely TSA (?) are installing none double knock systems and instructing Monitoring Stations to dial '999' on all actuations. How can this be rectified?

A *GK:* We need to continue to work closely with all involved and remain open to suggestions on how we can best move forward.

Q *Attendee:* We use internal URNs (Unique Reference Numbers) which are generated following attended risk assessments of premises and the types of burglar alarms installed. These also confirm that the systems were fitted by approved installers and systems are to standard. Would you consider using URNs on call monitoring stations that identify if a premise has an MFRS agreed double knock system in place, or has already been agreed as an exempt premise?

A *GK:* We will look into URNs possibilities and how technology can help take this forward.

C *Attendee:* Our URNs are accessible by our monitoring stations via an online connection. Once accessed by our monitoring stations, they can then relay any relevant information that is stored on our system about each premise.

C *GK:* MFRS systems already record an internal UPRN (Unique Premise Reference Number) on our system and would need to reconfigure our systems adding another field if we were to record external URNs from reliable sources.

Q *Attendee:* have you considered charging for unwanted fire signals to recover costs?

A *GK:* This has been discussed and will be considered.

C *Attendee:* Architects, building planners and persons designing fire systems in buildings have no knowledge of what a double knock system is.

Q *Attendee:* Can we advise you in advance of residential premises known to us?

A *GK:* Yes. If your installers inform monitoring stations that a premises is residential. The monitoring station can then advise MACC when dialling '999'. This information can also be forwarded to MFRS on AFaenquiries@merseyfire.gov.uk to be added to our records.

- Q** *Attendee:* How do we notify MFRS of premises we believe are exempt?
A *GK:* Email full details through to AFEnquiries@merseyfire.gov.uk . These will then be reviewed and may require a site visit.
- Q** *Attendee:* Will you response to alarm actuations from empty building that have no responsible person on site to confirm fire?
A *GK:* Only if the premise has been agreed as exempt.
- Q** *Attendee:* Until a premise has been agreed as exempt, will you no longer initiate an immediate response to unconfirmed alarm actuations from 1st November 2013?
A *GK:* We will no longer attend unless fire or signs of fire have been confirmed.
- C** *Attendee:* Although we can understand why this change is happening, I don't agree with the way it has been implemented.
A *GK:* We are always open to ideas and suggestions of better ways to do things.
- Q** *Attendee:* If an alarm goes off in a multi occupied premises that includes residential premises (e.g. betting shop with flats above), how will alarm actuation be dealt with in this scenario?
A *GK:* If there is a residential risk, we will respond immediately however this will continue to be monitored.
- Q** *Attendee:* Have there already been exemptions put in place during Phase 1?
A *GK:* Yes. There have been premises identified as exemptions. All exemptions are temporary and we continue to work closely with these premises to reduce risk, make improvements and move towards removing the exemption.
- Q** *Attendee:* Do monitoring stations need to know what sites are exempt?
A *GK:* If installers know of any agreed exempt premises, they should forward this information on to the monitoring stations as they will need to relay this information when calling '999'.
- C** *Attendee:* It would be beneficial to have only accredited installers and approved alarm systems in use going forward.
A *GK:* We continue to work with CFOA, Tech Standards, political groups and government to lobby industry over this issue.
- C** *Attendee:* There are two main organisations that cover intruder alarm companies (attendee will forward details of these companies to the AFA email address). It may be of benefit to cascade details of the response changes of AFAs for their information.
- Q** *Attendee:* How do you know if an agreed premise has an agreed exemption?
A *GK:* Our internal system records this information which is then accessed on receipt of a '999' call.

Debrief:

Next steps:

- Carry out a search in Sophtlogic to identify ARCs and FAMOs. These should be included in future communications
- Prosecution to be added to website
- Additional guidance to be added to website to provide clarity
- Revisit fire motorbike use
- Feed recommendations to MP to then take to SMG for go live on 1st November
- Update FAQs document that exists on the website