

**Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service**  
**Equality Impact Assessment Form**

<b>Title of policy/report/project:</b>	<b>Stage 2. Unwanted Fire Signals Reduction Policy</b>
<b>Department:</b>	<b>Prevention and Protection</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup> September 2013</b>
<p><b>1: What is the aim or purpose of the policy/report/project</b></p> <p><i>This should identify “the legitimate aim” of the policy/report/project (there may be more than one)</i></p>	
<p>The current AFA Policy has been in place since November 2012. To reduce Unwanted Fire Signals and their impact on MFRS. In November of 2013, stage 2 of this policy will be implemented, which looks to extend the current policy in place for daytime hours 0730 – 1930 to the night time period 1930 – 0730. A number of options are available with the key recommendation to extend the current policy across the night time period, but to exempt sleeping risk..</p>	
<p><b>2: Who will be affected by the policy/report/project?</b></p> <p><i>This should identify the persons/organisations who may need to be consulted about the policy /report/project and its outcomes (There may be more than one)</i></p>	
<p>This policy is concerned with the reducing the number of UwFS incidents Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service attend, therefore the people who would be most affected by this policy are the ‘Responsible Person’ for each organisation or building as detailed within the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. It is the responsibility of this person to have in place a risk assessment that details what actions should be taken upon the actuation of an automatic fire alarm system.</p> <p>In addition to this, other people will be affected by this policy. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The business community of Merseyside</li> <li>• Other premises with automatic fire alarm systems</li> <li>• Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority members</li> </ul>	

### 3. Monitoring

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

#### **What monitoring data have you considered?**

Monthly Data for Automatic Fire Call Actuations and Resultant UWFS for the period November 2012 – July 2013, compared to the same period for the previous year.

#### **What did it show?**

In the first nine months since implementation (1st November 2012 – 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%.

#### 4: Research

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

#### What research have you considered?

Changes in British Standards.

Relevant Case Law

Chief Fire Officers Association guidance for UwFS

#### What did it show?

Changes in British Standards;  
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

Relevant Case Law  
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 CFOA 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.”

In 2010, the Chief Fire Officers Association produced some guidance related to UwFS. The ‘Protocol for the Reduction of False Alarms & Unwanted Fire Signals’ and ‘Best Practice for Summoning a Fire Response via Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisations’ documentation considers a holistic approach to both improve premises

Department for Communities and Local Government guidance - 'Costs and benefits of alternative responses to automatic fire alarms'

fire safety and protect valuable fire and rescue service resources. This documentation shows a flow chart for call filtering and response. Most fire and rescue services have used this documentation as a basis for their own strategy, and tailored the guidance to best suit their own policies. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service have worked closely with Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Cheshire, Warwickshire and Nottinghamshire fire and rescue services to establish 'best practice' in establishing a response to reducing UwFS.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service have used the Chief Fire Officers Association guidance as the basis for the new policy and have established a close working relationship with the other fire and rescue services in the North West through an UwFS working group. This will allow for monitoring each individual Service's approach to UwFS reduction and support the development of a regional strategy.

In 2008, the Department for Communities and Local Government published a report called 'Costs and benefits of alternative responses to automatic fire alarms'. This report investigated the alternative approaches that could be taken with regards to response. This document outlined the benefits of a changed UwFS response:

- Increased availability of appliances for attending other emergency calls
- Cashable savings
- Releases resources for training and community and statutory fire safety tasks
- Fewer road traffic collisions
- Reduction of problematic call out workloads in the case of a small number of 'busy' fire stations in cities.

In addition, for Merseyside, there would be cashable savings in relation to attendance at UwFS incidents. In the year 2011/12, UwFS cost taxpayers of Merseyside over £1.6 million (using figures from the Fire Industry Association). The Service also spent 116 days in 2011/12 attending UwFS incidents (based on Fire Industry Association figures, which assume that 1 UwFS incident equals 30 minutes). The implementation of an UwFS policy has the potential to deliver savings in terms of money and staff time/resources.

This documentation also outlines the potential risks of

	<p>implementing an UwFS policy. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased risk of building damage – can be mitigated by encouraging occupants to confirm fire by telephoning the fire and rescue service</li> <li>• Negative impact on public or business confidence – can be mitigated by hosting public consultation events prior to implementing new strategy</li> <li>• Increased risk to occupants – can be mitigated with a risk based response which includes an assessment of risk to life.</li> </ul> <p>Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service have considered these risks, and placed the following mitigation strategies to reduce the risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of communication and consultation events to explain the change in response.</li> <li>• Work with stakeholders to implement the policy</li> <li>• All single private domestic dwellings and dwellings where the responsibility for the safety of the occupiers rests with the individuals, who reside there, will be exempted from this policy.</li> </ul> <p>It has been recognised that there may be a delay in attending fire incidents due to call challenging. The Department for Communities and Local Government guidance suggests that this may be up to 5 minutes. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service are working with and providing information to the ‘Responsible Persons’ to ensure that correct procedures are in place to minimise this risk.</p>
<p><b>5. Consultation</b></p> <p><i>Summarise the opinions of any consultation. Who was consulted and how? (This should include reference to people and organisations identified in section 2 above)</i></p> <p><i>Outline any plans to inform consultees of the results of the consultation</i></p>	
<p><b>What Consultation have you undertaken?</b></p> <p>Chief Fire Officers Association – Regional UwFS committee</p>	<p><b>What did it say?</b></p> <p>The five North West fire and rescue services (Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside) meet quarterly as part of the Chief Fire Officers Association regional UwFS committee to establish best practice in dealing with UwFS. All of the North West fire and rescue services, and others nationally, are using the Chief Fire Officers Association’s guidance on implementing an UwFS strategy. As part of</p>

<p>Communication events with 'Responsible Persons'</p>	<p>this committee, the participating fire and rescue services are sharing results with each other, and this will form best practice for the North West. As part of this committee, it has been reported that other fire and rescue services have not witnessed a reduction in UwFS related to reducing the number of appliances to automatically attend UwFS incidents or changing the manner of response (i.e. blue light response to non-blue light response). This suggests the need to explore a new strategy for reducing UwFS.</p> <p>Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has hosted 2 Consultation events in September of this year to consult with Stakeholders and Alarm Receiving Centres as to implementation of Stage 2 .</p> <p>In summary, affected organisations recognised the reality faced by MFRs and its need to reduce UWFS, concern was raised over sleeping risk at night time and the short time scale afforded to implementation of Stage 2.</p>
--	--

## 6. Conclusions

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

### (a) Age

Implementation of stage 2 will have a positive impact on elderly persons in so far as they occupy sleeping risk premises and will be exempt.

Residents aged over 65 are most vulnerable from fire. Sixty-five percent of the accidental dwelling fire fatalities between 2007/08 and 2010/11 involved a resident aged over 65.

### (b) Disability including mental, physical and sensory conditions)

*Persons from this protected group will be exempt from Stage 2 of the policy if they are in sleeping accommodation at night time*

### (c) Race (include: nationality, national or ethnic origin and/or colour)

The proposed changes may have a negative impact on minority groups. Research shows that these groups may be less likely to contact public services. They may also be less likely to understand the complex legislative or operational guidance provided to them. A considerable number of minority groups are engaged with the 'night-time' economy, for example fast food outlets and the provision of accommodation associated with these types of building.

To mitigate risk associated with this, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will need to provide communication materials in plain, easy to understand English to ensure residents from this protected group understand the content. In addition, the Service will continue to provide advice and guidance to residents within this group to support the development of a risk management plan. The Service has also considered utilising the bilingual community fire prevention advocates to help deliver the message.

**(d) Religion or Belief**

The proposed changes may have a negative impact on religion or belief. There are a number of key religious buildings within Merseyside. Responding only to confirmed fires may be seen as a reduction in services delivered to these groups.

To mitigate risk associated with this, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will provide communication materials in plain, easy to understand English is language proves to be a barrier. In addition, the Service will continue to provide advice and guidance to identified 'Responsible Persons' to support the development of a risk management plan. The Service has also considered utilising the bilingual community fire prevention advocates to help deliver the message.

**(e) Sex (include gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity)**

No impacts (positive or negative) can be found on the grounds of gender.

**(f) Sexual Orientation**

No impacts (positive or negative) can be found on the grounds of sexual orientation.

**(g) Socio-economic disadvantage**

Exempting sleeping accommodation at night time will have a positive impact in communities that are socio-economically disadvantaged. However businesses and services in such areas will be affected by stage 2 of the protocol, and if not managed effectively by the Responsible Person may be vulnerable to loss or damage through fire in the night time period.

**7. Decisions**

*If the policy/report/project will have a negative impact on members of one or more of the protected groups, explain how it will change or why it is to continue in the same way.*

*If no changes are proposed, the policy/report/project needs to be objectively justified as being an appropriate and necessary means of achieving the legitimate aim set out in 1 above.*

The impact of this policy will ultimately result in Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service attending fewer UwFS. Fire incident statistics are showing the proportion of UwFS that the Service is attending is increasing annually. If current trends continue, it is anticipated that over 40% of incidents attended by the Service in 2014/15 will be UwFS. This is unsustainable in terms of both monetary costs and staff time.

Overall, there would not appear to be a negative impact to protected groups related to implementing Stage 2 of the protocol.

There is no legal responsibility for any Fire and Rescue Service to respond to calls originating from an automatic fire alarm 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 suitable and sufficient Fire Risk Assessment that details, amongst other measures, what actions are to be taken upon actuation of the Automatic Fire Alarm system. One such action is to investigate the reason for the actuation of the system and then notify the Fire Service via the 999 system if a fire is confirmed. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will continue to work with and support organisations to ensure they have appropriate risk management plans in place. If there are language barriers identified, the Fire Safety Inspector will ensure that communication is delivered in a way that is easy to understand. If required, a bilingual advocate will be available to translate this information.

Finally, it is important to stress that the implementation of this policy does not affect residential properties where the responsibility for fire safety rests with the occupant who resides there. These properties will receive a full emergency response to all actuations of their automatic fire alarm systems.

### 8. Equality Improvement Plan

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

**SEE ACTION PLANNED IN SECTION 9 BELOW**

### 9. Equality & Diversity Sign Off

**Signed off by:**

Wendy Kenyon

**Date:**

30.9.13

Action Planned	Responsibility of	Completed by
To monitor the impact of Stage 2 on protected groups highlighted in section 6 above, as potentially being more negatively affected by the changes stage 2	Guy Keen and Staff with support from Diveristy & Consultation Manager	September 2014



introduces		
------------	--	--

For any advice, support or guidance about completing this form please contact the [DiversityTeam@merseyfire.gov.uk](mailto:DiversityTeam@merseyfire.gov.uk) or on 0151 296 4237

**The completed form along with the related policy/report/project document should be emailed to the Diversity Team at: [DiversityTeam@merseyfire.gov.uk](mailto:DiversityTeam@merseyfire.gov.uk)**