



**CFOA Guidance for the  
Reduction of False Alarms  
& Unwanted Fire Signals**



**CFOA**  
Publications



# Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA)

CFOA is a professional membership association and a registered charity that has been representing the fire service in their aspirations to protect the communities they serve for more than 60 years. We are not a trade union; we are the professional voice of the sector.

We provide independent and expert advice to government on fire prevention, protection and intervention issues as well as a wide range of community safety and rescue matters.

Our membership is made up from a strong, diverse blend of both uniformed and non-uniformed senior officers.

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# Welcome

## 1 Foreword – Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA)

The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) is pleased to publish this Guidance for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals.

False alarms and unwanted fire signals continue to be a real problem for both businesses and the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS). The previous CFOA Protocol, which this replaces, created an over expectation with other partners and stakeholders that a consistent approach was going to be achieved across all Fire and Rescue Authorities.

The reality is that Fire Authorities are independent, operate in very different governance models and have differing priorities and funding pressures. Therefore, although CFOA will continue to draw together

Fire Services and achieve a greater degree of consistency as possible, the likelihood is that different approaches will continue across the United Kingdom. Therefore this document is provided as guidance and not a protocol.

It has become evident through the development of this guidance that there is an equal responsibility upon Business, Alarm Receiving Centres (ARC's) and the FRS to work together to reduce False Alarms and unwanted fire signals. Therefore CFOA is delighted that representatives of Business and ARC's have been fully involved in the development of the guidance and have added their name to this document.

One thing is clear; Business, ARC's and all FRS want to see a reduction

in false alarms and unwanted fire signals. They also all want to know quickly when a real fire has started and a message sent through these partners so that an attendance by the FRS can be made thus avoiding unnecessary risk to life and property.

CFOA believes that this guidance is only the starting point in a closer working relationship between these partners to achieve greater consistency, call reductions and response when required. In so doing businesses will be free to grow without the disruption of unwanted fire signals or escalating fires and FRS will concentrate decreasing resources on preventing fires, and responding when really necessary.

**Dave Curry, CFOA Director**

## 2 Foreword – Industry & Partners

The past 10 years has seen a reduction in false alarms from AFA systems but the fire industry still has work to do if it is to achieve further reductions. No single action will achieve this, but by working in partnership, together with the introduction of new technology, our common goal of minimal false

alarms can be achieved. The industry welcomes this new policy as a tool to help achieve this common goal. For consideration of future development of this guidance, the industry would also welcome the introduction of Unique Reference Numbers (URN) in a similar manner to the ACPO

Security Policy as a means to improve the management of call handling of fire alarm systems.

**Industry Partners Joint Statement  
FIA, BSIA, TSA, FSA, NSI, SSAIB.**

## 3 Background

Over many years the FRS have been working with partners to reduce the number of Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) that are generated from premises protected by automatic fire detection and fire alarm (AFA) systems. A considerable reduction (about a third) has been seen in recent years. This is both due to

a reduction in calls to attend false alarms and an introduction of non-attendance to AFA policies by some FRS. However, despite this reduction, it remains clear that there is still the need for significant improved action, associated with the management of false alarms and the numbers of resulting UwFS.

In England and Wales, FRS continue to attend a large number of false alarms that are generated by AFA systems. The CLG Fire Statistics Monitor reports that, although reduced by some 37% in ten years, there were still 249,000 fire false alarms attended from April 2011 to March 2012. The cost of responding to AFA false alarms



has been estimated to be some £700 million per year in England and Wales (CLG: Costs and benefits of alternative responses to Automatic Fire Alarms, 2008).

These figures indicate that, despite reductions, responding to AFA false alarms continues to effect considerable drain on FRS resources. Responding to false alarm calls diverts FRS resources away from attending actual incidents or undertaking Fire Prevention and Protection work as well as introducing risks to fire fighters and the general public in mobilising and attending unnecessary calls under “blue light” conditions.

The clear benefits that AFA systems can offer is not disputed. The early warning of fire is essential to protect both life and property and research has proved that AFA-detected fires tend to be smaller than person detected fires and generally require less effort to extinguish when the FRS response arrives. This also assists with protecting business assets, business continuity and community resilience

A report on the measures taken and action required to reduce the number of false alarms from AFA systems in England and Wales was published by the Home Office in March 2001. This report, entitled "Reducing False Alarms - Reduction through Partnership, the report of a thematic inspection by HM Fire Services Inspectorate" (HMFI), identified many issues that required action.

With the assistance of the Fire Industry Association (FIA) and the

British Security Industry Association (BSIA) a “Model Agreement between Fire and Rescue Authorities and Users of Remotely Monitored Fire Alarm Systems (Model Agreement for RMFAS)” published September 2004, was developed to address the recommendations included in the HMFI thematic report. It attempted to clarify the relationship between those responsible for the protected premises, the fire alarm service provider, the Alarm Receiving Centres (ARCs) and the FRS.

Since the first model agreement was put in place by CFOA and its partners on this issue, a number of revisions and updates have been promulgated in an effort to continually reduce further the numbers of false alarms from AFA systems and subsequent unwanted fire signals.

The most recent document “CFOA Protocol for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals” (2010), aimed to ensure improvements leading to;

- The improved design and installation of fire alarm systems.
- The improved consistency in approach across FRS.
- Significant reductions in FRS attendance of false alarms – protecting valuable resources.
- Improved industry awareness leading to better servicing, maintenance and guidance.
- Improved compliance with fire safety legislation.
- Significant improvements in protecting persons from fire through improved fire safety measures.

The Guidance has formed the basis for many FRS policies on this issue and has led to many examples of best practice with industry partners. Individual FRS have to now consider new response strategies to AFA systems to reduce the overall cost of response to such calls and to meet the requirements of locally determined Integrated Risk Management Plans. In addition the Localism Act has provided Fire & Rescue Authorities with the power to put in place a charging policy in support of its strategy to deal with unwanted fire signals from automatic fire detection systems.

This new guidance has been produced in recognition of these changes and it continues to advocate a partnership approach as being the best way to deal with the problem of UwFS from AFA systems. Clear responsibilities and expectations exist between all of the stakeholders namely, the responsible person at the premises, the alarm receiving and monitoring centres, the industry sector responsible for the design, installation, servicing and maintenance of the system and the FRS.

The guidance provides a “Tool Kit” approach for FRS to formulate their local strategies and policies and provides options for dealing with poor performance.

The aim of the guidance should be for all stakeholders to work together to ensure that, ignoring persistent false alarms rather than fixing the problem, is not acceptable.

# Introduction and The Aims of this Guidance

## 4 Introduction

The guidance outlined in this document has been widely consulted and developed with stakeholders representing the fire alarm industry and FRS in order to reduce the occurrence of false alarms from automatic fire detection and fire alarm systems and to manage the appropriate FRSs response to UwFS.

This guidance applies to all premises which are or will be installed with an AFA system.

There are two distinct elements which this guidance seeks to address:

- False alarms which may contribute to fire safety issues.
- UwFS which impact on the FRSs resources.

If we succeed in reducing false alarms, UwFS will also reduce. However the reduction of UwFS to FRSs does not necessarily reduce false alarms and therefore may leave fire safety issues unaddressed. This may not only lead to business disruption but also to complacency of the alarm system by the occupants.

The guidance also seeks to address the issue of a relatively small number of premises generating a large number of false alarms and UwFS. However it recognises that a large proportion of the total false alarms come from premises producing just one or two false alarms per year.

The guidance recognises that there is

no single solution to the UwFS issue. It recognises that a holistic approach is required to encourage and ensure the cultural change required from FRS, the Fire Industry, the business community and the general public in order to promote a sustained reduction in the number of UwFS to FRS.

It is essential that FRS operate within a framework to reduce UwFS. This can be achieved through the widespread adoption and implementation of this guidance.

Co-operation and understanding cannot be expected from companies operating across various regions in the UK when each FRS operates a local policy which details the resource response to AFA systems. FRS attention has turned over recent years to changing the response to AFA systems in line with risk. The historical cautious presumption that the call is genuine, until proved otherwise, is becoming more difficult to sustain with the large numbers of false alarms being generated and the ever more stringent requirements for managing the health and safety of fire fighters as well as the public. Reducing the overall cost of response to AFA calls is now a driving factor for most FRS.

CFOA recognise the differences between Telecare Service Providers (TSPs) and traditional security based ARCs. However CFOA regards that any organisation considering monitoring fire alarms has a

responsibility to promote best practice in the management of those fire alarm systems it monitors.

This guidance provides clear direction to Fire and Rescue Services, Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisations (FAMOs) and to those people in Industry and Commerce that have a responsibility for building management in their responsibilities towards false alarm and UwFS issues.

FAMOs signing up to the CoP will promote the best practices outlined in this guidance and provide the consistent approach that will be a welcome improvement in this area of alarm operation.

Widespread implementation will encourage our fire industry partners to work with us in the development and review of the FAMO elements of the guidance. This guidance provides a clear and structured strategy that will, where adopted, lead to sustained reductions in false alarms and UwFS and provides a framework for all FRS, the Fire Industry and Business in which to operate.





## 5 The Aims of this Guidance

- To reduce the number of false alarms generated by AFA systems.
- To reduce the number of UwFS sent to FRS.
- To provide a working framework that offers a sufficient level of flexibility, whilst establishing a structure with sufficient consistency to satisfy the legal and other operating obligations of practitioners.

### Responsible Persons

- To ensure the AFA system is designed installed, commissioned, managed and maintained in accordance with British Standards so as to minimise the potential for false alarms.
- To establish a level of co-operation with installers and or maintainers and monitors to support the above.
- To have effective procedures in place so that an alarm actuation is managed appropriately to minimise UwFS calls and ensure, as much as reasonably possible, that a call being passed to FRS is a fire event.
- To duly consider the appointment of 3rd party certificated professionals as necessary to support comprehensive management of the AFA system and its function.

### Industry

- Designers, installers and maintainers are to ensure that systems comply with the relevant British Standards (or their equivalent), that systems are maintained accordingly and that all necessary co-operation is provided to the Responsible Person.
- FAMOs are to operate in accordance with the Code of Practice attached to this document.

### Fire Rescue Services

- To provide a framework of best practice that will encourage the adoption of effective management practices. These will be designed to improve local response to AFA signals whilst including a level of flexibility that allows for vigorous FRS filtering techniques with appropriate support through risk analysis.



# Impacts and Summary of Guidance Processes

## 6 Impact of False Alarms

- Disruption of business (downtime, time wasted, loss of business and theft).
- Erode user's confidence in the value and reliability of AFA systems and discourage people from taking these systems seriously.
- False alarms unnecessarily transmitted to FAMOs impacts on their resources. Whilst dealing with false alarm alerts, operators are unavailable to deal with real emergencies.

## 7 Impact of Unwanted Fire Signals

- Diverting essential services from emergencies (putting life and property at risk).
- Cost to business of retained fire fighters being released.
- Unnecessary risk to crew & public whilst responding (accidents).
- Disruption to arson reduction, prevention, community safety (education, domestic smoke alarm fitting) & business support activities. Disruption to training of operational personnel.
- Disruption to training of operational personnel.
- Impact on the environment of unnecessary appliance movements (noise, air and traffic pollution).
- Drain on public finances.
- The impact on Responsible Persons (RP) where persistent mismanagement of fire alarm signals has resulted in withdrawal of AFA attendance.
- Financial impact on premises where FRS apply charging for attending false alarms.





## 8 Summary of Guidance Processes Required for Effective UwFS Reduction

NB: Where FRS employ a nil response to groups of premises types as opposed to targeting of specific system poor performance, they must recognise that it will not be possible to appreciate the full benefits of the holistic approach. FRS that engage with RPs through responding to UwFS will be able to influence these key processes:

- The Responsible Person, as defined under the FSO, has overall responsibility for the performance of the AFA system.
- Prevention of false alarms.
- Prevention of false alarms becoming UwFS.
- AFA signal filtering.
- FRS response to an UwFS.
- Agreed working practices between FRSs and FAMOs.
- Industry support of the Guidance process.

### This will be supported by:

- The uniform adoption of this Guidance by FRS.
- Promoting the use of competent persons in the design, installation, commissioning, management and maintenance of systems. CFOA recommend that FRS support the use of third party certification schemes. Certification through a UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service) accredited third party certification body provides valuable reassurances and assists in the making of informed decisions as to the competency of the service provider.
- Promoting the appropriate management of AFA systems by Responsible Persons.
- Working in partnership with stakeholders to improve false alarm filtering.
- Promoting the adoption of AFA call filtering through FRS control on the 999 system.
- Implementing the appropriate FRS response (including pre-determined attendance (PDA) response, AFA response, full emergency response or a follow-up response (community fire safety and/or fire safety regulation response) to resolve UwFS issues).
- Monitoring the performance of AFA systems.

# Guidance Operation – A Tool Kit Approach

## 9 Guidance Operation – A Tool Kit Approach

The CFOA guidance for prevention of false alarms and unwanted calls from automatic fire alarm systems offers a number of tools for FRS to use. The tools are represented below in a chronological order. However, it is recognised that each FRS must determine which of the tools they wish to use in accordance with their respective Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP) and overall arrangements for managing risk.

### Stages of the process:

#### A Highlighting the problem of unwanted calls and false alarms from AFA systems

Whilst the installation and use of an automatic fire alarm system is common in many buildings, the role they play and the impact of false alarms, particularly on the building user and owner, is often misunderstood. Undertaking a range of generic and specific campaigns to highlight the moral and legal duties of the responsible person and other key stakeholders in the fire alarm industry, the impact of unwanted calls and actions which should be taken to prevent these will go a long way to reducing the problems which users and the FRS currently experience. (See also dealing with poor performance).

#### B Prevention of false alarms

There are two main stages of an automatic fire alarm system's life which have a significant effect on the

systems performance and the number of false alarms it produces:

#### 1. Design; Installation;

**Commissioning** - The decision to install, extend or upgrade an alarm system will be made on the basis of a risk assessment, insurance requirement or other consideration.

Organisations undertaking design, installation and commissioning work have a responsibility to make sure that their work meets the recommendations of the relevant code of practice (Usually BS5839) and is suitable for the building, its occupancy and intended use and is designed to minimise false alarms. If, during the course of conducting system work a failure or issue was identified outside the workers' area of responsibility, it is best practice to report that matter to the appropriate persons responsible. In addition to the recommendations set out in the relevant code of practice, designers and installers should, wherever possible, take advantage of modern technology which is focussing on increasingly intelligent components and systems which go a long way to preventing false alarms. FRS have a role in promoting the use of such systems across the sector and specifically when being consulted on building fire safety arrangements and solutions.

#### 2. Maintenance; Management –

Once a fire alarm system has been installed the on-going maintenance and management of the system becomes a duty of the 'responsible person' for the site. There are clear requirements for the regular testing of the AFA system (to the relevant standard) by a competent person to ensure it operates as designed. This should be extended to include effective arrangements for managing the system and building in which it is installed. These arrangements must include prevention of the causes of false alarm calls in particular those arising from visiting workers and misuse of the alarm and its detection system (e.g. vandalism or damage to break glass call points). In addition to completing work to the required standard, fire alarm maintenance companies have a role to play in advising their clients of problems with system design, apparatus or detector selection and positioning which could lead to the system generating false alarms.

The FRS should have arrangements to provide guidance and advice for the 'responsible person' about their maintenance and management regime and how it can be extended to ensure false alarm calls are prevented (See also dealing with poor performance Section 12).



### **C Confirmation of the cause of alarm before calling the Fire and Rescue Service**

A fire alarm system is intended to alert the occupants of a building to the possibility of a fire and to initiate the emergency plan for the building. This will normally, but not always, include evacuation. Dependent on the findings of your fire risk assessment, the fire safety arrangements in a building should include having a system in place to check the area where the alarm has been initiated. This will confirm at an early stage if there is a fire or the cause of the false alarm. This is particularly important given the large number of false alarms which are generated by some AFA systems. The arrangements should be included in the fire risk assessment, fire safety policy and emergency plan for the building and will be dependent on the building, its occupancy and use. In addition to using information from the building users, modern technology provides a range of options for confirming the cause of an alarm. The ideal place to prevent false alarms from being transmitted to FRS as UwFS is on site.

It is appropriate to consider the significance of the system information

available. For example, AFA signals that alert of an incident with a high reliability indication of fire, such as sprinkler activation, co-incidence detection, call point actuation, multiple detector/type activation, or unoccupied premises, may all, potentially, be considered sufficient reason to immediately request the attendance of the FRS. In premises with persistent false alarms, it would be necessary to establish a high degree of reliability in the signal indication if filtering processes are to be avoided.

If a call is placed via the services of a FAMO and no on-site filtering is employed, consideration should be made to establishing a call-back confirmation by the FAMO before alerting FRS. Where the FAMO has information that an AFA signal indicates a high reliability indication of a fire incident (see paragraph above), this information should be provided to the FRS.

However, it must be noted that under BS5839-1, care homes may expect to receive an FRS response without application of filtering practices. It is therefore accepted that, for care homes, FAMOs may accept and

process non-filtered calls. FRS need to be aware of this approach. Where care homes have excessive UwFS and associated deficiencies in alarm management practices, it will be necessary for the FRS to promote effective change in order to reduce UwFS.

Responsible Persons need to establish how calls are received and confirmed when the building is empty. When a building is unoccupied, a signal from the fire alarm system is less likely to arise from a false alarm. Fire alarm installation and maintenance companies will be in a good position to advise the Responsible Person about options which will suit their building. Where there are electronic means for a FAMO to establish that the building is unoccupied, this information should be relayed to the FRS along with the fire alarm signal and any other relevant information.

FRS also have a role in promoting this approach and should be able to draw on their own experience of similar buildings and case studies which illustrate how this confirmation can be achieved.

# Guidance Operation – A Tool Kit Approach

## D Call handling by the fire and rescue service

The objective of the call handling process is to determine the appropriate attendance to an incident.

A FRS receiving a call based on AFA actuation should consider an appropriate response where information provided indicates circumstances where there is a high reliability of a fire incident as described in Section 9C.

The FRS has a number of options which it can consider in deciding how AFA calls will be handled.

A call challenge or filtering process – Use of this system will allow the FRS to gain additional information about the cause of the alarm, following which a decision is made about what, if any, response is made.

Development of such a process will be determined by the specific FRS in line with an assessment of risk in their Integrated Risk Management Plan.

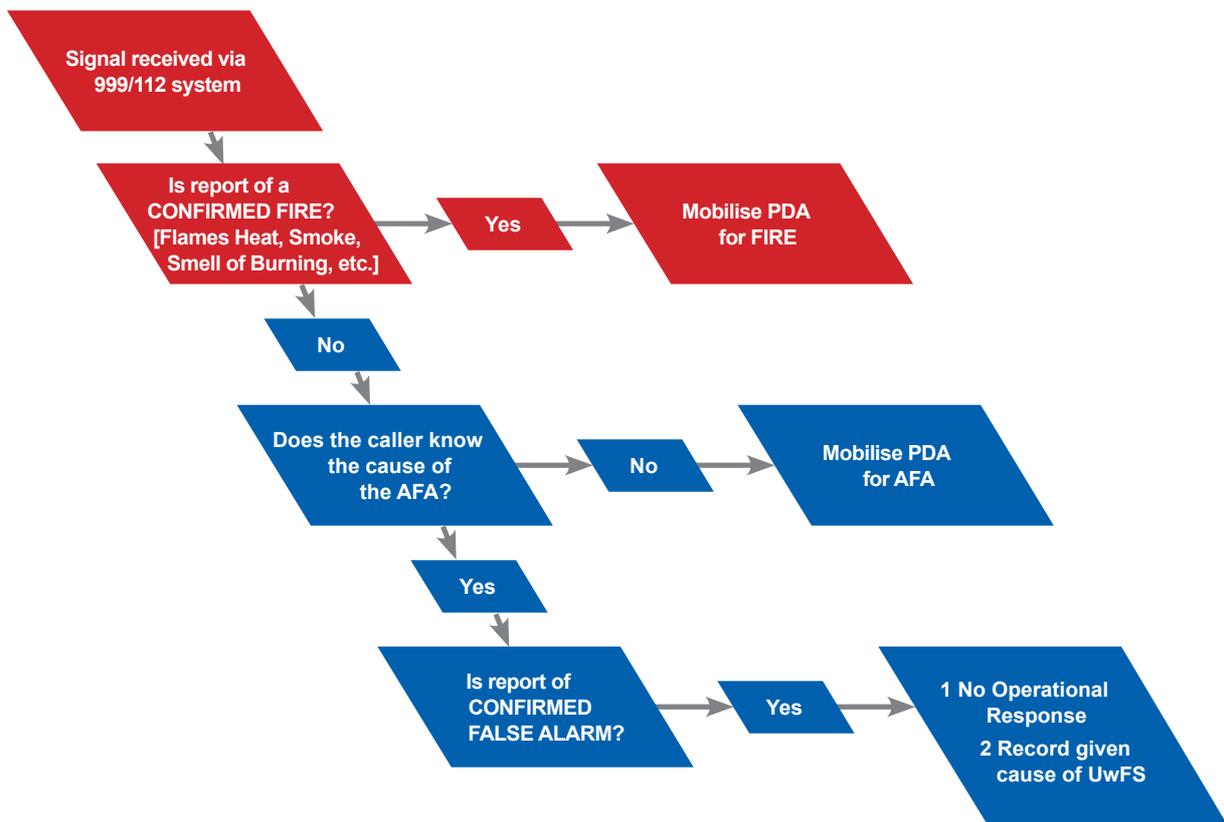
Reduced attendance – The FRS may select to send a reduced attendance to any call resulting from an AFA system actuation where there is no confirmation of a fire or signs of fire. In line with adoption of this approach, the ‘responsible person’

for any site will need to consider what arrangements they will put in place to provide this confirmation (See preceding Section 9C – confirmation of cause).

Full attendance – The FRS may select to send a full attendance to any report of an AFA sounding. Whilst this is likely to mean no change to the service’s existing control measures, the implications should be considered within the wider context of the service’s Integrated Risk Management Plan.

Figure 1 below shows the call filtering process in operation.

Figure 1 – Call filtering





FRS must be careful not to recommend the investigation of an alarm during an emergency call. If investigation was possible it should have already been carried out as part of their existing procedures before the emergency call was made. An unplanned investigation at this stage may jeopardise the safety of the investigator.

### **E Investigation and follow up of false alarm calls**

Following a false alarm from an AFA system there is an onus on the 'Responsible Person' to undertake an investigation into the cause of the false alarm. The focus of this investigation should be on identifying the cause of the false alarm which may fall into the areas of system design, equipment specification, system testing and maintenance, or building management. Having identified the cause of the false alarm, effective steps should be taken to prevent a future occurrence.

Where the cause of the alarm is found to be based on system design, equipment specification or testing and maintenance, the alarm installation and maintenance company should be consulted when determining what steps should be taken to prevent a future occurrence.

Where a FAMO is employed to relay the alarm signal to the FRS, they are often unaware of the cause and outcome of an incident. FRS should consider providing feedback to FAMOs as this may assist the Responsible Person/alarm maintainer in identifying and establishing appropriate measures to reduce future UwFS incidents. In addition, Responsible Persons, in conjunction with the alarm maintainer, should also consider providing the FAMO with feedback on alarm incidents in order to assist in reducing both false alarm and UwFS incidents.

The FRS will also be in a position to advise the 'Responsible Person' about measures which can be taken to prevent false alarms in the future, particularly where these relate to the management of the building and activities within it. It is important to recognise that any changes in management of the building are likely to have an impact on the fire safety risk assessment for the building which should be updated by the 'Responsible Person' or their appointed risk assessor.

### **F Stakeholder engagement**

Many of the tools described previously involve a number of stakeholders, all of whom may have a role to play in the effective design, installation, management and maintenance of fire alarm systems. When selecting which tools are appropriate for use when seeking to prevent false alarms from AFA systems in their own area, FRS will want to consider to what extent engagement with the key stakeholders should be undertaken in order to influence attitudes towards AFA systems and the problems which repeat false alarms produce. The section on dealing with poor performance (Section 12) has more detailed information about working with stakeholders.

FRS must be careful not to recommend the investigation of an alarm during an emergency call. If investigation was possible it should have already been carried out as part of their existing procedures before the emergency call was made. An unplanned investigation at this stage may jeopardise the safety of the investigator.



# Introduction and The Aims of this Guidance

## 10 FRS Attendance Levels

In order to protect resources, FRS response policies may alter the response to premises where calls are based on unreliable AFA systems. This may include anything from the reconsideration of any 'enhanced response' options through to not sending any attendance in the case of persistent false alarms<sup>1</sup>. Any determination should always be based on an appropriate assessment of the risk. Due account should be taken of premises type, occupancy, time of day, historical data and life and property risk.

Calls to a confirmed fire will always attract a full or enhanced emergency response. This will be dependent upon the information received, the individual FRS fire response established procedures and the availability of resources.

It is recommended that any reduction in response is applied to premises on an individual assessment basis and that suitable notification is provided in advance of any change. However, it is recognised that an assessment of risk can be appropriately applied to certain premises types as a whole. FRS employing this approach must be satisfied that they have taken all reasonable steps to meet their obligations to educate and inform. Fire calls should be reported as fire calls and not alarms actuating. All callers reporting an AFA signal and who are not to receive a response should be advised that any subsequent call confirming a fire will receive an emergency fire response.

If adjusting FRS standard response attendance to premises the process must be applied in accordance with the guidance in this section and section 11 where applicable.

FRS should determine an appropriate level of authority to decide the level of response. The three principal response options are as follows:

**Attendance Level One** is an immediate emergency response, resulting in an initial attendance based on a risk assessment of the fire fighting requirements that will be not less than one fire appliance.

**Attendance Level Two** in the absence of a confirmation call via the 999 system; the FRS will make an attendance based on a risk assessment of the fire fighting requirements. The attendance may be made under non-emergency conditions, thereby maintaining the availability of the resources for confirmed emergencies and protecting the public from the risk that arises from fire appliances responding under emergency conditions. (It is recognised that this response is effectively presuming that the call is to a false alarm. FRS may determine that at this point it is appropriate to go straight to application of Attendance Level 3 or alternatively maintain Attendance Level 1 up to Level 3 performance described in Section 11).

**Attendance Level Three** no emergency response, until a confirmation of fire is received from the premises via the 999 system or from some other acceptable source. Such confirmation will result in a full or enhanced emergency response, dependent on the information received.

It is recommended that these response options should only be applied if there is experience of persistent false alarms from specific premises. It should not be the case that it is applied generically e.g. to all premises of a certain type. Any changes to the attendance level by the FRS will be communicated in advance to the persons responsible for the protected premises and time will be allowed for them to take appropriate remedial action in accordance with section 11 – Performance levels and the resolution process.

<sup>1</sup> FRSs considering applying a reduced response (or charge) option should ensure UwFS can be considered 'persistent'. This would include a recent history of multiple calls to false alarms and a failure to adopt reasonable practices recommended by the FRS to assist them in reducing UwFS.



## 11 Performance levels and the resolution process

Although it is recognised that a certain number of false alarms will occur, in general, much more should be being done to reduce excessive levels of false alarms. Improved co-operation between alarm maintainers, FAMOs and Responsible Persons is necessary. Under the FSO, Responsible Persons are required to safeguard relevant persons and this commonly requires using appropriate AFA systems. It is generally accepted that an appropriate fire alarm system would need to comply with the relevant British Standard or its equivalent. Advice on reducing false alarms and the level of false alarms considered acceptable is contained in BS5839. It must be appreciated that the level of false alarms considered acceptable is entirely different to any level of UwFS. Responsible Persons should minimise the level of false alarms in accordance with BS5839. In addition any remaining level of false alarms should not generally result in UwFS and it is often appropriate that filtering measures are applied to keep any UwFS to an absolute minimum. If an AFA system produces a false alarm, it is irresponsible and unacceptable, particularly where false alarms endure, to assume it necessary to persistently call for the emergency attendance of the FRS.

The responsible person will put in place an action plan that will include:

- i) Provide an agreed written action plan for the reduction of UwFS to the FRS.
- ii) Advise their insurance company in the event of any change to attendance levels by the FRS.
- iii) Revise the fire risk assessment and emergency plan for the premises to take account of any changes in response by the FRS.
- iv) Review the fire safety management arrangements, revise and implement appropriate changes as necessary.
- v) Ensure appropriate maintenance is undertaken on the AFAS. Demonstrate their competence as a premises manager, as described in BS5839-1.
- vi) Arrange for the maintainer to undertake the actions required in BS5839-1:2013, clause 46.4.4.
- vii) Ensure a suitable emergency plan includes comprehensive consideration of action taken in response to an alarm actuation, including any filtering practices, relevance and subsequent handling of information identified, time dependant services of

FAMO, any call back filtering arrangements and any other influencing processes.

The Responsible Person, together with the maintainer of the AFA system will take the recommended actions to address an unacceptable rate of false alarm activations as outlined in BS5839-1.

Some systems are complex and have considerable numbers of detectors installed. Whilst there may be a greater likelihood of a false alarm occurring, unlike false alarm levels, there is a point at which the numbers of UwFS are considered unacceptable irrespective of the number of detectors. This is because, in these circumstances, the Responsible Persons should employ an effective and appropriate on-site filtering process.

FRS employing a reduced response option will consider the individual circumstances of the premises management and alarm performance in order to determine the level of response appropriate to the level of UwFS being produced.

# Impacts and Summary of Guidance Processes

## 12 Dealing with poor performance

### Scope of the problem

As outlined elsewhere in this document, the problem of unwanted calls from AFA systems is significant. Disruption to building users and their commercial activities is compounded by an impact on the FRS that often are unable to send the nearest emergency response vehicles to an emergency because they are attending an unwanted alarm call at another location.

### Recognising poor performance

The scale of the problem caused by unwanted calls is such that a fire & rescue service would want to take a strategic approach to reducing the calls combining measures to engage with, influence and, where necessary, regulate those who are responsible for managing buildings with AFA systems with amendment or variation to response arrangements.

### Staged approach to dealing with poor performance

FRS can choose a variety of ways to highlight and address issues of poor performance from automatic fire alarm systems. It needs to be recognised that there are a number of stakeholders in the process ranging from the building manager and/or responsible person through to the FRS which receives the call.

### Stakeholder engagement

FRS are now very familiar with the problem of unwanted calls from fire alarm systems. However the impact of these is not always appreciated by commerce. The first objective is to highlight the impact unwanted calls have both for the fire alarm user and their premises and the FRS. Depending on the scale of the problem, this can be achieved at a number of levels.

**Service wide publicity** using local media and trade publications to give a standard message about the problems associated with unwanted calls and the responsibilities the system 'owner' has for effective management and maintenance of the system, and taking action to investigate and prevent unwanted calls.

**Publicity tailored** towards a specific group or type of premises using a more refined message which highlights the issue of unwanted alarm calls and focuses on issues relating to the premises type combined with guidance on actions which can be taken to manage the problem, improve the reliability of the alarm system and reduce the number of unwanted calls.

Where a specific site or sites have been the source of repeated problems the FRS has a couple of options available to engage with those responsible for managing the site and its alarm system:

- Sending a standard letter to the Responsible Person (copy to local management where appropriate) for the site clearly highlighting the problem. This should include reference to the number and cause of unwanted calls over an appropriate reference period, explanation of the duties of the Responsible Person and provision of guidance and advice about the actions they should be taking to manage their system and reduce the number of unwanted calls.





- Visiting the premises and meeting directly with the person responsible for the site and managing the alarm system. This can be either for the sole purpose of addressing the false alarm problem or as part of a wider fire safety audit. Evidence of the alarm system's poor performance should be provided along with guidance about the Responsible Person's duties and advice about minimising unwanted alarm calls.

Whilst it is important to recognise that the primary duty holder is the responsible person for the affected site, there are other industry stakeholders. These stakeholders have an essential part to play in reducing the number of false alarms produced by systems they install, maintain or monitor, and should preferably be third party accredited to BAFE SP201 or SP203.

It is a recommendation of this Guidance that the Responsible Person shall nominate a competent person to respond to the premises at all times within 20 minutes of an alarm activation to facilitate entry to the building, resetting of the AFA system and post alarm procedures.

In the event of no sign of fire being apparent, the FRS will not necessarily await attendance of the competent person before deciding on the action to take.

It is recognised that FRS may choose to silence an alarm during an incident for FRS operational purposes. This may be to aid clear communications (with due consideration given to how this may effect the intention of the alarm, including the evacuation process). Resetting an AFA system may result in the loss of data that is required for comprehensive assessment of an incident. Persons, not properly trained or familiar with the AFA system, may not reset to the intended state of system operational function and it is therefore recommended that AFA systems are only reset by specific persons assigned to do so by the Responsible Person. The Responsible Person, depending on the type of system, should ensure that contingency arrangements are in place until the system is reset.

Engagement with installation and maintenance companies operating in the fire security area will give a further opportunity to highlight the

problem of unwanted calls from fire alarm systems. The service will also be able to clarify the responsibilities of the installer/maintainer to make sure that the systems they work with are properly designed and installed to minimise the likelihood of false alarms being generated and the role that timely and effective maintenance has on preventing false alarms. Encouraging Responsible Persons to use the services of designers, installers and maintenance companies that are third party certificated will also be of benefit.

FAMOs operating to the Code of Practice attached to this Guidance will also play an important role in reducing UwFS. By employing call-back confirmation of a fire incident, where this is appropriate and where on-site filtering is not in place, UwFS can be reduced. Additional support of the most appropriate FRS response to an incident can also be affected through the provision of supporting information, such as double-knock/co-incident detection, sprinkler actuation, Call Point actuation, visual confirmation of smoke, smell of fire, etc.

# Guidance Operation – A Tool Kit Approach

## Case studies and working in partnership

FRS is likely to be aware of a number of buildings or sites where effective management and maintenance of the fire alarm system takes place and this results in minimal problems arising from false alarms. FRS may want to use these sites as case study examples of how an effective installation, maintenance and management regime can be achieved. A number of such case studies can be developed which will allow managers of similar buildings to see how problems with alarm systems can be effectively overcome. It may be possible to get managers from some buildings to become 'advocates' for effective system management and false alarm reduction within the sector.

FRS will, on occasions, be presented with a site or building where the manager or responsible person requests advice and guidance about managing the AFA system and reducing false alarms. Whilst it is important to recognise the overall responsibility for the alarm system and fire safety within the building remains with the manager, this will give the FRS an opportunity to engage with the building manager and share experience from other sites showing how alarm systems can be effectively managed to meet both the legal duties of the responsible person and eliminate unwanted calls from the system.

The use of case studies of similar buildings will assist this. Partnership working in this way may allow the FRS to influence management behaviour at a number of sites or buildings, for example within a company with a number of sites in the FRS area.

## Call Filtering by FRS Control Operators

Call filtering is commonly used by FRS to reduce the large number of UwFS resulting in an emergency response being required. In many premises there exists a culture of telephoning the FRS if the fire alarm system is activated even though the cause of the activation is known to be something other than a fire. In many ways this culture has been encouraged by FRS campaigns such as 'Get Out, Stay Out, Get the Fire Service Out'. FRS as a whole now needs to work with local industry, commerce and public bodies to re-educate them to the changes in response to AFA calls and to re-emphasise the importance of the local management of the AFA system and the fire risks in the building.

Call filtering is also an opportunity to gather information to assess the level of response required and to influence the change in culture necessary for long term reduction in UwFS.

FRS may adopt call filtering procedures which relate to the time of day or occupancy/premises type or risk in line with their integrated risk management plan.

## Dealing with Poor Performance – the Tool Kit Approach

Each FRS will have established a local policy for dealing with calls that emanate from AFA systems. Within these policies call filtering and response levels will have formed a major part of the policy. The policy will also have outlined the FRS relationship with FAMO. The aim of the policy will have been to promote the establishment of close and harmonious working relationships between the FRS and the FAMO, service providers and end users to develop best practice in the reduction of false alarms and UwFS.

The policy's main objectives should be to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of the various organisations are effectively translated into practical working arrangements that will minimise requests for FRS to attend false alarms from AFA systems. It is recognised that it is ultimately the Responsible Person who is responsible for fire alarm performance.

The monitoring of the number of calls received from individual premises, which may have been transferred via a FAMO or come direct via the 999 system, will establish the scale of any problem and will trigger certain actions to improve the poor performance.

It needs to be recognised that the greater the number of fire detectors installed, the greater the likelihood of a false alarm occurring. This fact needs to be taken into account when FRS set poor performance trigger levels.



Once the pre-set trigger has been reached, FRS will consider the potential response which can follow a number of routes, either singularly or all at the same time.

Unacceptable performance may result in the requirement for immediate remedial action and improvements may be time bound. A reduced attendance may be introduced until the poor performance is rectified.

### **Action under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO)**

The FRS may consider the use of regulatory enforcement powers as Fire and Rescue Authorities have a statutory duty to enforce fire safety legislation and, where appropriate, should respond with regulatory fire safety intervention under the FSO where poor performance of the automatic fire alarm system is detrimental to the safety of occupants. The level of response will be determined by the level of risk and the contraventions found during an audit of the relevant premises. If the offending premises are covered by the provision of the FSO the enforcing authority may:

- Undertake an audit of the premises under the FSO.

- Provide advice in accordance with the Regulators Code.
- Issue non-statutory advice (notice of deficiencies).
- Commence FSO enforcement, i.e.:
  - Enforcement Notice
  - Prosecution

### **Reducing Attendance**

In line with local policy where an AFA System crosses the pre-determined trigger that indicates unacceptable performance and UwFS are being received by FRS, those responsible for the system should be instructed to take immediate remedial action.

Once performance has become unacceptable in line with local policy, then best practice suggests that the following actions should be considered by FRS.

The FRS should:

- Establish in advance the appropriate level at which changes in response are determined.
- Advise the protected premises that they have exceeded the acceptable performance trigger.
- Consider whether to revise the attendance level.
- Advise the protected premises

in advance of any changes and remind them to alert their Insurance Company to any changes to FRS attendance levels.

- Continue to review the performance of AFA systems.
- Advise that the Fire Risk Assessment/Emergency Plan for the premises must be reviewed.
- Consider the use of regulatory enforcement powers.

The Responsible Person, together with the maintainer of the AFA, should take the necessary actions to address an unacceptable rate of false alarm activations as outlined in BS5839-1.

Once a FRS determines that an unacceptable rate of UwFS has occurred, and a reduced attendance or non-attendance of FRS resources has been instigated, then the FRS will need to determine how long the reduced attendance will last, when it will be reviewed to see if performance has improved, and how normal attendance is reinstated and notified to the protected premises.

# Guidance Operation – A Tool Kit Approach

## Levying a Charge under the Localism Act

The Localism Act 2011 brings into force changes to the FRS Act 2004. Three new sections have been added to the 2004 Act Sections 18A, 18B and 18C allow Fire and Rescue Authorities to charge for responding to a report of fire where the call is made within the following circumstances:

- There is a report of fire.
- The premises are not domestic premises.
- The report is false.
- The report is made as a direct or indirect result of warning equipment having malfunctioned or been mis-installed.
- There is a persistent problem.

These changes to the 2004 Act supplement powers under the FSO and should add to the toolkit that the FRS has at its disposal to reduce the large numbers of resources being dedicated to persistent UwFS.

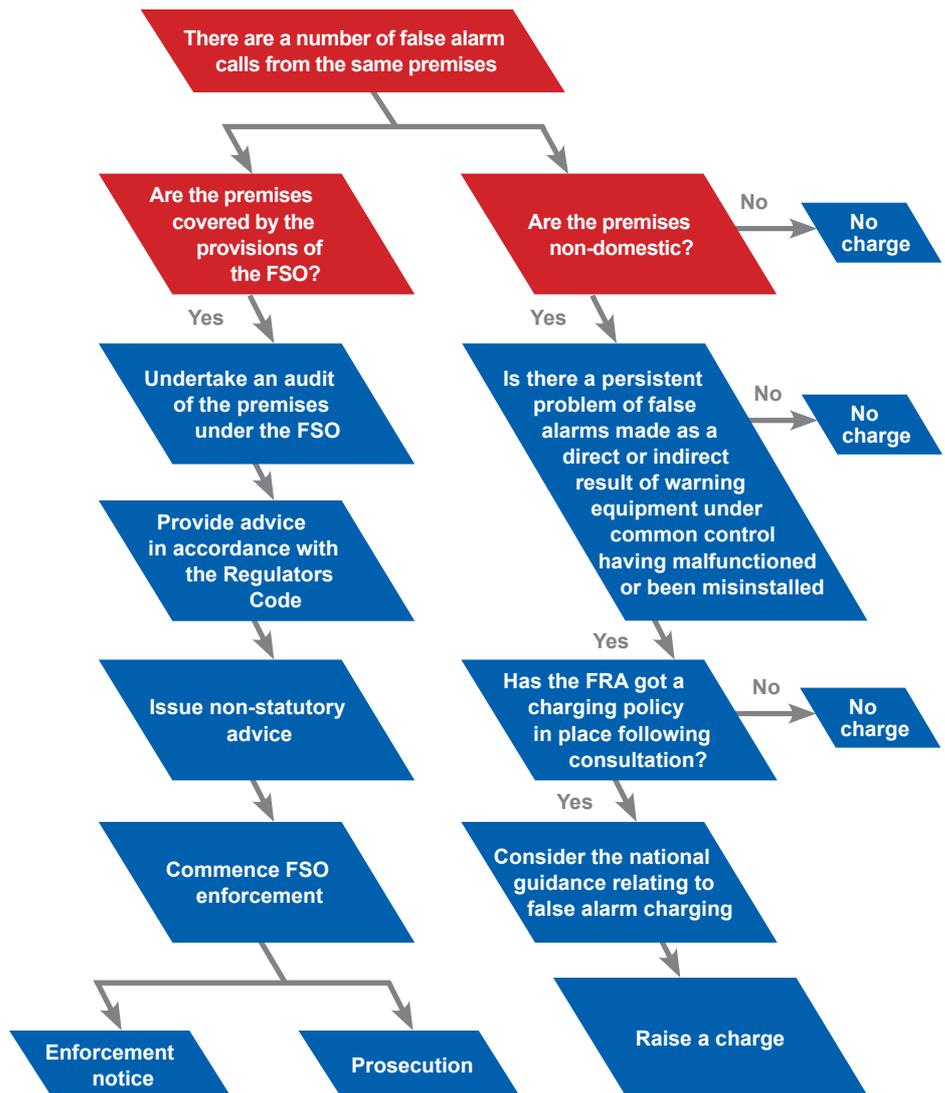
The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO) offers a legislative option for tackling any mismanagement of fire safety arrangements in non-domestic premises, including the issue of false fire alarm reports. Charging for false reports, as set out in the Localism Act, can be used independently to recover the cost to the fire and rescue service alongside the provision in the FSO. Charging should not prevent or preclude the provision of appropriate

advice to the responsible person as part of a fire safety audit of the premises, nor compromise a fire and rescue service's ability to take appropriate enforcement action under the FSO.

Figure 2 below shows how a FRS can take action simultaneously under the FSO and recovering costs for attendance at a persistent UwFS call.

**Figure 2 – FRS Response & Charging**

False alarms – Actions under FSO & charging





Each FRS making use of the power to charge will need to establish a robust methodology for assessing the costs to the Authority in responding to the unwanted UwFS.

Section 18A(5) of the 2004 Act places Authorities under a duty to secure that, taking one financial year with another, the income from levying a charge for responding to a UwFS does not exceed the costs of provision. In establishing a charging regime for UwFS, Authorities may have limited information initially upon which to base an assessment of the costs they expect to incur and, thus, the charge that should be made for responding to a UwFS. In order to

gather the appropriate information to calculate the cost of responding to a UwFS call, the Authority may wish to establish a period over which to monitor costs. The period adopted may differ between Authorities. The 2004 Act does not specify a period over which charges should be calculated; this is left to each Authority's discretion.

Should they so wish, Authorities may decide to respond to UwFS without charge. Equally they may decide to charge different amounts to different groups of recipients when the service responds to a UwFS call. The charging power allows this level of discretion.

Once each Authority has in place a charging policy in relation to UwFS then they should produce a plan to provide clarity in respect of any charges to be imposed and provide details on how such a list of charges could be accessed.

Having established a policy on charging for attendance at UwFS and a means of determining the level of charge, the Authority will need to determine who is liable to be charged and how they establish liability. It has to be accepted that it is, ultimately, the Responsible Person who has responsibility for a fire alarm system's performance and maintenance and, as such, would be liable for the charge.



# Information and Certification

## 13 CFOA Guidance: Forms & Letters

The forms and letters related to this Guidance are provided in the toolbox available from the CFOA web site:

Toolbox link: [www.cfoa.org.uk/10863](http://www.cfoa.org.uk/10863)

## 14 CFOA Guidance: Access, Revision and Version Control

The Guidance will be available to download on the CFOA web site at [www.cfoa.org.uk/10275](http://www.cfoa.org.uk/10275)

Should you experience any problems downloading a hard copy, please contact CFOA IT Support via email or on the phone 01827 302374 or by post at:

**9-11 Pebble Close  
Amington  
Tamworth  
Staffordshire  
B77 4RD**

The content of this guidance will be drawn to the attention of users of AFA systems, by the installer or maintainer of the fire detection and fire alarm system.

Interested parties may inform CFOA of any issues that may prompt an amendment to this guidance. These should be forwarded to CFOA at the above address. On a regular agreed basis, the Chair of the CFOA Working Group will meet with representatives of the fire industry, independent inspectorate bodies and other representative organisations to review potential updates and amendments. The guidance will be

kept under review and modified in the light of experience and improvements in performance and developments in fire alarm technology.

The version of the Guidance maintained on the CFOA web site will be the current Guidance.

## 15 Data Protection

The provisions of the Data Protection Act apply to all personal data held by CFOA & FRS.

## 16 Advertising and use of FRS or CFOA Identity

Companies selling or promoting AFA systems or FAMO services shall not use the CFOA logo or any FRS crest or signage on any documentation or promotional materials without the written permission of the relevant organisation. No company shall make misleading or inaccurate explanations of the CFOA Guidance or FRS response standards on any documentation or public material circulated to customers.

## 17 CFOA Liability

- i) CFOA does not exclude any liability for death or personal injury caused by its negligence or the negligence of its employees.
- ii) Subject to paragraph 17 i) and notwithstanding any provision of this Guidance, CFOA shall have no liability in respect of this Guidance whether in contract, tort (including but not limited to negligence), breach of any statutory duty, under statute,

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## 18 Certification Schemes for Automatic Fire Detection and Fire Alarm Systems

CFOA is committed to assisting and supporting users of fire protection products, systems and services to meet their legal responsibilities by encouraging such users to use only third party certificated companies.

UKAS accredited Third party certification schemes for fire protection products and related services are an effective means of providing the fullest possible assurances, offering a level of quality, reliability and safety that non-certificated products may lack. This does not mean goods and services that are not third party approved are less reliable, but there is no obvious way in which this can be demonstrated.

Third party certification can provide confidence, both as a means of satisfying you that the goods and services you have purchased are fit for purpose, and as a means of demonstrating that you have complied with the law.

Third party certification bodies that offer certification of designers and contractors should be accredited by UKAS, so providing the user with confidence about the standard of the certification body.

There are, at the time of writing, two UKAS accredited third party certification schemes for companies that design, install, commission and maintain fire alarm systems. These are;

- The SP203 Scheme published by BAFE and available from a number of UKAS accredited certification bodies. A list of companies certificated under this scheme can be found on the BAFE web site [www.BAFE.org.uk](http://www.BAFE.org.uk) It is important to ensure that companies are certificated for the particular service provided e.g: a company might be third party certificated for maintenance work, but not third party certificated for design work.
- The SP201 scheme available from the Loss Prevention Certification Board A list of companies certified under this scheme can be found at [www.redbooklive.com](http://www.redbooklive.com).

**UKAS**  
**21-47 High Street**  
**Feltham**  
**Middlesex**  
**TW13 4UN**  
**[www.ukas.com](http://www.ukas.com)**

## 19 Certification Schemes for Alarm Receiving Centres & Telecare Service Providers

A list of companies recognised as providing third party certification for FAMOs can be obtained through UKAS.

**UKAS**  
**21-47 High Street**  
**Feltham**  
**Middlesex**  
**TW13 4UN**  
**[www.ukas.com](http://www.ukas.com)**

CFOA strongly recommends that all FAMOs shall be certificated by UKAS accredited, or equivalent, third party certification body to the relevant standard for the types of alarm which they monitor.

A number of certification bodies operate third party certification schemes that monitor fire alarm signals. At the time of writing these comprise;

- NSI
- SSAIB
- LPCB

# Glossary and References

## 20 Glossary and References

The following definitions are applied only for the purpose of this document and should not be used to interpret any other publications.

### AFA

Automatic fire alarm ('AFAs' indicates plural form): An automatic fire detection and fire alarm system – as defined in BS5839-1)

### ARC

Alarm Receiving Centre (ARCs indicates plural form): A continuously manned remote centre to which information concerning the status of one or more alarm systems is reported. (See FAMO) [Source BS5979:2007]

### BAFE

British Approval Fire Equipment

### BS5839-1<sup>2</sup>

British Standard Code of Practice for the design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of fire detection and fire alarm systems for buildings. [source BS5839-1:2013]

### BS5839-6<sup>2</sup>

British Standard Code of Practice for the design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of fire detection and fire alarm systems for buildings used as dwellings. [Source BS5839-6:2004]

### BS5979<sup>2</sup>

British Standard Code of Practice for remote centres receiving signals from security systems. [Source BS5979:2007]

### BS7671<sup>2</sup>

British Standard Code of Practice for requirements for electrical installations – IET wiring regulations.

### Building fire alarm monitoring

This includes all BS5839 part 1 fire alarm systems and all BS5839 part 6 fire alarm systems excluding those covered under the definition of Individual Domestic Premises Fire Alarm Systems (27.17).

### Call Back

A type of call filtering process undertaken by FAMOs to prevent UwFS. Where call back is in place, on receipt of a fire alarm signal, a FAMO will call the premises contact, waiting for a maximum of 30 seconds for an answer (unless a longer period is otherwise justified under a risk assessment). If the phone is answered at any time within the 30 seconds, the call filtering process commences. If the phone is not answered within the 30 seconds, the call back process ends and the signal is relayed to the FRS.

### CFOA

Chief Fire Officers Association.

### Competent Person

Nominated by the responsible person: A person with enough training, experience, knowledge or other qualities to enable them properly to assist in undertaking the preventative and protective measures. [Source RRFSo 2005 guidance documents]

### CoP

Code of Practice

### False Alarm

A fire alarm signal resulting from a cause or causes other than a fire, in which a system has responded, either as designed or as the technology can be reasonably expected to respond to any of the following:

- A fire like phenomenon or environmental influence (e.g. smoke from a nearby bonfire dust or insects, processes that produce smoke or flame or environmental effects that can render certain types of detector unstable, such as rapid air flow.
- Accidental damage.
- Inappropriate human action (e.g. operation of a system for test or maintenance purposes without prior warning to building occupants and/or an alarm receiving centre.
- Equipment false alarms, in which the fire alarm has resulted from a fault in the system. [source BS5839-1:2013 clause 3.18].

A false alarm becomes an UwFS at the point a FRS is requested to attend.

### FAMO

Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisation (FAMOs indicates plural form): A combined term developed under this Guidance to include all remote fire alarm monitoring organisations e.g.: ARC, TSP, etc.

<sup>2</sup> All references to British Standards or equivalent documents within this Guidance require referencing the current version applicable.



### **Filtering**

Steps taken to limit a false alarm being transmitted to FRS as an UwFS and action taken by the FRS to determine if an emergency response is necessary.

Filtering can be done through:

- Measures introduced on site.
- FAMOs.
- FRS (Call filtering is the preferred term for call challenging or call verification).

### **FRS**

Fire and Rescue Service.

### **FSO**

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

### **Individual Domestic Premises Fire Alarm Monitoring (social or non-social)**

For the purposes of this Guidance, this is identified as any single property dwelling used for private living accommodation and not connected to a common parts fire alarm system.

### **PDA – Pre-determined attendance**

Specific number and type of each appliance, specific equipment required, together with such Junior, Senior and Principal Officers that are required to attend or be notified.

### **Premises & site**

The context of a site, premises or building needs to be considered in line with local FRS policies and the specific circumstances and configuration of the systems installed.

### **Protected premises**

A premises in the Guidance is as defined in the FSO. (See building alarm and individual domestic premises definitions)

### **Responsible Person**

This is defined in the FSO as: In this order "responsible person" means;

- a) Relation to a workplace, the employer, if the workplace is to any extent under his control.
- b) Relation to any premises not falling in paragraph (a).
  - i) the person who has control of the premises (as occupier or otherwise) in connection with the carry on by him of a trade, business or other undertaking (for profit or not).
  - ii) the owner, where the person in control of the premises does not have control in connection with the carrying on by that person of trade, business or other undertaking.

### **TSA – Telecare Services Association**

The Telecare Services Association is the representative body for the Telecare industry within the UK.

### **TSP – Telecare Service Provider**

Telecare Service Providers were formally known as Social Alarm Providers (SAP). It is a service that enables people, especially older and more vulnerable individuals, to live independently in their own home. It can be as simple as the basic community alarm service, able to respond in an

emergency and provide regular contact by telephone. It can include detectors or monitors such as motion or falls and fire and gas that trigger a warning to a response centre staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year (See FAMO).

### **UKAS – United Kingdom Accreditation Service**

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service is the sole national accreditation body recognised by government to assess, against internationally agreed standards, organisations that provide certification, testing, inspection and calibration services.

### **URN – Unique Reference Number**

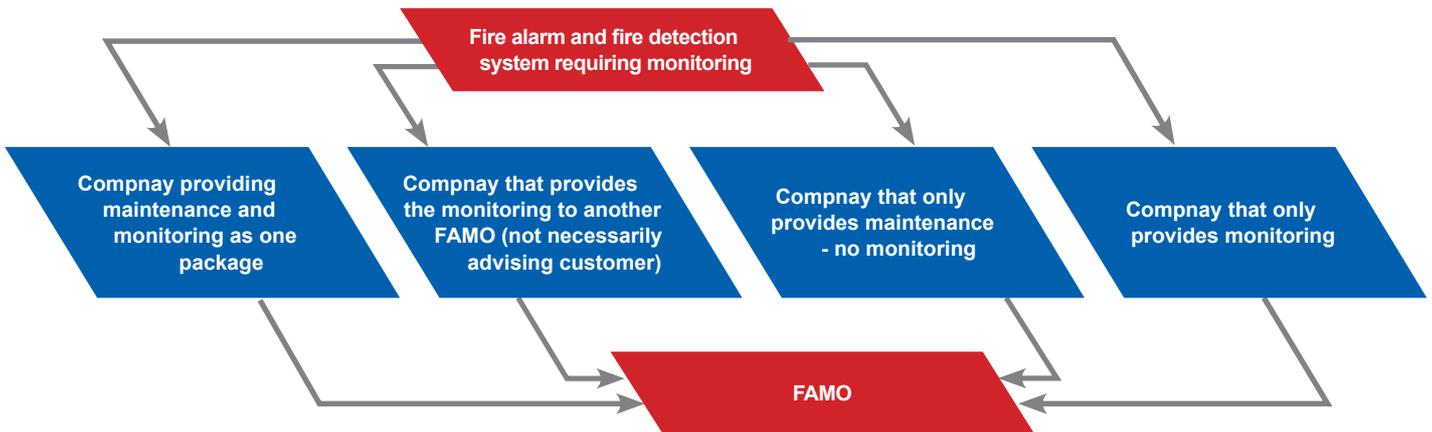
The number, issued by an FRS, by which an individual protected premises is uniquely recognised.

### **UwFS – Unwanted Fire Signal**

An UwFS is a false alarm from an automatic fire detection and fire alarm system that has been passed through to the FRS.

# Appendix A - FAMOs and Remote Monitoring Relationships

Figure 3 - Fire alarm Monitoring organisation/Service provider/End user



**D.1.** Remote monitoring organisations (FAMOs) do not often have a contract directly with the premises/ Responsible Person. In order to appreciate the responsibilities the various parties have in the process of managing false alarms and UwFS, the diagram above helps explain this aspect of the business model.

**D.2.** This Guidance recognises there are various levels of influence which stakeholders in this relationship can exert on each other. FRS can directly influence the end user and FAMO. The FAMO can directly influence the service provider and directly or indirectly influence the end user and the end user can directly influence the service provider. The levels of influence also dictate the ability to educate each stakeholder in best practice of fire alarm management.

**D.3. Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisations.** FAMOs have the responsibility for the administration of

the connection and monitoring of fire alarm systems.

**D.4.** The FAMO role is more than just alarm monitoring, it is often integral to the fire strategy of premises and can play a vital part in an effective emergency plan. The flexibility in the monitoring services available is often under utilised. The CoP supports the range and flexibility of fire alarm monitoring which should be tailored to each unique premises. The CoP also recognises the limitations of monitoring and managing fire alarm systems.

**D.5.** In monitoring building fire alarms, FAMOs provide the valuable function of protecting property in the event of fire in buildings outside normal working hours, when unoccupied and as back up to on-site filtering arrangements. Serious consideration must be given to the times and levels of monitoring occupied buildings. For example, when a building is fully

occupied and/or sufficient staff are available to investigate an alarm activation, it may be unnecessary for the alarm signal to be passed to the FAMO. This may unnecessarily disrupt the business activity and put emergency services at risk during unnecessary emergency response. In this circumstance it would be reasonable for the monitoring company to provide a back-up to any human failure during investigation or if for example, call point or co-incident detection increased the likelihood of fire.

**D.6.** Confirmation of the FAMOs compliance with BS 5979 (or equivalent) is achieved through certification by a United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) Accredited 3rd Party Certification body with the scope for monitoring fire alarms. The FAMO is required to undergo a regular inspection programme by a 3rd party certification body to confirm compliance.



**D.7. Service Providers.** A Service Provider (eg: system installer or system maintainer) may be nominated to maintain the fire alarm system on behalf of the Responsible Person.

**D.8.** The Service Provider will arrange connection to a FAMO incorporating the requirements of the Responsible Person and the requirements of the FAMO, whilst ensuring the system is correctly maintained.

**D.9. End Users.** The Responsible Person (as defined under the FSO) has overall responsibility for the performance of the fire detection and fire alarm system, including the prevention of false alarms and UwFS. Where roles have been assigned to complete the duties associated with the fire alarm system, the Responsible Person must ensure the tasks are undertaken by a Competent Person.

**D.10. FRA.** Fire and Rescue Authorities are the statutory enforcing authority for primary fire safety legislation for most premises in England and Wales.

**D.11.** Fire Safety legislation requires the employer (or responsible person) to carry out an assessment of the risk from fire to employees and other people using the premises, and to implement suitable control measures to reduce the risk to an acceptable level. This includes arrangements for summoning the Fire and Rescue Service.

**D.12.** CFOA strongly recommends that FRS do not place additional filtering or monitoring burdens on FAMOs complying with this CoP.

**D.13.** FRSs will promote the use of 3rd Party Certification schemes as one method that Responsible Persons may use to help demonstrate competency.

**D.14. Example FAMO Approach.** Maintain the name and address of the premises plus a Hazards at Location register where this has been supplied.

**D.15.** Employ a URN system. (Using a URN system can offer a number of advantages to both the FRS and the FAMO i.e. passing an emergency call would be quicker as the correct address/location has already been established. Having URNs may also enable better control over managing the databases; both at the FRS and the FAMO. URNs also provide opportunity to enable electronic alarm transfer).

**D.16.** Hold details of a minimum of 2 key holders that can attend the site within 20 minutes. Note key holders must be trained to operate the fire alarm system.

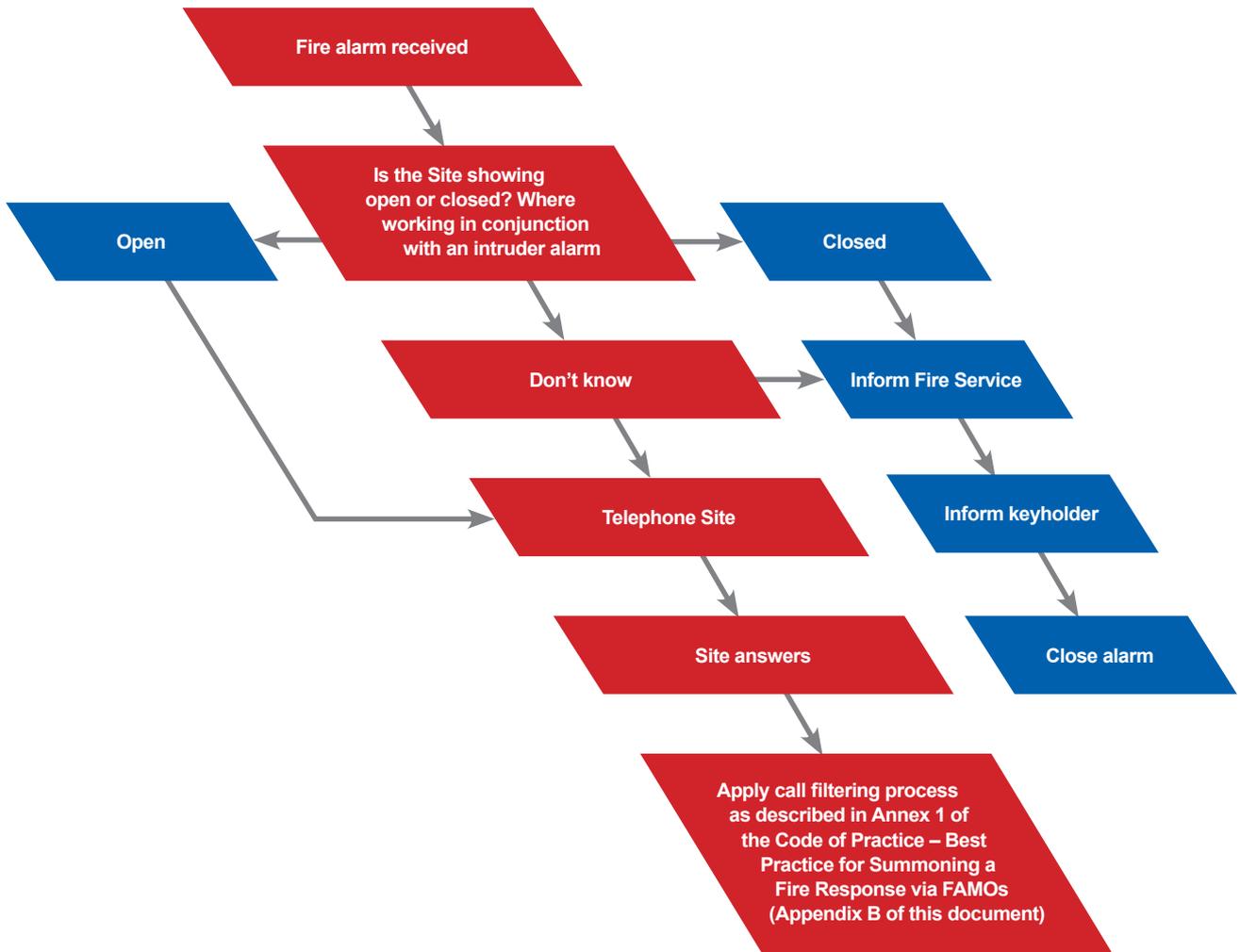
**D.17.** Be supplied with FRS feedback on incident information i.e. fire or false alarm. Systems with multiple false alarms can be identified and referral can be made to the maintainer company in order to take remedial action.

**D.18.** Where systems are linked or possibly share a communications unit, it may be possible to identify whether the premises are occupied. This information can be provided to the FRS and allow additional supporting action, such as telephone filtering to the site (see flow chart - Figure 4). Such action would be agreed under the connection contract and be supported by the Risk Assessment with appropriate co-operation and agreement of the relevant parties.

**D.19.** Agree and apply appropriate time limits to processes as necessary.

**D.20.** Consider identifying and filtering false alarm calls from weekly testing and engineers maintenance processes.

Figure 4 - FAMO - Example approach to call handling





## **21. Appendix B – FAMO: Code of Practice**

Available as a separate document.





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