

**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item No 9**

**MEETING: 18 JANUARY 2016**

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**SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION REPORT AND NEXT STEPS FOR THE RISK  
BASED ATTENDANCE POLICY FOR AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARM  
CALLS IN NON-RESIDENTIAL PREMISES**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the successful implementation of the Risk Based Attendance Policy and the accompanying improved performance in attendance at false alarm incidents; although despite this improvement there are still areas of poor performance in this indicator.
- 1.2 Furthermore, this report seeks approval from Members for proposals to extend the policy to further improve performance in this indicator.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 At the January 2015 Fire Authority meeting a revised policy for TWFRS's attendance to automatic fire alarms was approved with a go-live date of 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015. The revised policy changed the response to fire alarms from non-residential premises between 0800 – 1800 hours with an attendance being made when a backup call is received confirming a fire or physical sign of fire exists.
- 2.2 There were exemptions for the following premises types in the policy:
  - Hospitals
  - Education premises
  - COMAH sites
  - Specific High Risk premises (determined by local operational intelligence)
  - Premises Protected by Approved/Accredited Fire Alarm Systems
  - Exceptional Exemptions

## **3. ACTIONS PRIOR TO GO-LIVE**

- 3.1 A detailed implementation plan was developed to ensure a smooth transition for both the community and our Service. This included internal and external communication with specific actions completed such as:

- 30,000 letters delivered to premises within Tyne and Wear
- Attendance at community/ business events
- All individual enquiries followed up by a dedicated officer
- Development of a best practice advice leaflet
- Direct engagement with stakeholders
- Press releases, radio and TV interviews and updates on social media
- CFO communications to staff
- Internal briefings for all watches

#### **4 CURRENT PERFORMANCE**

- 4.1 The number of false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarms from non-domestic premises (LI22) between June and September has reduced by 372 when compared to the same period of the previous year, with a reduction of 346 between the hours of 0800 to 1800 hours.
- 4.2 Education, hospitals and medical care and residential home premises are the highest remaining offenders for this indicator with 52% of false alarms during this period.
- 4.3 No complaints have been received following implementation of the new policy.

#### **5 EXEMPTIONS**

- 5.1 There have been 22 exemptions granted to premises, with the following detailed breakdown of type:
- 18 Exceptional exemptions
  - 3 Fire Alarm exemptions
  - 1 Operational High Risk exemption

#### **6 NEXT STEP PROPOSALS**

- 6.1 It is proposed to extend the policy by targeting premises where due to the poor management and/ or an inadequate fire alarm system the occupants and our confidence in the fire alarm has reduced. Any changes will be applied through a robust process, with the emphasis on working in partnership with premises to improve their performance so no changes to response are necessary.

##### **6.2 Hospitals and Medical Care Premises**

- 6.2.1 Through a regional group, TWFRS Fire Safety Officers work closely with the Hospital Fire Safety Officers and large reductions in false alarms, of over 50%, has been achieved over the last five years, although the reduction is varied across different sites. It is proposed to continue the engagement with the

Hospital Fire Safety Officers but change the response to sites with poor performance compared to their counterparts.

- 6.2.2 Any changes in response for these hospitals will apply between 0800 and 1800 hours and will be applied flexibly, with officers focussing efforts on the premises who have so far not engaged to the extent of effecting a noticeable change in automatic fire alarm system behaviour. The primary focus of the engagements will be to ensure the responsible persons for a premise are acting within the requirements of the Regulatory Reform Order (Fire Safety) 2005 which states that an adequate risk assessment must be in place for a premise, including what actions should be taken in the event of a fire alarm actuation, and this risk assessment should not rely on the Local Authority Fire and Rescue Service.

### **6.3 Education Premises**

- 6.3.1 False alarms from education premises accounts for 21% of this indicator. We attempt to work with poor performing premises to improve the fire alarm system and their management of it, however several premises will not engage in this process. It is proposed to change the response to poorly performing premises which will not engage to improve their performance.
- 6.3.2 Any changes in response for these education premises will apply between 0800 and 1800 hours and will be applied flexibly, with officers focussing efforts on the premises who have so far not engaged to the extent of effecting a noticeable change in automatic fire alarm system behaviour. The primary focus of the engagements will be to ensure the responsible persons for a premise are acting within the requirements of the Regulatory Reform Order (Fire Safety) 2005 which states that an adequate risk assessment must be in place for a premise, including what actions should be taken in the event of a fire alarm actuation, and this risk assessment should not rely on the Local Authority Fire and Rescue Service.

### **6.4 Other non-residential premises**

- 6.4.1 Other non-residential premises, through application of the Risk Based Attendance Policy, are call challenged and only receive an emergency response for fire alarms between 0800 to 1800 hours when a backup call is received. Many premises have used this change in policy to improve their management of the fire alarm system outside of this timescale; however there are several premises which continue to be poor performers outside of this timescale and will not engage in the improvement process.
- 6.4.2 Any changes in response for these premises will apply between 0800 and 1800 hours and will be applied flexibly, with officers focussing efforts on the premises who have so far not engaged to the extent of effecting a noticeable change in

automatic fire alarm system behaviour. The primary focus of the engagements will be to ensure the responsible persons for a premise are acting within the requirements of the Regulatory Reform Order (Fire Safety) 2005 which states that an adequate risk assessment must be in place for a premise, including what actions should be taken in the event of a fire alarm actuation, and this risk assessment should not rely on the Local Authority Fire and Rescue Service.

## **6.5 Residential Care Home Premises**

- 6.5.1 False alarms from residential care home premises accounts for 12% of this indicator. CFOA Code of Practice guidance, in-line with BS5839-1 recommends that residential homes receive a FRS response without application of call filtering; therefore TWFRS will continue with our current approach to respond immediately. Where a residential home has excessive false alarms we will engage with management of these premises to promote effective change.

## **7 BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSALS**

- 7.1 Further reductions in the number of mobilisations to calls generated by automatic fire alarm systems would increase appliance availability to respond to life risk incidents, reduce road risk to the public and our staff, and allow more time to be spent on risk critical training, prevention and fire safety duties as well as gathering risk critical information, and reduce the Service's environmental impact.

## **8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The cost of the initial implementation was approximately £10,000 against a predicted expenditure of £15,000.
- 8.2 There are no financial implications for the next steps proposal.

## **9 LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The relevant legislation in relation to response to automatic fire alarms is:

- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

- 9.2 The recommendations in this report are within the legislative requirements placed on TWFRS by both the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

## **10 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.

## 11 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

## 12 RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 The Authority is recommended to:

- a) Note the content of the report;
- b) Approve further work with hospitals, education premises, and other non-residential premises.
- c) Receive further reports as appropriate.

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## BACKGROUND PAPERS

The under mentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- Fire Authority Paper Item 08 – Risk Based Attendance Policy For Automatic Fire Alarm Calls In Non-Residential Premises, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2015.

**Tyne and Wear Fire  
and Rescue Authority**  
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