Automatic Fire Alarms – our advice for residents

Where required, properly installed and maintained, Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) systems can be life savers and prevent serious escalation of fires reducing property damage.

In the year 2016/17 we responded on to 9,144 incidents. Unfortunately of those, 4,514 (49.4%) were false alarms including 3,177 from automatic fire alarm systems.

False alarms prevent ours crews’ attending real emergencies, and could endanger lives. They also cause considerable disruption and cost to the Fire and Rescue Service, Businesses and building occupiers.

We want to ensure the alarms we respond to are real emergencies - not false alarms.

It is the responsibility of the owner/Responsible Person of the premises to ensure that residents are safe from fire. This will mean making sure they know what to do in the event of a fire and may include the provision of an automatic fire alarm system.

The management and maintenance of any fire alarm is the responsibility of the owner/Responsible Person.

How you can help

• Ensure you know who maintains the alarm and check their advice for avoiding false alarms.
• If you are employing contractors, ensure they understand how the alarm system operates and pass on the advice about avoiding triggering the alarm by accident.
• Make sure you know what to do when the alarms goes off.

What we are doing

To reduce the number of these wasted and unnecessary journeys, we are:

• Requesting those responsible for AFA systems to introduce suitable procedures to quickly and safely investigate the cause of a fire alarm actuation before calling the Fire & Rescue Service.
• Not attending premises to silence or re-set fire alarms
• Not attending faulty alarms

Our emergency role at a site which has an AFA system is only to deal with a fire. If there are no signs of fire then, the fire engine will leave so that it can become available for other emergency calls.

For many differing reasons, no UK Fire & Rescue Service presently re-sets fire alarms, but principally because if the fire alarm system fails or malfunctions because of our interference, we could be considered liable for any consequences. Re-setting could also reduce the effectiveness of an investigation by a competent engineer into the cause of the alarm.

Additionally, for the simple reason that if we do re-set, it can result in the owner/responsible person not providing someone on-site, trained to manage fire procedures, including the fire alarm system.

Please remember that for a fire, always dial 999 immediately, even if your AFA system is connected to an alarm company, as it could speed our response.

For more advice go to

www.esftrs.org/afa