UNWANTED FIRE ALARM SIGNALS (UFAS)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Are the exemptions only for sleeping risk premises or are there any other category of relevant premises?

The only premises that will receive an initial response from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) on an alarm activation, are premises that have sleeping accommodation. *Within the council, this would include our linked corridor sheltered housing complexes, supported accommodation and children's care home settings.*

2. Some large organisations are looking into technological solutions to minimise staff costs due to investigation, such as replacement of smoke detectors with multi-sensor detection. Are SFRS accepting this, as this may mean extended time to alarm in escape routes, and detector spacing may need to be changed to satisfy the spacing recommendations for the least sensitive detection type?

If the Duty Holder's* system is sophisticated enough to determine that:

- a heat detector has activated; or
- a multi sensing detector has activated; or
- a manual call point has activated; or
- Sprinklers have activated; or
- multiple detectors have activated (Coincidence)

then a full pre-determined attendance will be mobilised without need for investigation.
*The duty holder is North Lanarkshire Council.

3.The above question states the "Duty Holder" can this be explained in a bit more detail?

The "Duty Holder" has the overall responsibility for ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of relevant persons from fire in the workplace. The Duty Holder is the

Council, who will nominate/appoint Building Managers and Head of Establishments with responsibility for the specific buildings in which they manage. Those responsibilities include that a fire risk management process has been implemented and is being maintained. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Being available or appointing a deputy to accompany the Fire Risk Assessor during the undertaking or review of the assessment.
- Taking the appropriate operational management actions, so far as is reasonably practicable, where recommended by the assessor.
- Ensuring those nominated as fire wardens have received training and regularly review ratios against occupancy type and risk rating. Also ensuring other employees have received online fire awareness training or have been made aware of the fire procedures specific to the building. This could be done through toolbox talks, team meeting agenda item or one-to-one meetings.
- Undertake regular fire drills to ensure suitable procedures are in place.
- Ensure, where applicable, that weekly fire alarm testing is completed and recorded and that all exit routes remain clear with final exit doors regularly checked for any obstructions.

4. Can alarm receiving centres (ARCs) identify the device which has actuated, or are most only able to report a general fire alarm signal?

No, The Council's property management team have confirmed that where buildings have a remote fire link to an alarm receiving centre, The ARC will receive either a fire or fault signal. They will not see exactly what type of device has activated or is in fault.

5. If a school is unoccupied when the fire signal is sent to the ARC, will the SFRS attend when there is no one on site to 'call confirm'?

No, the ARC will contact the keyholder and the mobile security officer to attend site and safely investigate for signs of fire in accordance with the guidance and instruction issued.

6. Will training be provided to staff with responsibilities for investigating fire alarm activations?

Yes, an eLearning training programme has been developed to provide those with responsibilities for investigating alarms with the key information and instruction for investigating alarm activations.

It's also important to undertake training specific to the building so that key information is given to those investigating, including:

- The location of the fire alarm panel.
- The type of alarm system, addressable, zoned.
- Sprinkler system.
- Specific risks, such as fuel/chemical storage.
- Occupancy needs for safely evacuating.

It's recommended that training and procedures are refreshed regularly through fire drills at the frequency recommended in accordance with the service, for example, educational settings, 4 per year.

7. How will I know exactly what has caused the activation and where it could be in the building?

Where buildings have an addressable fire alarm panel, text will be displayed on the panel to indicate what has activated and where. For example, "S.D. Zone 1, Address 2, Staff Rm". In this example, it would be a smoke detector activation in Zone 1, address 2, staff room. Other common text includes.

MCP – Manual Call Point. H/D Heat Detector.

Most panels will also have a fault indicating light. In this case a call to the maintenance helpdesk should be made.

Where an alarm panel is only "Zoned" an indicating light will appear next to the number of the zone, and the number of zones will depend on the size of the building. It's worth establishing the zones and listing them close to the panel. Those with responsibilities for the weekly testing of the system should understand the zones and their locations in order help with the creation of a zone list. The fire alarm maintenance engineer should also be able to assist.

8. Who's responsible for ensuring there are enough numbers to be ready to investigate?

The Building Manager/Head of Establishment should ensure that there are adequate numbers of staff available, trained and competent in undertaking the role of investigator. This should not compromise evacuating any occupants with an impairment who will require assistance. Ratios should be planned and consider absence including sickness and leave.

9. Does my building require a review of the Fire Risk Assessment because of the UFAS changes?

No, the FRA will not require a review because of the changes. What should be reviewed is the arrangements and procedures specific to your building. This should include:

- Knowing the risk level of your building – Low/Medium/High* and ensuring that the investigation ratios reflect this. During normal operating hours High risk buildings should have 3 staff, 1 at panel and 2 safely and progressively investigating for signs of

fire. Normal and Low risk should have 1 at panel and 1 investigating. Out of hours will be the keyholder and a mobile security officer.

- Undertaking/Reviewing Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPS) for anyone with an impairment that requires assistance in evacuating.
- Highlighting key locations such as plant/switch room locations and ensuring keys are available.
- Displaying a building layout plan and zone location list adjacent to fire alarm panel.
- Managing contractors effectively by ensuring they sign in/out of building and notify building management of works progress/completion.
- Coordinating arrangements and procedures and regularly reviewing these with other services/employers if and where necessary.

*The risk level to the building, (low, medium, or high) is where property have rated it upon considering some of the factors detailed below. This is not the separate rating given by the Fire Risk Assessor on the likelihood of fire and the consequences for life safety, such as tolerable or moderate.

The use of/storage within the building of Fuel/chemicals – this would likely result in quicker growth/spread in the event of fire. **High Risk.**

Assisted Support Needs Education settings have also been classed as **High Risk** – this is not based on inadequate fire safety measures, but due to the design and adaptations in place for the children.

Generally, most buildings such as schools and offices are of a **Medium Risk** rating.

Those buildings such as small community halls and common rooms adjacent to sheltered housing complexes are **Low risk**.

10. Where do I find a copy of my Fire Risk Assessment?

Upon completion of your FRA, a copy will be sent to you via email attachment. If this has not been received, it can be requested via an email to healthandsafety@northlan.gov.uk or by emailing the assessor directly. Upon receipt of your FRA, it should be read with any operational management action recommendations completed and the action plan returned to the assessor. A copy should be retained within the fire logbook on site.