

LFRS Automatic Fire Alarm and Unwanted Fire Signal Journey

Pre- 2022 over a 5-year period, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) had sent fire engines 32,685 times to premises, after receiving an automatic signal from an automatic fire alarm.

Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) provide an effective means of giving early warning of a potential fire within a premises and are especially effective and useful when the premises is unoccupied.

However, these systems are not fool proof and the vast majority (99.13%) of actuations from these systems require no action by the fire service.

Automatic fire detection can be actuated by many common airborne materials, such as dust, insects, steam, aerosol products and, also by faults with the system.

When an actuation of a fire alarm is automatically sent to the fire service (usually via an Alarm Receiving Centre), and the fire service mobilise their resources to the premises when they are not needed, this is deemed to be an unwanted fire signal (UwFS).

Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) cost businesses time and money and divert firefighters from genuine emergencies and other duties.

LFRS Phased Approach to AFA Policy Changes

- In response, in **April 2022**, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) changed how it responds to automatic fire alarms (AFA) in non-sleeping risk premises, during the day between 8am – 7pm, seven days a week.
- Since **May 2023**, LFRS no longer responds to automatic fire alarm activations, unless the Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) confirmed that the premises provides sleeping accommodation. LFRS continue to respond to confirmed fires.
- We will always respond to automatic fire alarm calls 24 hours a day if:
 - A backup call is received through 999 reporting a fire or signs of fire (such as a smell of burning).
 - You have successfully applied to LFRS for a fire alarm exemption, and it has been granted.

Higher Risk Premises AFA Exceptions

- Sleeping risk.
- Single private domestic dwelling.
- Sheltered accommodation.
- Other residential premises such as hostel, hotel, student accommodation, care/nursing home etc.
- Registered Upper Tier Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) sites, nuclear sites covered by the REPPiR legislation.
- High rise.
- Hospitals.
- Prison/young offenders' institution.
- Police station and military barracks.
- Infant, primary and secondary education premises.
- Grade 1 and Grade 2* (star) heritage premises.

AFA Policy Change Progress

- LFRS has delivered a significant reduction in commercial premises AFAs which has generated:
 - Improved fire engine availability
 - Reduced the road risk proceeding to incidents under blue lights
 - Contributed to reducing carbon emissions
 - Improved operational effectiveness, to ensure crews can focus on higher risk interventions and safety critical training
 - Promoted improved fire safety arrangements for businesses
- Implemented a call challenge policy at NWFC to triage risk more effectively
- Joint prevention and protection interventions to respond to unwanted fire signals.

Ongoing AFA Work

- Continued interventions in 'high risk' premises types.
- Appropriate use of enforcement for premises which have repeat unwanted fire signals.
- Continued work with responsible persons and partners (CQC, care and housing providers) to improve fire safety systems and promote awareness.
- Continued campaigns and initiatives to target the most common AFA/ UwFS causes i.e. cooking, inadequate detection systems, aerosols.
- Continued work with NWFC and call challenge policies.
- [Our Response to Automatic Fire Alarms | Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service](#)