SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
Working together for a safer Scotland

City of Glasgow

Community Safety Report

April 2023

Safety. Teamwork. Respect. Innovation.

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1. SPRING SAFETY

Over March and April, Scotland's fire service sees an increase in the number of deliberate fires across the country.

Firefighters in Scotland were called to tackle over 50 deliberately set fires every single day during Spring last year.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service crews were mobilised to a total of 3,372 incidents of deliberate fire-raising between March and April 2022.

This is an increase of 35% since 2020, when SFRS crews were turned out to 2,493 needless emergency incidents.

We will continue to work with our partners and communities to reduce these incidents as part of our Spring Thematic Action Plan (TAP).

Deliberate Fires

These fires present a danger to life, property and can have a detrimental financial impact on the Scottish economy. SFRS is appealing in particular to young people as they go on school holidays for the Easter break to consider the consequences of deliberately setting a fire.

When emergencies happen, it is vital that firefighters can quickly help people who may be trapped, seriously injured or in imminent danger. The simple fact is while SFRS are attending deliberate rubbish and refuse fires at least one of our appliances and its crew would be unavailable to respond to a real emergency, like a house fire or a road traffic collision.

SFRS need people to join Scotland's fight against fire and help ensure their community's vital fire and rescue resources are able to get to wherever they are needed.

Parents and carers have a responsibility to know what their children are doing and to keep them safe from fire.

For more information download our Deliberate Fires leaflet from our website.

Wildfires and Grassland Fires

Communities, tourists and visitors should be aware of the heightened risk of fire at this time of year and people should act safely and responsibly and follow the countryside code. The best protection against loss, damage or injury due to wildfire and grassland fire is prevention.

Information and advice is readily available about preventing countryside fires, such as the Muirburn Code, which applies to the controlled burning of heather within the permitted season period.

One of the most important things you can do to protect your home is to create a safety zone around it, extending out for at least 10 metres in all directions. A safety zone, is a well planned, well maintained area that is as free as possible of combustible materials that could support the spread of a wildfire. It doesn't mean you need to strip the land of any vegetation and cover it in concrete.

For more information download our Wildfires leaflet from our website.

Fly-tipping, Rubbish and Refuse Fires

Fly-tipping is not only illegal, it's a fire hazard for our communities. We need the public to report large amounts of waste by contacting their local authority. In particular, be careful not to store bins or sacks up against your home as fire can quickly spread to buildings.

Refuse bags, combustible materials or items of furniture shouldn't ever be stored in common areas such as stairways, corridors or drying rooms within a building. By keeping these areas clear it will protect your escape routes and reduce the risk of deliberate fires.

2. UNWANTED FIRE ALARM SIGNALS (UFAS)

Fire Alarm Systems provide an early warning of fire and are one of the most effective ways to keep your business, staff and customers safe in the event of a fire.

Unfortunately, most signals from these systems are not actual fires – they are false alarms often caused by cooking fumes, dust or a lack of maintenance. These unwanted fire alarm signals (UFAS) mean our fire crews are called out unnecessarily.

What's changing?

From 1 July 2023, we will stop attending automatic fire alarm (AFA) call outs to commercial business and workplace premises, such as factories, offices, shops and leisure facilities unless a fire has been confirmed.

Our control room operators will now be asking anyone who reports a fire alarm to check whether there is an actual fire or signs of fire, before sending the nearest resource.

This does not apply to sleeping premises, such as hospitals, care homes, hotels or domestic dwellings.

This change follows the SFRS Public Consultation in 2021.

It is estimated that this change will greatly reduce unnecessary call outs which will free up capacity to increase our operational availability, undertake more community safety prevention work and to upskill our staff.

What do I need to do next?

- As a dutyholder you must ensure that your premises are safe for staff, visitors and occupants in the event of a fire. You have a responsibility under the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 to maintain the facilities and equipment provided. Failure to do this could lead to prosecution.
- Staff and occupants should be made aware of how to respond safely to AFA activations in each premises. It is recommended that you read the guidance Investigating Fire Alarms prepared by the Fire Industry Association. Ignoring them or assuming the fire and rescue service has been notified could put people at risk.
- You should contact your insurance company to discuss the changes in response to AFA activations, but please note that SFRS will always attend a confirmed fire.
- If there is a fire you should always call 999 immediately and follow other specific strategies, such as evacuation and assembly points.

How you can help to reduce false or unwanted alarms

As a dutyholder, you have a responsibility under the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 to maintain the facilities and equipment provided. Failure to do this could lead to prosecution.

We fully support the installation of automatic fire alarm systems, but these systems must be fully managed and maintained to reduce false alarms and ensure that they activate at the right time and achieve the correct response.

You must work with your fire risk assessor and update your fire risk assessment with any changes.

We have two initiatives in place to assist with reducing instances of UFAS. 'TAKE5' and 'BE AWARE' are simple and effective ways of delivering key information to staff and guests, allowing them to consider their actions in buildings.

Other key steps include:

- Reviewing your Fire Safety Risk Assessment and keeping a log of all false alarms to identify any trends which should be raised with your alarm engineers.
- Creating an action plan to reduce the chance of any false alarm occurring
- Check detector types and their locations – would moving detectors or changing the type used reduce activations? Seek advice from your alarm engineer.
- Upgrading automatic fire detection (AFD) systems that are obsolete with more modern technology e.g. 'multi-sensing' detectors
- Fitting manual call points with protective plastic covers in problem, vulnerable or high traffic areas
- Ascertaining whether any false alarms are a result of activating the wrong call points such as green emergency door release points
- Keeping AFD systems appropriately maintained
- Considering whether a link to an Alarm Receiving Centre is necessary or if it is appropriate to suspend the automatic dialling function whilst buildings are occupied or at certain times of the day
- Seeking further guidance and advice from their alarm system provider or servicing agent as well as their local legislative fire safety officer

Reducing Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals - Time for Change - Dutyholder Event

On Monday, 20 February 2023, we held a virtual dutyholder engagement event where 253 attendees joined our session to receive guidance and advice in order to help them to reduce Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) ahead of our change in response from 1 July 2023.

This virtual event was the first external engagement to support workplaces to prevent false alarms by working with those who have a responsibility for fire safety to understand their legal obligations.

We had a full and comprehensive agenda where we offered support and guidance on considerations for fire protection, limiting false alarms, training staff and other relevant measures.

Dutyholders heard from Colin Todd, a leading industry fire and safety expert, who provided guidance and Fire Risk Assessor considerations. We heard from Glasgow Life, a charity-based organisation, who has already prepared for the change and lastly, we heard from Glasgow City Council's Alarm Receiving Centre as to what support and capabilities they can offer dutyholders.

Attendees were encouraged to direct any unanswered questions to their local fire safety office.

The dutyholder event was recorded and has been made available on our SFRS YouTube channel as an information tool, as well as for accessibility purposes for those unable to attend on the day.

What are the benefits of reducing false alarms?

- Each false alarm can lead people to become complacent when they hear the fire alarm.
- There is a cost to you as a business from productive time lost.
- SFRS will not be diverted from other emergencies, training and other prevention and protection work.
- Blue light responses lead to road accidents, so any reduction means less risk on our roads.

Please visit our website for more information and links to supporting resources.

3. MAKE THE CALL CAMPAIGN



Scotland's firefighters are calling on communities to help stop preventable deaths in house fires – by making a five-minute phone call.

Make the Call is a hard-hitting appeal to carers, family, friends and of those who are at risk of serious injury or even death because of an accidental fire in their home.

SFRS is appealing to communities across Scotland to help save a life and consider home fire safety when checking in on vulnerable neighbours, patients, friends and family members during and to put them in touch with SFRS wherever possible using the free Home Fire Safety Visit phoneline.

As part of our commitment to building a safer Scotland we offer everyone in Scotland a free home fire safety visit. We'll help you sort out a fire escape plan and provide information about smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms.

Contact us:

0800 0731 999 | Text "FIRE" to 80800 from your mobile phone