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| wyfrsLANDSCAPELogo | | | Fire Safety – Public Advice | | | |
| Fire Alarm Checklist & Advice | | | |
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**Fire Safety Law – Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 – Fire Alarms**

Under the above legislation the ‘Responsible Person’ for the premises must ensure that any fire detection and warning systems installed are covered by a suitable system of management and maintenance and are maintained by a competent person in efficient working order and in good repair for it to be considered fit for purpose.

If your system produces persistent false alarms it may be considered not fit for purpose and therefore not compliant with the legislation.

Find below a check list which could help in ensuring that your fire alarm and detection equipment is performing within acceptable limits.

**Checklist**

Is there a person delegated who has responsibility for the fire alarm system

Is the fire alarm serviced and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions and British Standard by a competent person (West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service recommends/promotes the use of 3rd party UKAS certification schemes for fire alarm companies as a means of demonstrating competence)

Are any faults dealt with quickly and efficiently?

Is the system effectively managed to prevent false alarms & unwanted fire signals i.e. when testing, contractors on site etc. (See later guidance in this note).

Are records kept of all testing, servicing and causes of false alarms?

(Keeping such records will aid in proving compliance with the law)

Are all false alarms investigated to identify the cause of the actuation?

Is remedial action taken to prevent any reoccurrence of the false alarm?

**Boxes above should contain a tick otherwise an alarm system review should take place.**

For more information on reducing false alarms see the ‘Short Guide’ attached or visit the Fire Industry Association’s website: <http://www.fia.uk.com/en/cut-false-alarm-costs/index.cfm>

For more information regarding fire alarms and the law go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities/who-is-responsible>

**Short Guide to Reducing False Alarms & Unwanted Fire Signals from Automatic Fire Alarm Systems**

*(Intended for use by persons responsible for fire detection and fire alarm systems and fire safety management)*

**A false alarm -** is an actuation of a fire alarm system resulting from a cause other than a fire

**An unwanted fire signal -** is when that false alarm is passed to the fire service

**1 -** **Main Causes of False Alarms / Unwanted Fire Signals**

**Cooking Fumes** – being detected by a detector in an adjacent area e.g. a smoke detector located in a corridor outside a kitchen.

**Steam and aerosol sprays** – activating smoke detectors

**Contamination of detector** – by ingress of insects, dust etc. This can change the sensitivity of the detector and cause false activations.

**Incorrect type of detector** – used to protect an area. A typical example is where a room protected with a smoke detector has its use changed and a toaster or kettle is introduced.

**Contractors working on site** – causing dust or electrical disturbances which affect the fire alarm system.

**Failure to notify the alarm monitoring centre** – when the system is being tested or maintained.

**Unsatisfactory maintenance / testing programme** – where detectors are rarely cleaned and serviced.

**Incorrect siting of a detector** – in an area where excessive air movement due to mechanical heating, ventilation or open windows prevail.

**Lack of effective management** – in taking responsibility for the fire alarm system, being proactive and reactive to causes of false alarms and managing an initial investigation into the cause of an alarm before the fire & rescue service are called (investigation is inappropriate for Residential Care Premises).

**Human activity** – the biggest cause of false alarms, people need to be made aware of their actions and responsibilities with regards to fire alarm and detection systems

**2 - Ways to Minimise False Alarms Occurring**

**CORRECT DESIGN** – installation, commissioning, acceptance, maintenance and management of the system should minimise false alarms.

**COOKING** – **Only** done in designated areas

**Appropriate** detectors in kitchen (normally heat)

**Adequate** extraction / ventilation

**Adjacent** detectors should NOT be ionisation – use optical/multi sensor

**Doors** not wedged open – consider use of an open door alarm

**Provision** of local mains, self-contained smoke detectors to warn occupants of smoke prior to main system actuating

**Toasters** - only used in designated areas

**Approved Toasters** - wired into mains or a non-standard plug

**Toasters** - use conveyor type, less likely to burn

**CONTRACTORS** – **Appropriate** permit to work

**Isolation** of area or take system ‘off line’

**Schedule** of work to contain details of how contractor will prevent false alarms

**Cover** detectors (uncover when completed for day)

**Hot work** – Risk assessed to include false alarms

**Management** controls to review performance

**Penalty** clauses

**STEAM -**  **Vents** and extraction to be adequate

**Placing** of detectors, can they be moved further away

**Type** of detectors – use optical/multi sensor/heat

**SMOKING -**  **Be** aware of illicit smoking

**Design** of smoking areas

**MANUAL CALL** **Is** it needed  
**POINT -**  **Can** it be moved

**Use** of lift covers / flaps to be considered

**Audible** warning boxes could be fitted

**Key** operated systems may be suitable

**Consider the use of coincidence alarms** - in certain areas where the activation of a detector would need to be backed up by another activation of an adjacent detector before the alarm system entered full alarm mode. This offers a more reliable arrangement in circumstances when environmental effects can readily cause false alarms, without an increase of risk in the protected area.

**3 - Ways to Minimise False Alarms Being Passed to the Fire & Rescue Service (F&Rs)**

(Subject to a Review of the Fire Risk Assessment)

**The following sections are not appropriate for Residential Care Premises**

***For Remotely Monitored Fire Alarm Systems***

**Taking the Automatic Fire Detection (AFD) system ‘Off Line’** – during the times when the premises are fully occupied. This would then allow for a suitable investigation of an actuation and contacting the fire service via the 999/112 public telephone system confirming a fire.

It is particularly recommended when contractors are on site.

One recommended variation could be that when the system is ‘off line’ the operation of a manual call point would still pass the signal to the Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC).

**Use of a transmission delay / call filtering** - This would allow for an investigation to confirm a fire, prior to the signal being automatically passed to the F&RS via the ARC.

Note – Consultation with all relevant enforcing authorities and your insurance company should be undertaken when considering transmission delays & call filtering

***All Fire Alarm Systems***

**Investigating the cause of a fire alarm actuation** - Whenever possible, all activations of the fire detection system should be investigated to confirm signs of fire.

Most fire alarm systems work on identifying zones in which a detector has actuated, (modern systems can even identify a particular detector head or call point)

In many premises when using this information it should be possible to determine if anyone in the vicinity of the zone has observed signs of fire. If so a 999 call can be made to confirm a fire.

If there are no reports of signs of fire, it should be possible to send suitably trained personnel, with communications, to check the area more thoroughly for signs of fire e.g. smell, smoke, sounds, heat. Remember they are looking for signs of fire, not a fire itself…..

**If there is any evidence, suspicion or doubt,**

**exit the premises and call the fire service.**

**Regardless of the method for alerting the fire & rescue service** - once a fire alarm is sounding at the premises, an evacuation in accordance with the Risk Assessment should take place.