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Date: 22 September 2023

Dear Mr Fogelman

I write in regard to a change in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) response to Automatic Fire Alarm signals (AFAs) which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023.

This was implemented following a significant consultation and engagement process to address the burden of responding to an average of 28,000 false alarms every year. By implementing the change to our operational response model, this will allow the SFRS to free up resources to be able to respond to real emergencies.

This change impacts premises where alarm installers have installed an AFA system and requires that correct premises information is passed to our Operations Control colleagues in the processing of the fire alarm signal by an Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC).

Our Operations Control will “call challenge” all calls originating from an AFA source to determine if there is a fire or sign of fire. This does not apply to sleeping risk premises.

Since the launch of our change in response, we have received a significant number of calls from ARCs with ambiguous or inaccurate premises information, affecting our ability to respond appropriately. Specific issues relate to:

- Inaccurate or incomplete address information
- ARCs are unable to state if the premises are sleeping risks
- ARCs stating premises are sleeping risks when they are not

**There is an urgent need** to ensure ARCs have the correct address details and can accurately advise us if the premises have a sleeping risk occupancy type.

Having engaged with ARCs directly, we understand that they are instructed by alarm installers on the address and occupancy details to pass.

We are reaching out to you in the hope that you instruct your installer membership to ensure that the correct premises details of AFA systems installed (including that a sleeping risk exists, where appropriate) are provided during the processing of alarm signals to SFRS.

**Failing to do so may result in a delayed response by SFRS.**

Under the Fire Scotland Act 2005, SFRS as the enforcing authority, has no legal obligation to attend a business or workplace when an automatic alarm is activated. It is the person(s) with fire safety

responsibilities in the building - known as the dutyholder – who must ensure the safe evacuation of people from the building and investigate the cause of the alarm before summoning the Fire and Rescue Service.

Dutyholders' have a responsibility to ensure adequate fire safety arrangements are in place in their premises and to limit false alarms and unwanted fire alarm signals.

**Alarm Installers and Alarm Receiving Centres have a key role in this dutyholder compliance.**

Please note SFRS will treat any fire alarm as a sign of fire, other than from a single smoke detector. Obvious signs of fire include: visual flame, smell of smoke/burning. Other factors SFRS would consider a sign of fire, include those provided by a technological solution through the form of an activation of fire detection technology, an example of them are, but not limited to.

- a multi sensor detector
- heat detector
- sprinkler
- manual call point;
- or where at least two or more smoke detectors have actuated.

Signals from detection devices must clearly eliminate single smoke detector activations, the source of the majority of false alarms.

We understand that many ARCs do not currently receive signals from AFA systems which determine the source of activation. SFRS have accepted technological solutions to allow dutyholders to manage their premises alarm actuations and are advising dutyholders to consult alarm installers and ARCs to establish the suitability of their system.

We would welcome and encourage your clients to undertake a review of the call processing and filtering arrangements to ensure that passing signals between premises and ARCs to SFRS is robust, unambiguous, and accurate to enable us to respond to real fires as quickly as possible.

Our [website](#) has comprehensive information on our change in response to Automatic Fire Alarms Signals.

We would be grateful if you could disseminate this information to all your Alarm Installers and to encourage them to follow us across our social media platforms.

Thank you for your support and assistance.

Kind regards



**IAIN MACLEOD  
DEPUTY ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER  
HEAD OF PREVENTION & PROTECTION**

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