

Humberside Fire and Rescue Service
Summary of Remotely Monitored Fire Alarm Systems Policy

Humberside Fire and Rescue Service have been working with other organisations to reduce the number of false alarms from Remotely Monitored Fire Alarm Systems (RMFAS) and have now developed and implemented a policy to deal with this issue. The policy is based on a nationally accepted model agreement drawn up by the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and endorsed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister ; www.odpm.gov.uk and is part of a strategy to utilise the Fire and Rescue resources in the most effective manner.

The policy implements a progressive registration of RMFAS with HFRS. This registration enables HFRS to gather information on the size and scope of the system and risk it is protecting. HFRS will issue a '*unique reference number*' (URN) for use by the alarm-receiving centre to identify the premises when a fire signal is passed to the Command and Control Centre. Also the issuing of a URN significantly reduces the call handling time and consequently produces a more rapid response by the Fire and Rescue Service.

The policy requires that RMFAS are maintained to appropriate British Standards and Codes of Practise and from 1 April 2008 new systems will be designed, installed, commissioned and maintained to appropriate British Standards and Codes of Practise by a third party 3rd party certificated company.

It is also a requirement of the policy that users take responsibility for their system and their duties under current legislation and British Standards. The Fire and Rescue Service may use their statutory enforcement powers to ensure this takes place.

The policy will be introduced in phases (see annex B of the HFRS policy) with the systems that cause a false alarm requiring to be registered first. A summary of the phased implementation plan is shown below:

From 1st April 2006

- Users of remotely monitored fire alarm systems that have a false alarm will be required to register for a URN.
- Systems which require a URN will have to be "maintained" by a fire alarm maintenance company, as detailed in British Standard (BS) 5839 – 1: 2002 – *Fire detection and fire alarm systems for buildings*, with reference to '*a competent person*'.
- The system shall have a nominated "*responsible person*" who is responsible for the operation, user maintenance and management of the fire alarm system, and who is the focal point in your premises for all matters pertaining to the fire alarm system. The duties of the "*Responsible person*" are detailed in British Standard (BS) 5839 – 1: 2002 – *Fire detection and fire alarm systems for buildings*, Section 7 – *User responsibilities*. Your fire alarm maintenance company will have a copy of this standard, and a shortened version of the duties is included in the Public Advice Note No. 0001 "Fire Alarms - General", and Public Advice Note No. 0002 "Fire Alarms - False Alarms from Automatic Fire Detection Equipment", and the full HFRS policy will be available from the 1st April 2006 on our web site www.humbersidefire.gov.uk
- There should be at least 2 keyholders (who may or may not be the "*responsible person*", trained to operate the fire alarm, **and must be able to attend the premises within 20 minutes and be contactable by telephone and preferably with their own transport**. The keyholders shall also have the ability to gain access to all areas of the premises. The keyholder shall be able to fully operate and reset the fire alarm system. Where the Fire and Rescue Service hold personal information relating to you and your keyholders in connection with your remotely monitored fire alarm system, the requirements of The Data Protection Act 1998 will be strictly adhered too.

Note; The Fire and Rescue Service attends all remotely monitored alarm activations and upon arrival at the premises will carry out a dynamic risk assessment of the scene to determine if there is a fire. If there are signs of fire or any suspicion that it is a genuine alarm the Fire and Rescue Service may

forcibly enter the premises in the absence of a keyholder, and commence firefighting action as necessary. Where there are no signs of fire the Fire and Rescue Service will endeavour to remain at the scene for not less than twenty minutes (where possible) pending the arrival of the keyholder but cannot be committed to remain thereafter. It is your responsibility to ensure the keyholder is given the relevant training to carry out the role including what to do upon arrival if the Fire and Rescue Service have already left the scene.

WITHDRAWAL OF OUR RESPONSE TO EXCESSIVE FALSE ACTIVATIONS PASSED BY THE REMOTELY MONITORED FIRE ALARM SYSTEMS (RMFAS)

The policy includes monitoring of all false activations passed by the Remotely Monitored Fire Alarm Systems (RMFAS), should an unacceptable level of false alarms persist, it may be necessary to consider the withdrawal of our response to activations from that RMFAS unless confirmation that there is a fire is received from another source (i.e. telephone call).

Note; receipt of a call to a confirmed fire will always result in a full attendance based upon a risk assessment of the danger to life and fire fighting needs relevant to your premises.

Should this withdrawal of response occur the owner/occupier of the premises is advised to contact their insurance company and fire alarm maintenance company and inform them of the withdrawal of this facility as soon as possible.

Following a reduction in attendance response level and after visit from the Fire and Rescue Service you will be required to prepare a plan to reduce the number of false alarms and to carry out any remedial action in conjunction with your fire alarm system maintainer to resolve the false alarm issue. Once this has been completed and the amount of false alarms falls to an acceptable level you should apply to the Fire and Rescue Service to restore your system to the higher level of attendance.

The Fire and Rescue Service may use their **statutory enforcement powers** if they do not deem the action plan is likely to solve the false alarm issue.

From 1st April 2007

- All maintenance companies maintaining systems which have an URN will be required to be a member of a 3rd party UKAS certificated inspectorate which has the scope for the CFOA approved fire system schemes in their scope.
- All ARCs sending alarms to fire and rescue service mobilising centres to be 3rd party UKAS certified to abridged BS 5979: 2000 (see CFOA Policy, Annex F clause F.3 iii.)

From 1st April 2008

- Any system without a URN may have to register for an URN.
- All new systems to be designed, installed and commissioned by a 3rd party certificated company with BS 5839 Pt 1 within their scope.

CFOA promotes 3rd party UKAS certification schemes as a means of demonstrating competence. The list of schemes recognised by CFOA for designing, installation, commissioning and maintenance are listed in Annex E of the CFOA policy.

In brief, the current CFOA approved schemes are:

For design, installation, commissioning and maintenance:

- BAFE adopted LPS 1014 – *Requirements for certificated fire detection and alarm systems*
- BAFE adopted SP 203 – *for the design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of fire detection, alarm and suppression systems.*
- LPS 1048 – *Requirements for certificated sprinkler installers, supervising bodies and supervised installers.*

For monitoring are:

- LPS 1020 – *Requirements for alarm receiving centres*

HFRS Summary of Remotely Monitored Fire Alarm Systems - FS PAN 03

- BS 5979:2000- *Code of Practice for remote centres receiving signals from security systems.*

Alarm Receiving Centres (ARC)

The ARC is typically a commercial organisation that monitors the status of security and / or fire alarm calls from protected premises in a continuously manned remote centre.

The ARC has to meet specified standards of competence, and as recommended by the ODPM, is usually licensed by the individual fire authority to be permitted to pass calls from fire alarms through to the Fire & Rescue Service Control room via ex-directory telephone lines.

The ARC shall be certificated and subsequently inspected by a UKAS accredited third party certification body with the approved CFOA scheme within their scope of accreditation.

The ARC has certain obligations under the new HFRS RMFAS policy:

- Annex F of the HFRS Policy refers to certification schemes for ARCs, and covers requirements for social alarm receiving centres.
- ARCs shall be managed by a competent person and operated by a minimum of 2 competent persons at all times.
- ARC operators will filter signals from domestic premises by calling the premises.
- If the ARC received information from the occupier of the protected premises that the call is a false alarm, the ARC will advise the F&RS.
- **From April 2007, social alarm receiving centres passing fire signals to the fire and rescue service shall meet the requirements of a certification scheme for assessment against selected clauses of BS 5979:2000.**

FIRE ALARM COMPANY MAINTAINERS

From the 1st April 2005 all fire alarm company maintainers will be required to comply with BS 5839 Pt 1 2002 or equivalent for the means of minimising false alarms. This coupled with the CFOA requirement that all systems issued with a URN should be maintained by persons competent to do so. Thereby ensuring that your company is inspected by a 3rd party UKAS accredited inspectorate with the required CFOA approved scope is a means of showing compliance to the CFOA requirements.

It is important that you are fully conversant with the requirements of the CFOA policy so that you understand what CFOA expects as customers will contact you to discuss their fire alarm system, if they have had an excessive number of false alarms. They will need to solve their false alarm problem to stop a reduction in the fire and rescue response Level to activations from their fire alarm system. Full details of the policy are available on the Chief Fire Officers Association web site, at www.cfoa.org.uk.

Conclusion

If you comply with the above advice you will be assisting the fire and rescue service in providing a more efficient and effective service to the community, failure to do so, may result in a reduction of attendance to your premises and/or result in enforcement action being taken against you under current Fire Safety Legislation. A fire alarm system that is generating an unacceptable number of false calls is doing so because of a reason, and thus may not be considered to be suitable and sufficient in the circumstances. The reasons can be identified and appropriate modifications made, whether to the fire alarm system, practices and processes or behaviour of people, and the Fire and Rescue Service will be pleased to assist you in resolving these matters as expediently as possible. It is in everyone's interest that your fire alarm system performs as it is designed to do, and as a result raises the alarm only when it should do so.

Each application for a Unique Reference Number is subject to an administration fee payable by the system user of £35.00, inclusive of VAT. All remotely monitoring fire alarm system monitoring

HFRS Summary of Remotely Monitored Fire Alarm Systems - FS PAN 03

centres operating under this policy must utilise a dedicated ex-directory lines nominated by each fire brigade. An access fee may be chargeable and will be recovered as an annual fee.

Note: These administration charges do not represent a charge for our attendance at fire alarm calls, nor do they form a contract with the occupier of the premises for response to calls.

More information regarding approved companies can be obtained from ;

NSI (National Security Inspectorate)
Tel No 0870 2050000
www.nsi.org.uk

LPCB (Loss Prevention Certification Board)
Tel No 01923 664100
www.redbooklive.com

SSAIB (Security Systems & Alarms Inspection Board)
Tel No 0191 2963242
www.ssaib.org

Other useful links

CFOA (Chief Fire Officers Association)
Tel No 01827 302300
www.cfoa.org.uk

BFPSA (British Fire Protection Systems Association)
Tel No 020 8549 5855
www.bfpsa.org.uk