



On Tuesday, 1 April 2014, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service commenced charging to recover the costs associated with attending persistent false alarm calls generated by automatic fire alarm systems and fire detection systems. You are receiving this guidance note as your premises has had a false alarm that may result in a charge being issued

The Service will recover costs for the fourth false alarm attended within a twelve month period and for all subsequent false alarm call outs. This will not apply to domestic properties but will apply to properties where the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies to either all or part of the premises. The charge per actuation is based on the cost of a fire appliance for up to 1 hour as detailed in the scale of special service calls.

Why charge?

The charging scheme has been introduced as part of the Services approach to reduce unnecessary calls and encourage better management and maintenance of automatic fire alarm systems.

Even when appropriate measures are in place, false alarms will occur. However, a false alarm is not necessarily a reason in itself to call the emergency services and if they occur regularly, action should be taken to prevent the Service being called out unnecessarily.

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is not required to attend calls that are made solely because a fire alarm system has actuated. Poor alarm management means fire-fighters regularly attend false alarms at the same location, meaning resources are being misused and the consequences include:

- An unnecessary risk to the public and fire-fighters from blue light attendance
- A reduction in capacity to attend real emergency incidents
- An impact on the Service's ability to carry out community safety work
- Interruption to essential training for fire-fighters
- And often – a considerable cost/impact at the site itself

What we want fire alarm system owners to do

Owners / persons responsible for the fire alarm system should have arrangements in place that include:

- Where the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order applies, carry out the required fire safety risk assessment. This should include an emergency plan that explains the action to be taken in the event the fire alarm actuates.
- An appropriate maintenance contract should be in place, including action to identify the cause of false alarms and reduce such incidents as necessary.

- Review false alarm incidents to identify and resolve issues, particular where they have a common cause or a single event is triggering repeated false alarms over a particular period of time.
- Ensure the fire alarm is designed and installed appropriately for the use of the premises. Make appropriate changes as necessary.
- Staff training should ensure that all staff follow the agreed process when responding to an alarm incident.
- Consider an on-site filtering process that prevents false alarms from being transmitted to emergency services unnecessarily.
- Where an alarm monitoring company is employed, co-operate with them to make use of call-back facilities if appropriate; share information on incident data, ensure key holders can attend an incident in good time.
- If you have good reason to suspect a fire other than from the actuation of the fire alarm, for instance signs of smoke and you cannot readily identify the cause, sound the alarm and call 999. If this turned out to be a false alarm, it would not be considered a chargeable call.
- In the event of a fire, always make a call confirming the fire to 999.

What West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service do?

Around 52% of all of the calls attended by West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service are to false alarms. In 2013 we attended over 11,000 calls to false alarms and 328 premises called us out more than 3 times equating to over 3128 mobilisations. We have managed to significantly reduce the number of false alarms we attend but the fact remains that the actual number still remains high.

When taking 999 calls about a fire alarm actuating, our control operators may ask callers if they can confirm the reason for the alarm to find out whether or not there is a real emergency. We will continue to attend genuine emergencies and send a full fire response to calls of confirmed fire.

People responsible for automatic alarm systems have an obligation to make sure that, when it activates, there is sufficient reason to call on the assistance of the emergency services - particularly where there is a history of false alarm incidents. We do not want to attend unnecessary calls to false alarm incidents.

Let us help you

We can help you and provide advice on reducing calls to false alarm incidents. Please contact our Fire Protection team on 0113 3875738 or by emailing: fire.safety@westyorkshire.gov.uk

If you have received an invoice from West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority, for attending a false alarm, you can appeal against the charge if there are reasonable grounds to do so by following the appeals process.