



Public Consultation Document Summary Unwanted Fire Signals Cost Recovery Guidance

1. Introduction

- **Purpose:** The guidance aims to mitigate the impact of false alarms and outlines a charging system to recover costs incurred by the fire service.
- **Objective:** Encourage proper management of fire detection systems in line with safety regulations to reduce the number of false alarms.

2. Unwanted Fire Signals

- Unwanted fire signals (UFS), particularly from automatic fire alarm systems (AFA), have increased due to factors such as the rise of student accommodation, new building developments, and regulatory changes. These incidents impose significant strain on LFRS resources.
- Statistics show a rising trend in UFS, which constituted around 30% of all incidents attended by LFRS in recent years.

Financial year	April 21 – March 22	April 22 – March 23	April 23 – March 24
Total calls Attended	8263	9444	9345
Automatic fire alarms attended	2366	2680	2860
Percentage of Automatic fire alarms	28.63%	28.37%	30.60%

Table of total number of incidents LFRs attended per financial year and total number of Automatic fire alarms attended.

3. Legal Framework

- The power to charge for false alarms is derived from the **Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004**, as amended by the **Localism Act 2011**.
- Charges can be levied on **non-domestic** premises for persistent false alarms caused by malfunctioning or poorly maintained fire detection systems.

4. Impact and Rationale for Cost Recovery

- **Benefits:** Improved fire alarm management, better emergency responses, reduced risk to firefighters and the public, less financial burden on LFRS, and higher service availability.
- **Challenges:** False alarms divert resources, disrupt routine operations, and create risks during emergency responses.

5. Cost Calculation

- The cost of attendance is set at £55 per firefighter, plus additional charges for the fire appliance (over 2 tons), with a total recovery sum of **£338.80 plus VAT** for each incident.
- Charges apply only to the first attending appliance, even if multiple are dispatched.

6. Application of Cost Recovery

- The process applies to all **non-domestic premises** covered by the **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005**.
- Premises will be charged starting from the ninth UFS within a rolling 12-month period.

- Invoices will be issued to the responsible person or the owner/operator of the fire alarm system within 28 working days, and there is an appeal process available.

7. Appeals Process

- Appeals can be lodged if the responsible party believes the charges are unjustified due to non-compliance with the chargeable criteria.
- Appeals must be submitted in writing within 28 days and will be reviewed by the Area Manager for Community Risk.

8. Monitoring and Review

- LFRS will audit the cost recovery process every three years, or when significant changes occur, to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with evolving standards.

9. Conclusion

This consultation aims to balance fire safety needs with operational efficiency, encouraging better fire alarm system management through cost recovery for false alarms, which in turn should reduce the unnecessary use of fire service resources.

The full guidance document can be found below.

To reply to the consultation please use the survey [HERE](#) or for further information please email: firesafety.advisors@leics-fire.gov.uk



LEICESTERSHIRE
FIRE and RESCUE SERVICE

Fire Protection Department

LEICESTERSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS COST RECOVERY GUIDANCE
CONSULTATION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This guidance document is designed to reduce the impact of 'Fire False Alarm' calls or unwanted fire signals generated from automatic fire detection systems in premises by proposing a charging procedure for Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service to adopt.
- 1.2 This guidance will outline the rationale for implementing a cost recovery process and detail the criteria as to which premises are identified for cost recovery and how this can be applied.
- 1.3 Leicestershire fire & rescue service (LFRS) categorise a "False Alarm" as on receiving notification of a "fire Alarm" through the fire control room and subsequently on investigation by the fire service in attendance as no fire present. False alarms include calls made from persons that at the time of calling the fire service had a genuine concern that fire was present. In this circumstance LFRS determine this as a "false Alarm Good Intent". If the cause for alarm is believed to be disingenuous, this is recorded as "false Alarm malicious intent". There are several subcategories that fall under "false alarms" within the incident recording system and control mobilising software.
- 1.4 LFRS recognize the value of fire detection in protecting people from serious injury from fire. LFRS objective through cost recovery process is to encourage proper use and management of these systems in accordance with the relevant legislation and codes of practice to ensure that those responsible have a suitable system with appropriate management processes in place to reduce the number of false alarms caused by these fire alarm systems. Additionally, where there is a persistent concern with automatic Fire alarm and detection systems generating false alarms and where it is appropriate to do so, ensure that filtering is applied to prevent unnecessary calls being made to LFRS
- 1.5 Fire alarms which actuate when there is no fire can be an indication of poor fire safety management, including lack of maintenance of alarm systems in the premises, those false alarms that result in an attendance by the fire service with a specific pre-determined attendance which could be four pumping appliances to a high rise for example and these have a significant impact on the use of operational resources.
- 1.6 work has been carried out in relation to UFS (unwanted Fire Signals) previously and a downward trend in our attendance to these incidents has been seen however the numbers of UFS has now been on a steady rise due to a number of factors which includes but is not limited to: -

- More student accommodation
- Cost of living
- Pre pandemic business struggles
- More purpose-built flats being built
- Relaxing of some building regulations and planning requirements
- More buildings in general being converted or constructed on the ever-changing landscape and demand for housing locally in the city and county, many of these proposals will include flats.

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- 1.7 The inclusion of suitable automatic fire detection in certain circumstances within the Building Regulations (as amended) and the requirements imposed on certain types of premises under fire safety legislation, Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended) means that the potential for fire false alarms will continue to increase year on year. Therefore, there must be a robust procedure in place to ensure that sites giving rise to persistent UFS (false alarms) are identified and remedial action taken if Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service to continue reduce of UFS received each year. It should be noted that Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service has a new updated unwanted fire signals procedure and implementation for cost recovery has been included within that procedure.

2.0 POWER TO INTRODUCE COST RECOVERY

- 2.1 The legal basis for charging comes from the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (FRSA) as amended by the Localism Act 2011.
- 2.2 The Authority has no legal power to make a profit from any charges. Section 18A (5) of the FRSA says *"In setting the amount of the charge an FRA must secure that, taking one financial year with another, the authority's income from charges does not exceed the cost to the authority of taking the action for which the charges are imposed."*
- 2.3 The Localism Act has also amended the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 by

introducing a new power, which allows the Fire Authority to charge for attendance at unwanted fire signals due to an automatic fire alarm (AFA).

2.4 Section 18C of the FRSA 2004 states

Cases where a charge may be made for responding to report of fire etc

- (1) This section applies for the purposes of section 18B (3 of the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004.
- (2) This section applies to a report of fire, or explosion, at sea or under the sea.
- (3) This section applies to a report of fire if—
 - (a) the report is of fire at premises that are **not domestic** premises,
 - (b) the **report is false**,
 - (c) **the report is made as a direct or indirect result of warning equipment having malfunctioned or not been installed to relevant codes of practice**, and
 - (d) there is a **persistent problem with false reports** of fire at the premises that are made as a direct or indirect result of warning equipment under common control having malfunctioned or subject to poor maintenance.
- (4) The references in subsection (2) to “sea” are not restricted to the territorial sea of the United Kingdom.
- (5) In subsection (3)—

“Domestic premises” means premises occupied as a private dwelling (including any garden, yard, garage, outhouse or other appurtenance of such premises which is not used in common by the occupants of more than one such dwelling);

“Warning equipment” means equipment installed for the purpose of—

 - (a) detecting fire, or
 - (b) raising the alarm, or enabling the alarm to be raised, in the event of fire.

(FRSA 2004)

A domestic premises is also defined under the Fire Safety Order in application to premises: -

Application to premises

3.(1) This Order does not apply in relation to —

- (a) domestic premises, except to the extent mentioned in article 31(10);
- (b) an offshore installation within the meaning of regulation 3 of the Offshore Installation and Pipeline Works (Management and Administration) Regulations 1995⁽¹⁾;
- (c) a ship, in respect of the normal ship-board activities of a ship's crew which are carried out solely by the crew under the direction of the master;
- (d) fields, woods or other land forming part of an agricultural or forestry undertaking but which is not inside a building and is situated away from the undertaking's main buildings;
- (e) an aircraft, locomotive or rolling stock, trailer or semi-trailer used as a means of transport or a vehicle for which a licence is in force under the Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994⁽²⁾ or a vehicle exempted from duty under that Act;
- (f) a mine within the meaning of section 180 of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954⁽³⁾, other than any building on the surface at a mine;
- (g) a borehole site to which the Borehole Sites and Operations Regulations 1995⁽⁴⁾ apply.

(2) Subject to the preceding paragraph of this article, this Order applies in relation to any premises.

4.0 **IMPACT**

4.1 The purpose of applying a cost recovery process in relation to attending persistent fire false alarms at a premises is to stimulate an improvement in the local management of automatic fire alarm systems. This is expected to have the following impact:

- An improvement in local fire alarm management practices
- An increase in the general standard of fire safety at the premises
- An improvement in the local response to potential emergency situations
- A reduction in the unnecessary burden including financial burden on fire service resources
- Reducing the likely impact of a fire service vehicle being involved in a collision while responding on blue light and sirens to an automatic fire alarm.
- An increase in the availability of appliances and staff for emergencies, training, engagement, community safety activity, business fire safety checks and fire safety audits.
- A better value Fire and Rescue Service provision to the people of Leicester,

Leicestershire, and Rutland.

4.2 Incidents that are found to be fire false alarms have a major impact on Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service and cause concern for the following reasons:

- They divert essential service resources rendering them unavailable, with the possibility of delayed attendance at genuine emergencies.
- They create unnecessary risk to fire crews and members of the public when appliances are responding under emergency conditions.
- They are disruptive to work routines, particularly community fire safety activity, arson reduction and training.
- The persons working or living in the premises become complacent and complain to the fire service generating further work.
- They impose an additional financial burden on the Service, particularly salary and vehicle fleet costs.
- They adversely impact upon the employers who release on call staff for operational duties.

5.0 Calculation of costs

5.1 The costs have been calculated as £50.00 per firefighter plus 10% administration fee. (Standard appliance will be crewed by 4 fighters). Appliance cost for a traditional appliance weighing over 2 tons.

5.2 Example Breakdown of cost recovery sum for a call out to a False Alarm for a traditional appliance with a crew of 4 firefighters.

Charge per firefighter	£55.00
Fire Appliance Over 2 Tons	£118.80

Total Cost recovery Sum **£338.80 +VAT**

Leicestershire fire and rescue will only charge for the first attending appliance. So for example if the pre-determined attendance is 4 traditional appliances due to the risk of the premises we will only charge for one and not the four.

6.0 Application of Cost Recovery

- 6.1 Cost recovery will be applied to all non-Domestic premises where the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended) applies.
- 6.2 non-domestic premises are defined in the FSO under Article 6 application to premises:
- all workplaces and commercial premises
 - all premises the public have access to
 - the common areas of multi-occupied residential buildings
- 6.3 Cost recovery will be applied to premises where, on the ninth and subsequent UFS generated over a rolling 12-month period in line with Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service Unwanted fire signals procedure where deemed appropriate
- 6.4 All invoices will be raised within 28 working days of the date of the cost recovery qualifying UFS incident
- 6.5 The invoice will be issued to the responsible person as defined under the Fire safety Order. If this person is not readily identified, the invoice may be raised against the owner/operator of the fire alarm system.
- 6.6 The Group Manager for Fire Protection will be responsible for scrutinising any UFSs that result in an activation of Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service cost recovery process.
- 6.7 There will be a separate route to appeal should the responsible person(s) disagree with the Fire and Rescue Service calls or the causes. This can be submitted in writing to Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service, the grounds for appeal will be considered by the Area Manager for Community Risk. Please see Appendix A.
- 6.8 UFS incidents will be attributed to a premises type and Fire Protection number contained within the community fire risk management information system. (CFRMIS) which is unique to that premises or site. For the purposes of cost recovery, UFSs will be effectively assigned to a premises. Where they are multiple blocks on site LFRS will ensure the UFS is recorded against the correct premises. if these are not under the control of the same responsible person. **To be recognised as a different premises on a site it is necessary that the other buildings under that postcode do not share a common alarm system or a linked alarm system or shared fire alarm management practices.** Where there is a question over which address is responsible for the UFS appropriate investigation will be carried out by Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service in conjunction with responsible persons from that site.
- 6.9 To ensure that invoices are correctly issued, FP numbers will be issued on the invoice similar to all correspondence that is sent from Fire Protection to premises.

7.0 Audit, Monitoring & Quality Assurance

- 7.1 The Fire Protection Team will perform an internal organisational audit of this procedure if adopted and related procedures/guidance every three years or if a change in circumstances occurs.
- 7.2 Any recommendations resulting from reviews and audits will be incorporated into the existing policy and related procedures/guidance.

8.0 FURTHER READING

- CFOA/NFCC Policy: Model Agreement between Fire and Rescue Authorities on Unwanted Fire Signals and Users of Remotely Monitored Fire Alarm Systems.
- CFOA/NFCC Codes of Practice: Best Practice for Summoning a Fire Response via Fire Alarm Receiving Organisations.
- CFOA/NFCC Protocol for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals.
- LEICESTERSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICESERVICE- Unwanted Fire signals procedure 2023
- Regulatory reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended)
- British Standard 5839 Part 1 2017 Fire alarm systems and the section on limitation for false fire alarms.
- Localism Act 2011.
- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

APPENDIX A
Appeals procedure for False alarm call charges

1. Information

1.1 The charges referred to in this invoice are being made under section 18C of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (as amended)ⁱ, which states a fire and rescue authority may charge a person for responding to report of fire etc. when:

- (i) the report of fire is at premises that are not domestic premises;
- (ii) the report is false;
- (iii) the report is made as a direct or indirect result of warning equipment having malfunctioned or been mis-installed, and
- (iv) there is a persistent problem with false reports of fire at the premises that are made as a direct or indirect result of warning equipment under common control having malfunctioned or been mis-installed.

1.2 “*Domestic premises*” means premises occupied as a private dwelling (including any garden, yard, garage, outhouse or other appurtenance of such premises which is not used in common by the occupants of more than one such dwelling).

1.3 “*Persistent problem*” is defined by the Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Authority as more than nine occasions within a twelve month period.

1.4 “Warning equipment” means equipment installed for the purpose of:

- a) detecting fire, or
- b) raising the alarm, or enabling the alarm to be raised, in the event of fire.

2. Grounds for an Appeal

2.1 You can make an appeal against the charges if:

- in your opinion the charge is being made for responding to a report of a fire other than detailed in paragraphs 1.1 (i) and (ii) above, or
- in your opinion the charge is being made for responding to reports of fires that are not considered to be a persistent problem, or as a direct or indirect result of warning equipment under common control having malfunctioned or been mis-installed.

- You have taken proactive measures which have resulted in a cost to you or your organisation which has prevented subsequent attendances by Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service to false alarms at your premises.

2.2 If you intend to submit an appeal, it must indicate which aspect from among the criteria set out within Section 18C of the FRSA (see above) is the foundation of your appeal. The appeal must also clearly state why you believe the incident does not comply with the chargeable criteria detailed in Section 18C (above). If your appeal does not provide this information, we will not be able to consider your appeal and it will be rejected.

3. How to make an Appeal

3.1 Appeals must be received within 28 days of receipt of the date on the invoice.

3.2 Your appeal should be made in writing setting out the reasons as to why in your opinion the above grounds have not been met. Your written appeal should include our invoice number, your contact details and telephone number. Your appeal should be sent for the attention of the Area Manager, Community Risk at:

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service
12 Geoff Monk Way
Birstall
Leicester
LE4 3BU

or Email at (firesafety.advisors@leics-fire.gov.uk)

4. Administration Error

4.1 If you believe the invoice contains an administrative error, is not addressed to the correct person or to the organisation you believe to be responsible for the false alarm that resulted in our emergency attendance, you should once again contact us within 28 days of the date on the invoice

5. Appeal decision

5.1 The appeal will be considered by the area manager and a decision will be sent in writing within 28 days of the appeal being received.

5.2 If the appeal is not upheld then the invoice will need to be paid in 14 days from the date of the decision not to uphold the appeal. If the invoice is not paid enforcement action will commence which will increase the charges as both interest and legal costs will be payable.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents>

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