

**ESSEX POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY**

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service (ECFRS)

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| Meeting | **Performance & Resource Board** | Agenda Item | 11 |
| Meeting Date | 24th September 2018 | Report Number |  |
| Report Author: | Technical Fire Safety Manager |
| Presented By | Director of Prevention, Protection & Response |
| Subject | **Unwanted Fire Signal Update – Broomfield Hospital** |
| Type of Report: | Information |

# Recommendations

This paper is for information only and provides an update on work between ECFRS Technical Fire Safety department (TFS) and Broomfield Hospital in relation to Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS).

Members of the board are asked to note the work that has been carried out to date with Broomfield hospital, and to note the planned work which coincides with the National Fire Chief’s Council (NFCC) Business Safety Week (10th – 16th September 2018).

# BACKGROUND

The reduction in UwFS is a Key Performance Indicator for ECFRS, and a presentation was made to the SLT on the subject earlier this year.

ECFRS has a Policy in place to identify those premises where UwFS are generated and has set thresholds above which intervention will take place.

A top 10 list of those premises having the highest incidence of UwFS, with the top 3 premises being hospitals. In 2017, Broomfield Hospital had 74 UwFS, an increasing trend over the preceding two years where the number were relatively steady averaging approximately 50.

Broomfield Hospital is a large sprawling site, comprised of a number of both linked and detached buildings, put to a wide variety of uses. The building is protected by approximately 7200 smoke/heat detectors and break glass call points.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Each UwFS to Broomfield hospital normally attracts a response from the Service of two whole-time pumping appliances. On the basis of both appliances being fully crewed, mobilised from Chelmsford Fire Station and for the attendance to stop message taking 30 minutes, this equates to a figure of approximately £105.

The cost to the Service of 74 attendances to Broomfield Hospital as a result of UwFS is therefore in excess of £7K (circa £7770).

**SUMMARY OF ACTION TAKEN**

TFS Officers have been in regular contact with the Fire Officer at Broomfield Hospital, a summary of which is listed below:

* Watch Manager Lee Hurst had a meeting with the Hospital Senior Fire Officer at Broomfield Hospital back in February 2017 to discuss the number of AFAs that ECFRS attended measured against our own Unwanted Fire Signals Policy. During the meeting it was highlighted that many of the call point activations are members of the public mistaking the call point for the door release / exit button. Action has been taken in an attempt to rectify this with plastic covers over the call points and this has seen a reduction but it still occurs.

* Fire Safety Officer Brian Chamberlain met with the Hospital Senior Fire Officer at the hospital on 7th March 2018 to discuss the number of UwFS’s received in 2018 as we had received 8 UwFS’s in January alone.

The Fire Officer at Broomfield Hospital keeps detailed records of all UwFS’s and having had a spike in the number of activations due to burned cooking had re-trained some members of staff, and in some cases removed cooking appliances from their use. During the meeting the Fire Officer stated that his intention at this time was to reduce UwFS’s to 1% or less of fire alarm devices in line with the recommendations of Health Technical Memorandum 05-03 Part H. The hospital site has 7200 automatic detectors and call points and so would need to keep annual UwFS’s to 72 or less (this equates to an average 6 fire calls per month).

* Action taken since March 2018Fire Safety Officer Brian Chamberlain has been in continuous contact with Hospital Senior Fire Officer at the hospital since March discussing ways in which the number of AFA’s can be reduced. Mr Wilks has informed us that the majority of activations are caused by contractors working within the hospital and that after investigation if it is found that the contractor is not adhering to the hospitals policy i.e. hot working, then they are asked to leave the site.

* On 24th July 2018 ECFRS attended two UwFS’s in quick succession which were due to the hospital not informing control before conducting their fire alarm test. We discussed this with the Hospital Senior Fire Safety Officer who agreed to tighten up the procedure around informing ECFRS Control before testing the fire alarm autodial. Mr Wilks did again point out that the number of activations at the hospital is comfortably inside the 1% target for the number of heads and call points at these premises as per the guidance set out in Health Technical Memorandum 05-03 Part H. 1% in real terms being 6 actuations per month while as of 03/08/18 ECFRS are receiving an average of 4.4 UwFS’s per month from Broomfield Hospital.

* At the current rate of UwFS’s per month the number of UwFS’s attended in 2018 should be a marked improvement on the previous year, the Officers will continue to work with the Fire Officer at Broomfield Hospital to push this number down further.
* Recommendations have been made to consider the introduction of a search period prior to contacting the Fire Service, this has proved very successful at Southend Hospital, reducing their UwFS to zero over the last few years, the Hospital Senior Fire Safety Officer has expressed concern at this approach due to the potential risk and size/ layout of the site. The Station Manager for the South and the Head of TFS are arranging a meeting with the Hospital Fire Safety Officer.

* media for a campaign to promote good practice, we have designed posters and leaflets to be delivered to businesses and will specifically target the worst offenders, this may form part of the NFCC Business Safety week campaign

**FUTURE PLANS**

ECFRS will continue to proactively engage with Broomfield Hospital and other premises that exceed the threshold number of UwFS to reduce the numbers of UwFS.

The National Fire Chief’s Council (NFCC) Business Safety Week runs from the 10th – 16th September 2018. ECFRS TFS Officers are working with the ECFRS Media and Corporate Comms Department to highlight the issue of UwFS and the benefits that can be recognised from taking simple measures to reduce them.

Premises with the highest numbers of UwFS will be visited by TFS Officers during the week to again raise the issue. The Officers will also hand out leaflets and posters to businesses during pre-planned audits where appropriate during the week. This will include a successful case –study (Southend Hospital) and will be backed up with a social media campaign.

Copies of the campaign documentation are attached (appendix 1 and appendix 2).

# Benefits and Risk Implications

There are clear benefits to reducing the number of UwFS to ECFRS, businesses and the Community of Greater Essex – these benefits form the basis of the message of our forthcoming campaign.

# Financial Implications

There is a reduction in financial cost to the Service associated with a reduction in UwFS. There is a small cost attached to the production of flyers and posters associated with the campaign.

# Equality and Diversity Implications

None specifically associated with this paper – social media campaign will provide untargeted information. Premises and Responsible persons targeted during the campaign are being approached on a clear objective rationale; number of UwFS.

# HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Reduced UwFS will mean less blue light journeys which reduces risk to the Service and Communities.