



THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

The professional voice of the UK fire and rescue service

Code of Practice

Best Practice for Summoning a Fire Response via Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisations

Appendix B to the
CFOA Protocol for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals

Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA)

CFOA is a professional membership association and a registered charity that has been representing the fire service in their aspirations to protect the communities they serve for more than 60 years. We are not a trade union; we are the professional voice of the sector.

We provide independent and expert advice to government on fire prevention, protection and intervention issues as well as a wide range of community safety and rescue matters.

Our membership is made up from a strong, diverse blend of both uniformed and non-uniformed senior officers.

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Summary

This Code of Practice (CoP) has been produced to establish an agreed best practice between Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) and representatives from the industry of Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisations (¹FAMO). It outlines best practice in improving the emergency response arrangements for fire alarm and fire detection systems which are remotely monitored. It also outlines how to reduce the number of unwanted fire signals passed to the FRSs. This CoP is Appendix B of the CFOA Protocol for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals. The protocol details how this CoP aligns with our recommended approach and should be referred to for further information.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 CFOA, FRSs and representatives from the fire alarm industry identified that FAMOs can significantly influence the management of fire alarms in premises. However it is also accepted that it is ultimately the Responsible Person in the premises who is responsible for fire alarm performance, not the FAMOs. This CoP provides a framework to assist FRSs and FAMOs in the promotion of best practice in fire alarm management by the Responsible Person.
- 1.2 FAMOs provide the valuable function of protecting property in the event of fire in buildings outside normal working hours, when unoccupied and as back-up to on-site filtering arrangements. FAMOs also provide valuable monitoring services for vulnerable groups through monitoring fire alarms which are part of social alarm system provision.
- 1.3 This CoP has been produced by the CFOA and the fire alarm monitoring industry. It is intended to provide a framework to guide future working between FRSs and FAMOs. The aim is to promote the establishment of close and harmonious working relationships between FRSs, FAMOs, Service Providers and end users to develop best practice in the reduction of false alarms and unwanted fire signals. The objective of the CoP is to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of the various organisations are effectively translated into practical working arrangements that will minimise requests for FRSs to attend false alarms from automatic fire alarm and fire detection systems and therefore improve the effectiveness of fire alarm monitoring services.
- 1.4 CFOA and the fire alarm monitoring industry jointly acknowledge the unique, dynamic and often complex environments that we operate within. An outline of the common business relationship models is provided under Annex D of the main CFOA protocol document. Both organisations share a common objective to minimise the risk from fire to people and property. Consequently each undertake to use their respective powers and authority to ensure that adequate progress is made in achieving this objective.
- 1.5 The FAMO role is more than premises protection/security. It is often integral to the fire strategy and can play a vital part in an effective emergency plan. The flexibility of the monitoring services available is often under utilised. This CoP supports the range and flexibility of fire alarm monitoring which should be tailored to each unique premises and also recognises the limitations of monitoring and managing fire alarm systems.
- 1.6 CFOA and the fire alarm monitoring industry have agreed FRSs and FAMOs will work together in partnership to meet the shared objective of improving the fire alarm response measures. This will safeguard all relevant people and premises throughout England and Wales.
- 1.7 Further guidance on reducing unwanted signals is provided in BS 5839-1 2002, Section 3.

¹ For the purposes of the CFOA Protocol for the Reduction of Fire Alarms and UwFS and this Code of Practice, a FAMO is any organisation that provides remote fire alarm monitoring.

- 1.8 This CoP has been made available to CFOA members, Fire & Rescue staff, 3rd Party Certification organisations and the fire industry through the CFOA website together with printed copies being supplied through fire industry membership organisations.

2 Status

- 2.1 This CoP does not create any legally binding obligation on any of the parties or organisations they represent. It sets out the principles for effective liaison, collaboration, communication and mutual co-operation between the parties.
- 2.2 CFOA has no authority to bind FRSs or ensure their compliance with this CoP but CFOA commits to sharing this document, and encouraging its adoption across all UK FRSs.
- 2.3 Whilst CFOA cannot require FRSs to adopt either the Protocol or CoP, FAMOs signing up to operate in accordance with this CoP (and Protocol) should not expect to be required to comply with alternative/ additional unreasonable conditions that may be requested by FRSs operating alternative policy on the same issue/s.

3 Scope

- 3.1 This CoP applies to all organisations that monitor any type of fire alarm and fire detection system.
- 3.2 This CoP does not include the contractual arrangements for connections between the FRSs and FAMOs. (Refer to Section 6.2 (b) FAMO / FRSs connection licence).

4 Confidentiality

- 4.1 For these arrangements to be effective, they rely on mutual respect for the confidentiality and sensitivity of information exchanged. Therefore, no party will disclose unpublished information to third parties without the authority of the administration which originally provided the information, subject to the requirements of the law and other obligations.

5 FAMO Standards

- 5.1 Alarm receiving centres (ARC) are a specific type of FAMO inspected to BS 5979 "Remote centres receiving signals from fire and security systems – Code of Practice". The standard states specific requirements for the ARC on site selection, construction, facilities, operating procedures and alarm handling techniques (including filtering) and is used by the ARC to ensure that a suitable and sufficient standard of operational effectiveness is achieved.
- 5.2 Telecare (social alarm) monitoring organisations have a specific role in the monitoring of an individual. It is accepted that there will be occasions when call filtering should not be applied due to the specific risk relating to the individual such as decision making capability. The Telecare Services Association provides advice, standards and accreditation for monitoring vulnerable individuals.
- 5.3 In any case where a building alarm is being monitored the recommended fire alarm monitoring standard is BS 5979 or equivalent. BS 5979 recognises the difference between the monitoring of security alarms and fire detection and alarm systems through its Category 1 and Category 2 divisions. BS5979 is a UKAS accredited standard of inspection for FAMOs and is a publicly available document from BSI. The TSA Code of Practice is provided to its members and inspected by UKAS Accredited Inspectors. It is publicly available to non-members for a fee. The TSA Code of Practice is considered by CFOA to represent best practice in Social Alarm Care.
- 5.4 End users should make themselves aware of the limitations of individual components of a monitored system in order to ensure that components work together to provide an effective response to monitored fire alarms. For example the reliability and speed of the connection and transmission between detection activation and presentation to the monitoring centre operator.

- 5.5 It is important that each type of FAMO adopt all the recommendations considered necessary for their specific monitoring functions. This is likely to incorporate best practice from BS5839, BS5979 and the TSA Code of Practice.

6 Principal Aims

- 6.1 CFOA and the fire alarm monitoring industry have agreed to work together to meet four principal aims to improve the management of fire alarm systems, false alarms and unwanted fire signals:
- (a) Agree and implement fire alarm monitoring protocols.
 - (b) Agree and implement false alarm filtering protocols.
 - (c) Agree and implement connection protocols between FRSs and fire alarm monitoring centres.
 - (d) Reduce unwanted fire signals.
- 6.2 To assist in meeting these aims the fire alarm monitoring centres will:
- (a) Ensure all service providers and end users are made aware of the provisions of this CoP.
 - (b) FAMOs will sign a connection licence to pass calls to the FRSs. The Licence will include:
 - i) Commitment to this CoP;
 - ii) Connection arrangements (including primary and secondary number arrangements in a format that will tie-in with the introduction of Regional Control Centres);
 - iii) Cost of line/licence where applicable. (CFOA strongly recommend that if charging is considered necessary by a FRSs, it is limited to administration costs of line set-up, maintenance and testing and is reviewed to tie-in with Regional Control Centre requirements); and
 - iv) Line testing and line maintenance arrangements.
 - (c) Ensure that all new fire alarm monitoring contracts include false alarm filtering arrangements.
 - (d) Premises producing ²excessive UwFS will be subject to new contract arrangements containing false alarm filtering arrangements. Where premises refuse to sign a contract that requires the implementation of filtering, the FAMO must notify the relevant FRSs.
 - (e) To avoid unnecessary delay in passing the call to FRSs, 'call back' alarm filtering is limited to the FAMO waiting for a maximum of 30 seconds for an answer from the premises. If the phone is answered at any time within the 30 seconds, the filtering process commences. If the phone is not answered within the 30 seconds, the call back process ends and the signal is relayed to the FRSs.
 - (f) Ensure that where call back alarm filtering is applied, it follows the best practice outlined in the CFOA Protocol for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals.
 - (g) Ensure that information confirming the presence of a fire should be passed to the FRSs immediately.
 - (h) Ensure that instructions for premises access for the emergency services provided as part of the monitoring contract.

² As noted under Section 9 of the CFOA Protocol for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals – From April 2010, excessive UwFS include 3 or more fire calls (false alarm or fire) per year (in a rolling 12 month period) and from April 2011, excessive UwFS include 2 or more fire calls (false alarm or fire) per year (in a rolling 12 month period).

- (i) Ensure that the premises are aware of their need to have a competent person at the premises to take over from the fire & rescue service within 20 minutes of the time of call.
- (j) Support CFOA and the protocol by working with the relevant FRS to ensure that the aims of the CoP are progressed.

6.3 Fire alarm monitoring centres will not:

- (a) Act as fire safety consultants for monitored premises.
- (b) Devote a disproportionate level of resources to meet the aims of this CoP

6.4 To assist in meeting these aims, CFOA strongly recommends FRSs to:

- (a) Adopt a proactive approach to securing compliance with all fire safety legislation in premises and will issue notification of deficiencies, alterations, enforcement and prohibition notices where necessary to assist with this process.
- (b) Provide a single point of contact for alarm monitoring centres to consult CoP matters.
- (c) Support fire alarm monitoring centre initiatives to reduce unwanted fire signals through consistent advice and CoP changes when required.
- (d) Provide fire alarm monitoring centres with data, in an agreed format/frequency, relating to unwanted fire calls.
- (e) Ensure Responsible Persons for premises are made aware of the provisions of this CoP and that any on-site false alarm reduction provisions will be their responsibility.
- (f) Work with the fire alarm monitoring centres to ensure that the aims of the CoP are progressed.
- (g) Where the FAMO has notified an FRS of premises producing excessive UwFS and a refusal to sign a new connection contract requiring filtering (6.2 (d)): the FRS will review the circumstances and determine the appropriate action. After giving notice to the End User, the FAMO will be notified where it has been decided to implement response level 3 (Section 16 of the Protocol).

6.5 CFOA strongly recommends FRSs not to:

- (a) Apply additional call filtering to fire alarm calls received from fire alarm monitoring organisations. This assumes that filtering should already have taken place; the fire alarm monitoring organisation will be remote from the premises originating the call and are unlikely to have any additional information.
- (b) Act as a fire safety consultant for premises.
- (c) Carry out fire safety risk assessment for premises.
- (d) Attempt to use the FAMO as a means to impose actions on the responsible person.
- (e) Devote a disproportionate level of resources to meet the aims of this CoP.

7 Dissemination

- 7.1 All parties agree that any mutually derived advice and guidance, produced through the principles of this CoP, can be shared with other appropriate parties.
- 7.2 To assist dissemination of information, a biannual (twice yearly) meeting will take place between CFOA and FAMO representatives. Attendees will be made up from members of the CFOA Working Group for the Protocol for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals and invited representatives from the monitoring industry (See Section 9.5 – Monitoring & Review). CFOA recommend local discussion between FRSs and FAMOs to identify solutions to localised issues and refer to the members of the Working Group for consideration in policy review.

8 Filtering Options

FAMOs seeking to establish filtering practices in accordance with Section 6 can be guided by:

CFOA Protocol for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals (Section 9, Page 9):

“... the ideal place to prevent false alarms from being transmitted to FRSs as UwFS is on-site.” “This is where the most accurate information can be gained to ascertain the cause of the alarm activation and the Fire Service to be alerted to a confirmed fire at the earliest opportunity through the 999 system. Wherever possible this is the preferred method of AFA signal filtering.”

On Site

BS 5839-1:2002 should not be applied prescriptively, e.g. without consideration of design and use of the building. This can result in conflict with other areas of BS 5839; such as Section 3 - Limitation of false alarms, which contains guidance on filtering measures including design, detector selection, time related systems, etc.

This Code of Practice expects designers, installers, commissioners, acceptors, maintainers and managers of fire alarm and fire detection systems to fully utilise the innovative applications in design and make use of permitted variations as necessary in their application of these filtering measures. Application of a fire alarm and fire detection system should compliment the overall fire risk assessment, including consideration of the effects on business continuity for the occupier/s process and for minimising unnecessary fire and rescue services emergency response. For example, it may be appropriate to introduce measures only during certain times, e.g. application of an investigation period only during occupied times.

FAMO

Domestic Premises – Single Private Dwelling (not vulnerable)

All fire alarm signals received from domestic premises (for the purposes of this Code of Practice: all Single Private Dwellings) should be subject to a call back for confirmation of fire. The call back should be limited to 30 seconds if not answered, before passing to FRSs. If answered within 30 seconds, the call filtering process should be applied as per Annex 1.

Domestic Premises – Vulnerable Persons

A vulnerable Person can be identified as a person aged 18 years or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or maybe unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. Call filtering of a fire alarm system monitoring a vulnerable person should not be automatically applied, but considered through an appropriate risk assessment. Where the risk assessment determines that filtering should not be applied, a system should be put in place to ‘flag’ to the operator that the call should not be filtered before sending through to the FRSs.

Commercial Premises – includes any premises that is not a Single Private Dwelling

Filtering arrangements should be supplied to the FAMO by the Responsible Person/owner through the fire alarm maintainer. This must include either on-site filtering arrangements or a request for a call back facility. Unless justified otherwise under a risk assessment, the call back should be limited to 30 seconds. This should apply to all new connection contracts and all existing connections that receive 3 calls or more in any rolling 12 month period.

It has been agreed that existing contracts for connections that do not produce 3 or more fire calls in any 12 month rolling period will not be made subject to a new connection contract requiring filtering to be applied.

Monitoring/ Reporting – There is concern that FAMOs are unaware which calls passed to the FRSs are genuine calls to fire and which are UwFS. FAMOs should contact the service provider/maintainers who arrange the connection contract on behalf of the end user. This will establish the cause of the signal from the AFDS as per BS5839. Following this process will remove the possibility of requesting a new contract when a genuine fire signal was received.

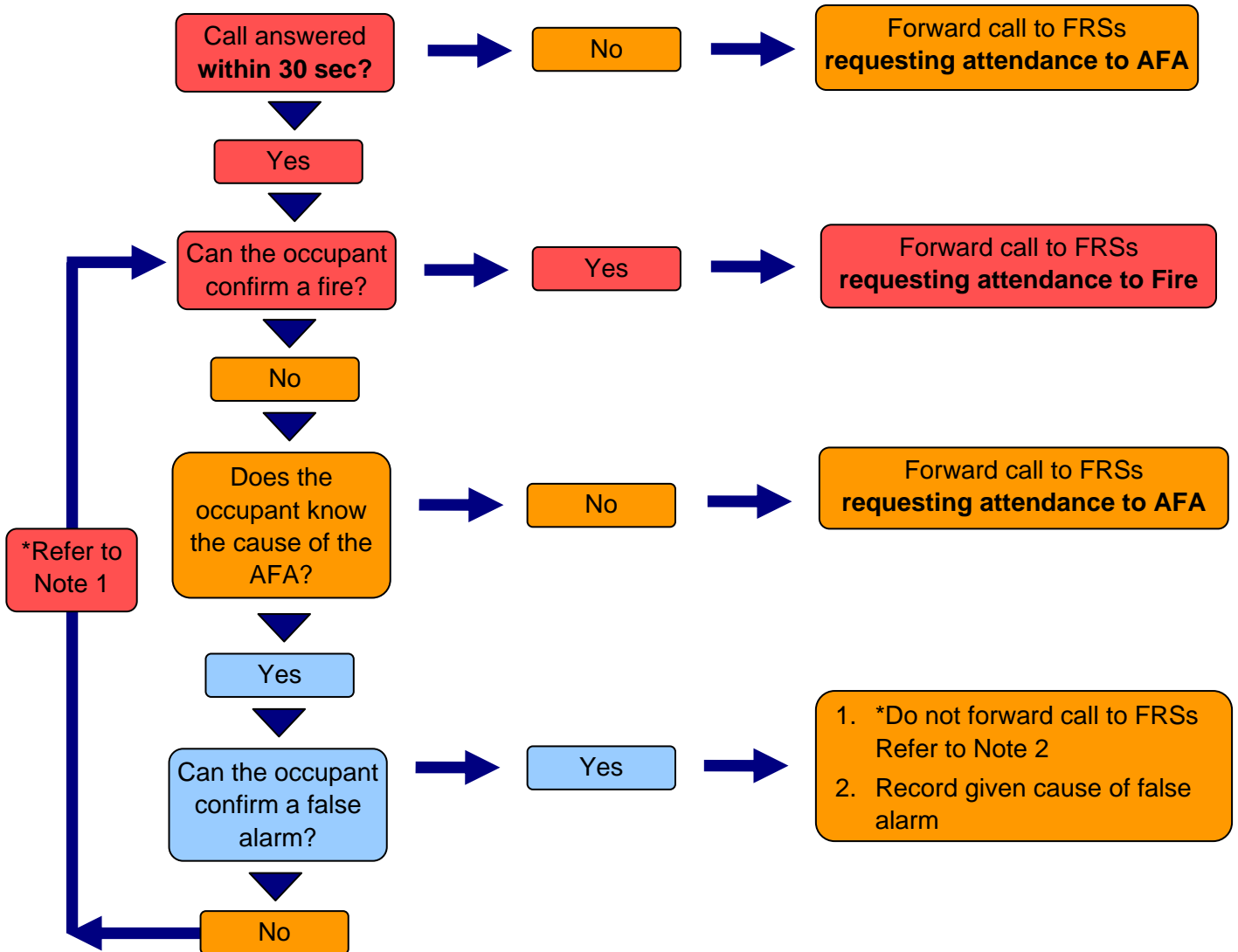
Call back to commercial premises should only be adopted when arranged formally with the Responsible Person as part of the connection contract based on the premises fire risk assessment.

9 Monitoring and Review

- 9.1 FAMOs would be expected to maintain records demonstrating the reliability of connected fire alarm systems.
- 9.2 FAMOs would be expected to periodically review records to ensure unreliable systems operating outside of level 1 performance of the CFOA Protocol for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals are identified and reported back to the fire alarm Service Provider for remedial action.
- 9.3 FAMOs should be able to provide reports on number of calls received, number of connections, and the number of new connection contracts applied. Further reports may be requested on a local level by FRSs.
- 9.4 All parties agree that any mutually derived advice and guidance, produced through the principles of this CoP, can be shared with other appropriate parties.
- 9.5 This CoP will be reviewed by a sub-group of the CFOA Working Group made up of representatives of the following organisations. Meetings to be held twice yearly and organised by CFOA secretariat.
 - TSA
 - FIA
 - BSIA
 - FAMO representatives (ADT, Invicta Telecare, etc)
 - CFOA
 - FRSs representatives
 - FSA
 - FAMO Inspection Body Representatives
 - Insurance Representatives

Annex 1 – FAMO Call Filtering Flow Chart

Adapted from CFOA Control Operator call back flowchart to apply to FAMOs and the pre-arranged call back of commercial and Single Private Dwellings:



***Note 1**

DO NOT RECYCLE AN ENQUIRY MORE THAN ONCE

Occupiers who are confused over the filtering process should have been identified under the risk assessment and alternative filtering measures put in place. If the false alarm cannot be confirmed:

Forward call to FRSs **requesting attendance to AFA**

***Note 2**

IF THE ALARM SIGNAL IS NOT SENT TO FRSs:

Inform the caller that if a fire, or signs of fire, are subsequently discovered, a new alarm call will be required in order to alert emergency services.

Annex 2 – Commitment to the CoP

CFOA will publish a register of FAMOs and FRSs who have adopted the CoP on the CFOA website. This is to demonstrate the commitment shown by those organisations who have agreed to operate in accordance with this CoP.

Information published will include:

- FAMO Name
- Address
- Name of the local FRS

Signed copies of any CoPs which contain contact details of the FAMO will be held by CFOA and shared with the relevant FRS (if not already). Personal information will not be published on the CFOA website.

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Annex 3 - FAMO Declaration

FAMOs agreeing to operate in accordance with the CFOA Protocol and CoP should ensure they adopt the principles and operate to the standards and aims described in this CoP. They should register this commitment by completing this declaration, returning it to CFOA (address below) for registration as well as sending a copy to the relevant FRS.

NB: FRSs may refuse to accept calls from FAMOs who do not operate to the minimum expected standards outlined in this CoP.

FAMO Name _____

FAMO Address _____

Signed For FAMO _____ (Signature)

Name _____ (Capitals)

Date Signed _____

Position _____

Email _____

Telephone _____

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