



R B F & R S

news release

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An Alarming Problem

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) responds to more than 3,000 unwanted fire alarms every year, at a cost of around £150,000.

Area Manager Gene Ashe, Head of Prevention and Protection for RBFRS, is determined to tackle the issue, in a new initiative starting this week.

He explained: "This is an ongoing and significant problem for us and wastes hundreds of hours of operational response crews' time. These firefighters could be doing more valuable work in helping the community, in training and, of course, responding to genuine emergency incidents.

"A high proportion of these unwanted fire alarms is caused by equipment that is sited incorrectly or, some cases, not suitable for the type of premises. Owners and occupiers of non-domestic premises are required by law to maintain an effective fire detection system, where appropriate. We will be working closely with the occupiers of a selection of premises that have generated unwanted alarms, particularly those where this happens repeatedly.

"The Station Commander of the local fire station, together with a Fire Safety Officer, will visit the occupier to advise them on the most appropriate ways to reduce the level of unwanted calls and to ensure they have an effective system in place. This will include a reminder of the occupier's responsibility to maintain their system correctly, to train their staff in its usage and to make sure they have an alarm system installed that is appropriate for their needs.

"Our aim is to reduce the number of these unwanted alarm calls by a significant amount. We are confident that this direct, advisory approach will pay dividends. Business owners do not want to see their activity disrupted by unwanted alarms and, with our help, we believe that they will be able to make any changes necessary to ensure that their system is not generating such alarms.
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“In addition to the tying up of our appliances and crews, we are very much thinking about extra risk to fire crews and the public from these unnecessary emergency calls and also to the environmental impact of such journeys. Again, we believe that business owners will support these aims and help to keep their communities a safer place.

“Anyone who would like to know about the law relating to fire safety, as it applies to their premises, can find information on business fire safety, a guide for employers, links to the relevant legislation and to the Department for Communities and Local Government website on our website at www.rbfrs.co.uk”.

ENDS.

NB

Notes for Editors:

Further information on the relevant legislation, the Fire Safety (Regulatory Reform) Order 2005, can be also be found at www.communities.gov.uk.

If you wish to interview AM Ashe, please contact Nicole Targett (0118 932 2283) or Ellie Gray (0118 932 2214).