



R B F & R S

news release

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UNWANTED FIRE ALARM CALLS DOWN BY MORE THAN A QUARTER, BUSINESSES 'ARE DOING A GOOD JOB'

Unwanted (those identified as false alarms) Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) calls, from businesses across Berkshire, have dropped by 26 % since the introduction of a Call Challenge scheme last year.

Area Manager Gene Ashe, head of Prevention and Protection for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, said the figures were encouraging and praised the efforts of business owners.

“This is really good news and I would like to thank businesses and the owners of commercial premises, for working with their alarm receiving centres to help us drive down the level of unwanted calls and attendances. The downward trend is definitely being maintained and with such support from businesses and the alarm receiving centres, we are aiming for even more significant reductions,

“Before we started the scheme, we were getting more than 4,000 calls a year originating from automatic fire alarm devices, the majority of which turned out to be false alarms. For example, in 2008, we had 4,010 such calls of which more than 3,000 were false alarms. This was obviously having a significant impact on our service, as crews were spending a great deal of time responding to these calls.

“Most of these activations were due to a systems fault or perhaps incorrect siting or installation of an alarm system. By offering advice to occupiers of business premises, including site visits if necessary, together with the co-operation of most of the alarm receiving centres, many of these problems have been addressed, hence the positive results.

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“We trialled the scheme from May to August last year and introduced it fully from September. It has certainly reduced the impact on us operationally and the time we spent in travelling to false alarms has been reduced significantly. There are still some businesses that generate these types of call however and I would urge them to make clear to their alarm receiving centres, the importance of challenging calls, to ensure that the correct fire and rescue service response is despatched. It is hard for a business owner to make money if their staff and customers have been evacuated from the premises due to a faulty alarm system!”

ENDS.

Notes for Editors:

The scheme is based upon the national policy developed by the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and adopted by fire and rescue services across the country. When the RBFRS Control Room receives an AFA call, the caller will be asked to confirm whether there is a fire, or a suspected fire. If so, the usual emergency response is mobilised. If the caller advises that the call is a false alarm, then an emergency response is not required. Control Room staff retain the discretion to mobilise a response in any case if there is any uncertainty from the caller.

If you would like to interview GM Ashe about this story, please contact Nicole Targett on 0118 932 2283.