



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



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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.

Postal Address

The Chief Fire Officers' Association
9-11 Pebble Close
Amington
Tamworth
Staffordshire
B77 4RD

Telephone Numbers

General: +44 (0) 1827 302300
Fax: +44 (0) 1827 302399
IT Support: +44 (0) 1827 302374





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Summary and Status

This Code of Practice (CoP) has been produced to establish an agreed best practice between Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) and representatives from the industry of Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisations (FAMO)¹.

Summary

This Code of Practice (CoP) 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 FRS. This CoP is Appendix B of the CFOA Guidance for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals. The Guidance details how this CoP aligns with our recommended approach and should be referred to for further information

1 Introduction

1.1 CFOA, FRS and representatives from the fire alarm industry identified that FAMOs can, through drawing attention to the issue, significantly influence the management of fire alarms in premises. However it is also accepted that it is ultimately the Responsible Person for the premises who is responsible for fire alarm performance, not the FAMOs. This CoP provides a framework to assist FRS 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 FRS and FAMOs. The aim is to promote the establishment of close and harmonious working relationships between FRS, 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 FRS, to attend false alarms from automatic fire alarm and fire detection systems and therefore improve the effectiveness of fire alarm monitoring services.



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



1.4 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 Appendix A of the main CFOA Guidance 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 FRS and FAMOs will work together in partnership to meet the shared objective of improving the fire alarm response measures. This will help safeguard all relevant people and premises throughout England and Wales.

1.7 Further guidance on reducing unwanted signals is provided in BS5839-1 2013, Section 3.

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 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 FRS or ensure their compliance with this CoP but CFOA commits to sharing this document, and encouraging its adoption across all UK FRS.

2.3 Whilst CFOA cannot require FRS to adopt either the Guidance or CoP, FAMOs signing up to operate in accordance with this CoP (and Guidance) should not be expected to adopt significantly different approaches in order to comply with the requirements of FRS operating alternative policy on the same issue/s.

Scope, Confidentiality, Famo Standards, Principle

3 Scope

- 3.1** This CoP applies to all organisations that monitor any type of fire alarm and fire detection systems.
- 3.2** This CoP does not include the contractual arrangements for connections between the FRS and FAMOs. (Refer to Section 6.2 (c) FAMO / FRS 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 BS5979 "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 guidance on accreditation for monitoring vulnerable individuals.





5.3 All FAMOs should be independently 3rd party accredited to the appropriate code of practice.

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

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:

- Agree and implement fire alarm monitoring protocols.
- Agree and implement false alarm filtering protocols.
- Agree and implement connection protocols between FRS and fire alarm monitoring centres.
- Reduce unwanted fire signals.

6.2 To assist in meeting these aims the fire alarm monitoring organisations will:

a) Ensure all service providers and end users are made aware of the provisions of this CoP.

b) Enable a level of co-operation with the Responsible Person (via the alarm maintainer if, and as, necessary) to ensure they have established the process through which an actuation of their alarm system will result in the appropriate response, including where necessary, the summoning of the FRS. As part of appropriate levels of co-operation, consideration should be given to include the sharing of incident information in order to assist in the reduction of UwFS.

Principle

- c) Sign a connection licence to pass calls to the FRS. The licence will include:
 - i. Commitment to this CoP.
 - ii. Connection arrangements (including primary and secondary number arrangements).
 - iii. Regular review (minimum annually) of both the list of emergency contact details and the alarm signal handling arrangements. (This must include agreement with the Responsible Person for the premises where the fire alarm system is located that the information held by the FAMO is current, accurate and appropriate, liaising through the alarm maintainer as necessary).
 - iv. Cost of line/licence where applicable. (CFOA strongly recommend that if charging is considered necessary by a FRS, it is limited to administration costs of line set-up, maintenance and testing).
- v. Line testing and line maintenance arrangements.
- d) All new fire alarm monitoring contracts are to include false alarm filtering arrangements. However, under BS5839-1, care homes may expect to receive an FRS response without application of filtering practices. It is therefore accepted that, for care homes, FAMOs may continue with contracts that do not require filtering and to accept and process non-filtered calls. Where care homes have excessive UwFS and associated deficiencies in alarm management practices, it will be necessary for the FRS to promote effective change in order to reduce UwFS.
- e) Premises producing excessive UwFS² 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 FRS.
- f) To avoid unnecessary delay in passing the call to FRS, 'call back' alarm filtering is limited to the FAMO waiting for a maximum of 30 seconds for an answer from the premises (unless a longer period is otherwise justified under a risk assessment). 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 FRS.
- g) Ensure that where call back alarm filtering is applied, it follows the best practice outlined in the CFOA Guidance for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals.
- h) Ensure that information confirming the presence of a fire is passed to the FRS immediately.
- i) Ensure that instructions for premises access for the emergency services are provided as part of the monitoring contract.
- j) Ensure that the premises are aware of their need to have a competent person at the premises within 20 minutes of the time of call so that they may take over from the FRS in the event it is a false alarm incident.

² In accordance with the preceding version of the CFOA Guidance for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals from April 2011 excessive UwFS include 2 or more fire calls (false alarm or fire) per year (in a rolling 12 month period).





k) Support CFOA and the Guidance 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 FRS to:

- a) Adopt a proactive approach to securing compliance with all fire safety legislation in premises and to 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 organisations to consult on CoP matters.

c) Support fire alarm monitoring organisation 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 organisations to ensure that the aims of the CoP are progressed.

g) Where the FAMO has requested a new connection contract requiring filtering (6.2 (d) and (e)), that it has been refused and the premises are producing excessive UwFS, the FAMO will notify the FRS: 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 10 of the Guidance).

6.5 CFOA strongly recommends FRS 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.

Dissemination, Filtering Options, Monitoring and Review

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 Guidance for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals and invited representatives from the monitoring industry (See Section 9.4 – Monitoring & Review). CFOA recommend local discussion between FRS 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

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

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

...the ideal place to prevent false alarms from being transmitted to FRS as UwFS is on-site.

On Site

- 8.2** BS5839-1:2013 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 BS5839; such as Section 3 - Limitation of false alarms, which contains guidance on filtering measures including design, detector selection, time related systems, etc.
- 8.3** BS5839-6 recommends that prior to establishing a monitored connection in domestic premises, guidance on the avoidance of false alarms (as contained in BS5839-6 Annex D) should be sent to the occupier or landlord.
- 8.4** 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 complement 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

8.5 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. Unless there are known circumstances which would make it appropriate to increase the time limit, the call back should be limited to 30 seconds if not answered, before passing to FRS. When answered, the call filtering process should be applied as per Annex 1.

8.6 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 FRS.

Note: BS5839-1 advises against call filtering in care homes. Guidance in section 6.2 (d) refers.

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

Filtering arrangements should be supplied to the FAMO by the Responsible Person/owner (through the fire alarm maintainer where necessary). 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 2 calls or more in any rolling 12 month period.

8.8 It has been agreed that existing contracts for connections that do not produce 2 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.

8.9 Monitoring/Reporting – FAMOs are unaware which calls passed to the FRS 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. Through a collaborative approach, an agreement should be reached on the sharing of information which will support an effective reduction in UwFS and false alarms.

8.10 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 should be able to provide reports on number of calls

received, number of connections, and the number of new connection contracts applied. Through mutual agreement, further reports may be requested on a local level by FRS.

9.3 All parties agree that any mutually derived advice and guidance, produced through the principles of this CoP, can be shared with other appropriate parties, subject to the confidentiality statement, paragraph 4.1.

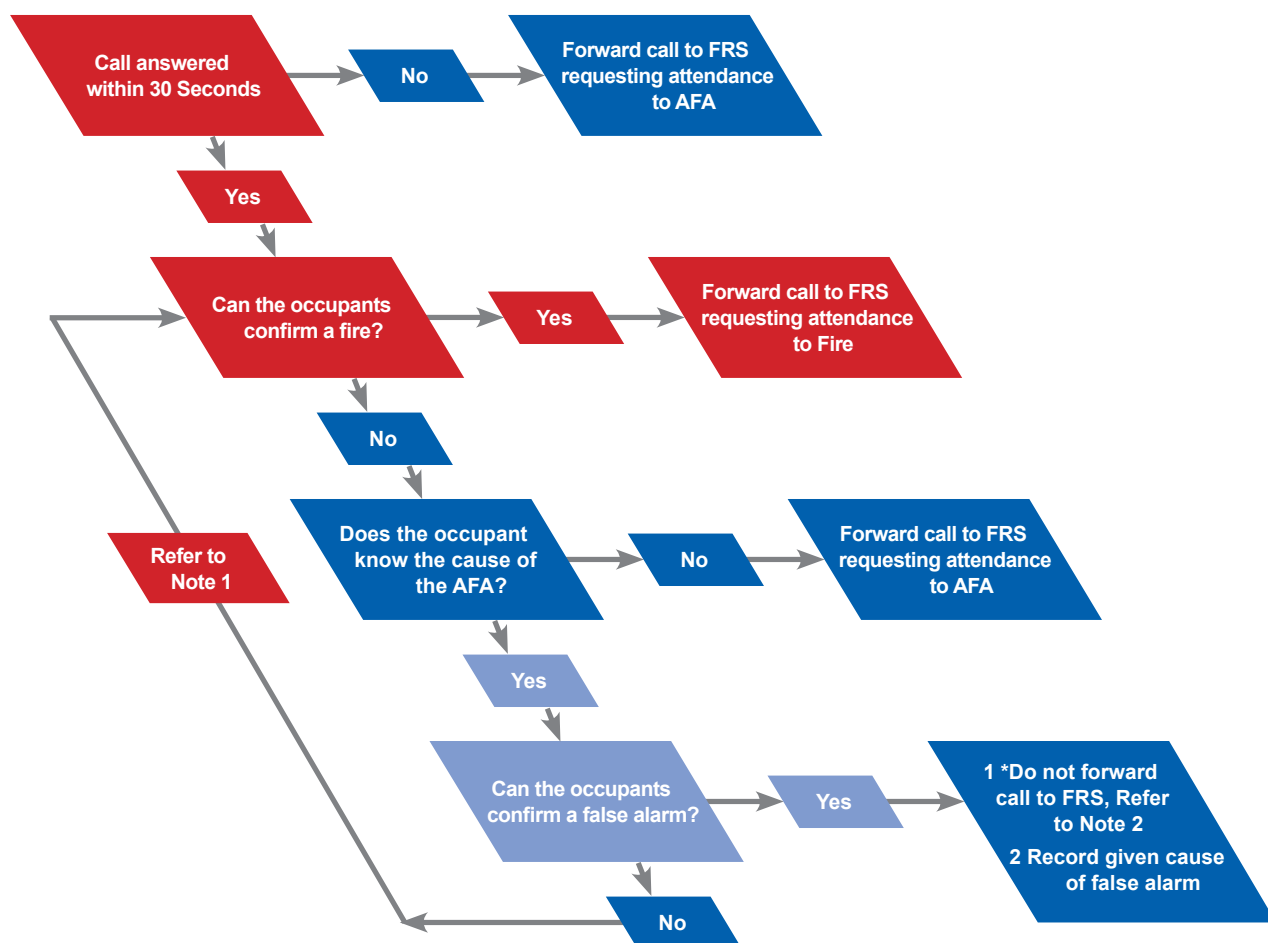
9.4 This CoP will be reviewed by a sub-group of the CFOA Working Group made up of representatives of the following organisations. Meetings to be held twice yearly and organised by CFOA secretariat.

- TSA
- FIA
- BSIA
- FAMO representatives (ADT, Invicta Telecare, etc)
- CFOA
- FRS representatives
- FSA
- FAMO Inspection Body Representatives
- Insurance Representatives

Annex 1

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



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Annex 2 - Commitment to the CoP

CFOA will publish a register of FAMOs and FRS 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
- United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) accredited certification body certificate number where applicable
- 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.



Annex 3

Annex 3 - FAMO Declaration

FAMOs agreeing to operate in accordance with the CFOA Guidance 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: FRS may refuse to accept calls from FAMOs who do not operate to the minimum expected standards outlined in this CoP.

FAMO Name

FAMO Address

I have read and will comply with the CFOA Guidance for the Reduction of False alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals, including the CoP (Appendix B).

I acknowledge that failure to comply will result in my company no longer being accepted or being included on the register.

My company is inspected by
(Copy of certificate to be enclosed)

I am authorised to sign this document on behalf of
(name of company)

Signed For FAMO (Signature)

Name (Capitals)

Date Signed

Position

Email

Telephone

Chief Fire Officers' Association

9-11 Pebble Close

Amington

Tamworth

Staffordshire

B77 4RD



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9-11 Pebble Close | Amington
Tamworth | Staffordshire | B77 4RD

Telephone: +44 (0) 1827 302300

Facsimile: +44 (0) 1827 302399

www.cfoa.org.uk