



IMPERIUM
FIRE
CONSULTANCY

False Fires - just how prevalent are they?

An increase in technology has brought about a surprising increase in callouts to the fire brigade, often without due cause. Fire detection and highly sensitive alarm systems have resulted in an increased number of 999 calls to the fire brigade. False alarm incidents in the NHS overall have risen by 12% over five years.

A false fire alarm is where the alarm is sounded and the fire brigade arrive to discover that there is no fire to extinguish, this can be for one of three reasons

Malicious - Where the alarm has been falsely triggered simply to cause disruption.

Good Intent - When an individual wrongly suspects that a fire may have broken out.

Apparatus/Technical - This is when apparatus malfunctions or triggers the alarm falsely. This can occur for several reasons including, shower steam, burnt toast, aerosols, etc.

According to UK Government fire statistics, false fires in the year to December equaled 220,000, accounting for 41.5% of the total of 528,601 callouts. This was a five percent decrease during covid compared with the previous year, but an increase over the ten years preceding.

- 143,683 fire false alarms due to apparatus: a seven per cent decrease from the previous year (155,269).
 - 71,468 fire false alarms due to good intent: an increase of five per cent from the previous year (68,298).
 - 5,281 malicious fire false alarms: a decrease of 21 per cent from the previous year (6,704).
- (Source: FIRE0104)

The majority of alarms are caused by automatic systems, which may summon the fire service as soon as they activate. This can be caused by badly maintained or damaged systems or activities such as burnt toast or dust, shower steam or aerosols, animal/human activity such as cable gnawing, and urinating on electrical components.

In a single year Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service responded to more than 2,500 Automatic Fire Alarms. On 99% of occasions these were avoidable false alarms caused by either a faulty system or an accidental activation for example, cooking fumes. Most Fire services now no longer respond to an Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) in non-sleeping premises unless the alarm has been backed up by a call confirming that there is a fire.

False alarms cost businesses time and money. They also divert firefighters from genuine emergencies and other duties.

Cheshirefire.gov.uk
Fia.uk.com
gov.uk