SPOTLIGHT ON UNWANTED FIRE ALARM SIGNALS (UFAS)

Renfrewshire Report

SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
Working together for a safer Scotland

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide local authority partners with details of Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) incidents that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) attended within Renfrewshire. The data provided will cover 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19. Data for 2019/20 will also be included but will only include figures for year to date (YTD), April – November.

The report will break down false alarm incident data with a more in-depth analysis of UFAS incidents. A description of each incident type will be provided along with a narrative to explain each chart and the figures within. All charts will cover the past 3 years and current YTD.

The report will also look at initiatives and activities currently used to reduce UFAS incidents. This will provide evidence based information to define SFRS' current position within Renfrewshire relating to UFAS. There will also be details of future focus to engage and educate UFAS reporters and reduce incidents.

Incident Breakdown 2018/19:

Total Incidents -	3,182
Deliberate Fires -	673
Accidental Fires -	338
Fatal and Non-Fatal Fire Casualties -	50
Non-Domestic Fires -	71
Special Services -	445
RTC Casualties -	64
False Alarms -	1,716
UFAS	862

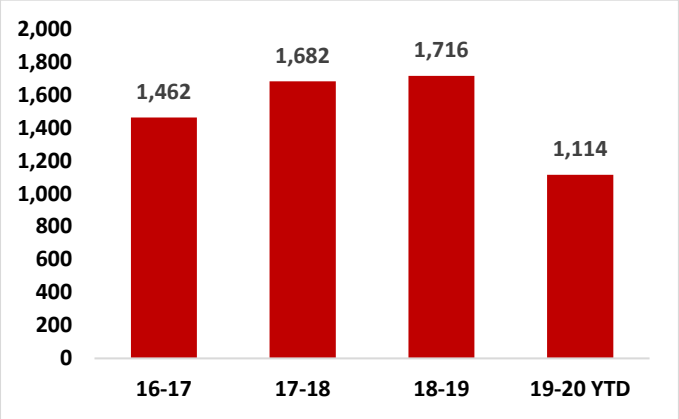
Incidents Review 2018/19

In 2018/19, the SFRS attended a total of 3,182 incidents in Renfrewshire. 1,716 (54%) of these incidents were false alarms. Of these false alarms, 862 (50%) were UFAS incidents.

The 3-year (2016/17-2018/19) average for total incidents within Renfrewshire are 3,098. Over the 3 years, false alarm figures average at 1,620 (52%) and UFAS incidents at 854 (53%).

2018/19 data shows there has been an 8% (76 incidents) decrease with UFAS incidents when compared to 2017/18, taking into account an increase in false alarms between the two years of 2% (34 incidents).

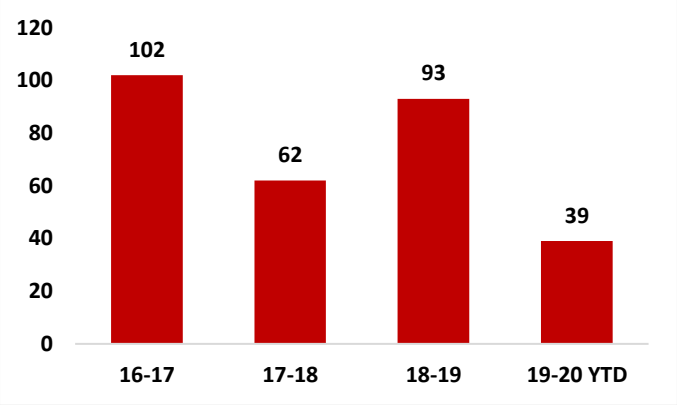
All False Alarms - Yearly



In 2018/19 SFRS attended a total of 1,716 false alarms across Renfrewshire. Compared to the previous year (2017/18), that is an increase of 32 incidents (2%). Over the 3-year period from 2016/17 there has been an upward trend of 17% (254 incidents).

False Alarm – Where the Fire and Rescue Service attends a location believing there to be an incident, but on arrival discovers that no such incident exists, or existed.

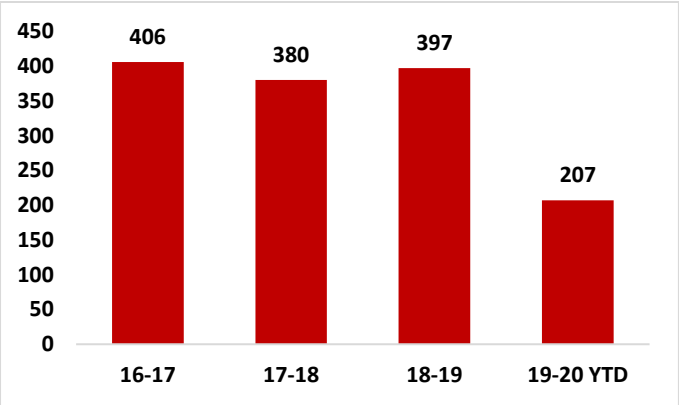
Malicious False Alarms – Yearly



Malicious False Alarms show an increase from 2017/18 of 50% (31 incidents). 2018/19 figures sit 9% above the 3-year average for this indicator with secondary schools being the common cause.

Malicious False Alarms - are calls made with the intention of getting the Fire and Rescue Service to attend a non-existent incident, including deliberate and suspected malicious intentions.

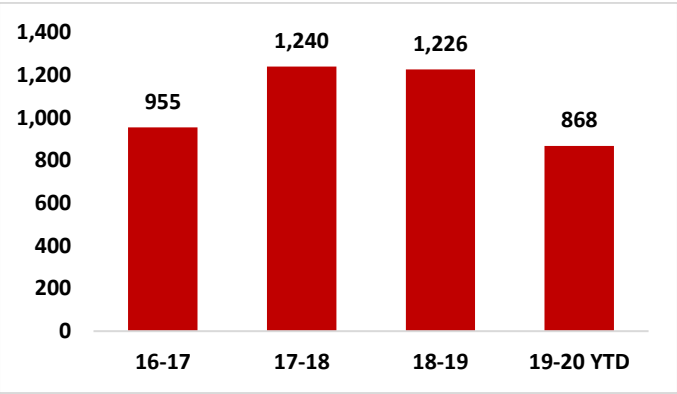
Good Intent False Alarms – Yearly



An increase in good intent false alarms incidents for 2018/19 with an increase of 4% (17 incidents) compared to 2017/18.

Good Intent False Alarms - are calls made in good faith in the belief that the Fire and Rescue Service really would attend an incident.

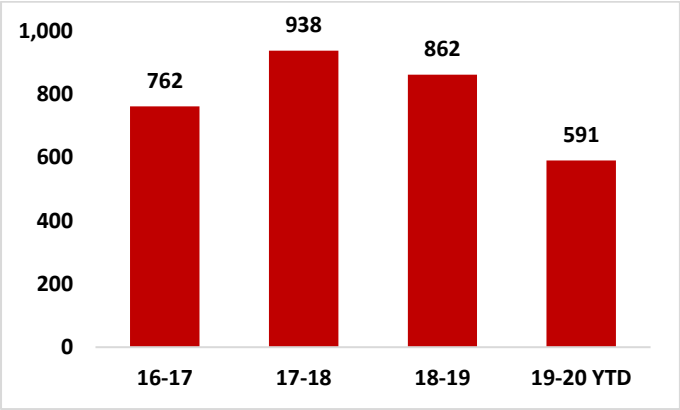
Equipment Failure – Yearly



Equipment failure shows a reduction of 1% (14 incidents) from 2017/18 to 2018/19. Burnt toast/cooking accounts for 18% (223) of these incidents.

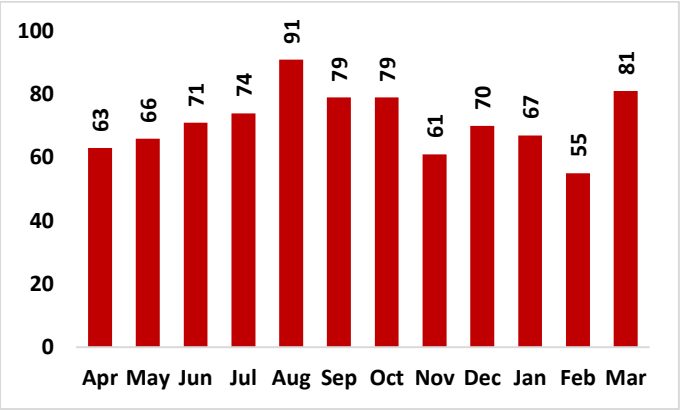
False Alarm due to Apparatus - are calls initiated by fire alarm and fire-fighting equipment operating (including accidental initiation of alarm apparatus by persons).

Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) – Yearly



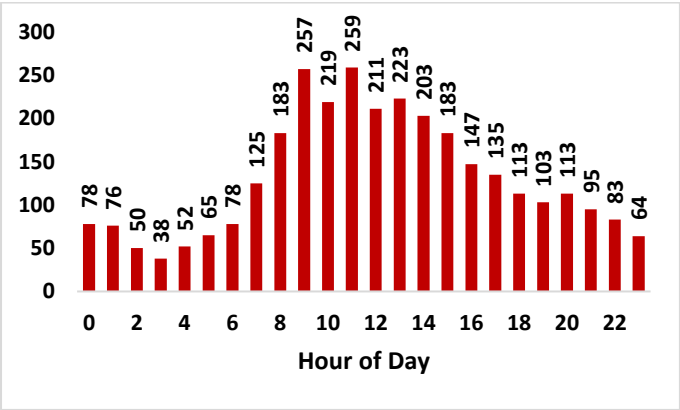
UFAS incidents show a decrease from the previous year of 8% (76 incidents) a reduction from 2017/18.

UFAS Monthly Average – 2016/17 – YTD



All month's over the year are consistent with UFAS incidents across Renfrewshire with no month accounting for a peak or trough in figures.

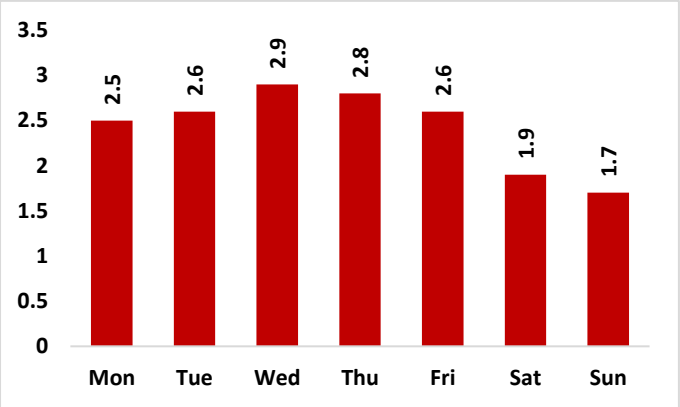
UFAS Hourly Breakdown – 2016/17 - YTD



UFAS related incidents from 2016/17 – YTD total 3153, 60 % (1885) of these incidents occur between the hours of 0800 and 1600.

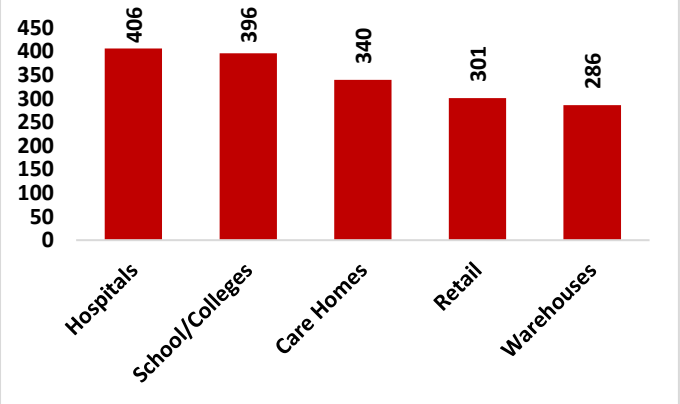
Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals - Automatic fire alarm systems provide an early warning of fire but many detection systems can also react unnecessarily to steam, cigarette smoke or cooking, signalling an Unwanted Fire Alarm to the occupants and often the Fire and Rescue Service.

UFAS Day of the Week – 2016/17 - YTD



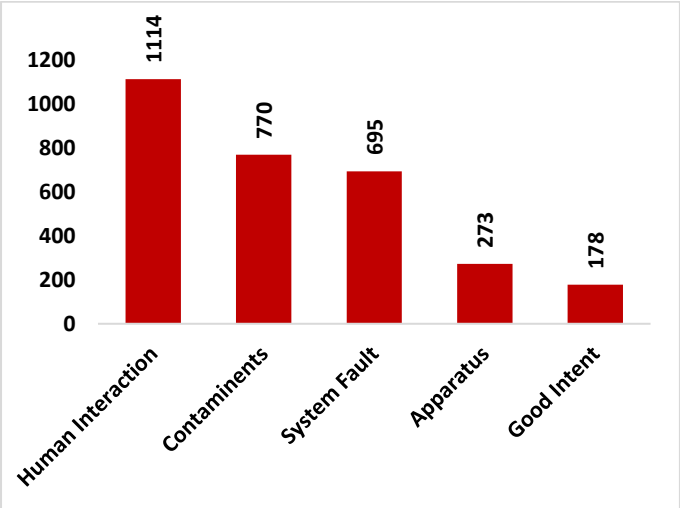
Monday to Friday account for the majority of UFAS incidents with weekends showing a fewer average.

UFAS Property Types (Top 5) - 2016/17 - YTD



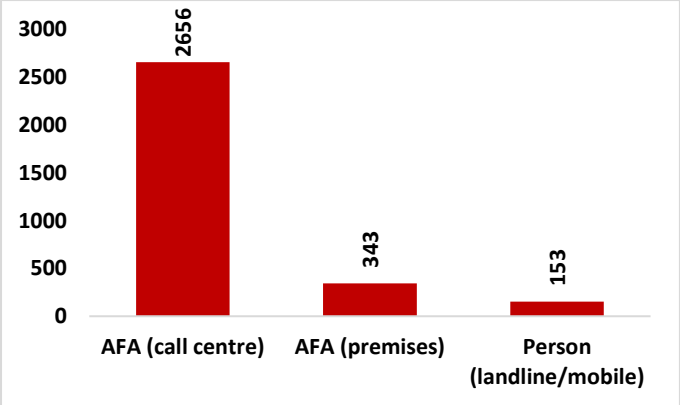
The top 5 reporters for UFAS incidents account for 55% (1726) of the 2016/17-YTD totals within Renfrewshire.

UFAS False Alarm Types – 2016/17 - YTD



35% (1114 incidents) are mainly due to human error when testing the alarm systems or accidentally setting the system off.

UFAS Origin of Call – 2016/17 - YTD



84% (2656 incidents) are from automated fire alarms received from call centres.

52% of Renfrewshire false alarms are UFAS related, this is 2% higher than the East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde (ERRI) Area. The local authority remains 2% below the West Service Deliver Area and the Scottish Service which sits at 54% for the 2016/17-YTD data.

Current Initiatives and Engagement

From the spotlight report it is evident that UFAS incidents are an ongoing concern for the SFRS. Every Unwanted Fire Alarm (UFA) costs UK businesses on average £848 in lost revenue and production, resulting in continual disruptions daily. These incidents subsequently affect the safety of the community, SFRS community engagement activities, Firefighter training and station work routines. UFAS incidents also have a finical impact on the SFRS, it is estimated that each incident costs just under £2,000 per incident. Figures from this report show an estimated cost to the service for Renfrewshire from 2016/17 – YTD at over £6,211,000.

In order to address UFAS incidents, a 'bottom up' management process has been adopted. This process assigns responsibilities to ensure that early interventions can be taken as near as possible to the local point of service delivery.

This enables;

- Control staff to filter calls and mobilise the appropriate resources,
- Operational managers to investigate the cause of all UFAS incidents at the scene and provide those responsible for the premises with information on the root cause and advice on how to reduce the likelihood of further actuations.
- Station Commanders the ability to monitor UFAS incident activity within their respective community fire station areas.
- Local Senior Officers (LSOs) will monitor UFAS incident mobilisations as an element of their normal performance management arrangements. In so doing, they will direct the Group/Station Commanders to coordinate all local activity in support of the corporate UFAS Incident Policy.

All UFAS incidents are broken down into intervention stages to allow the appropriate actions to be carried out based on the number of incidents that premises had over a set period of time.

- Stage 1 Intervention, UFAS Incident – local engagement with duty holder by the Incident Commander at the incident, report completed on return to station.
- Stage 2 Intervention Five or more UFAS Incidents within three months – Station Commanders provide follow up action and support local crews with further engagement with duty holder.
- Stage 3 Intervention Ten or more UFAS Incidents within six months - Prevention and Protection officers will review circumstances action an audit from Fire Safety Enforcement Officers and arrange an initial or follow up audit as appropriate.

- Stage 4 Intervention Twenty or more UFAS Incidents within nine months – a review of the premises pre-determined attendance will be undertaken by the LSO and Director of the West Service Delivery Area and a decision made whether it can be reduced.

Earlier this year, ERRI Area Management Team introduced a mid-month Quality Assurance meeting to review various key performance indicators for our operational crews. One of these indicators is UFAS reporters and the stage they have triggered over the past 9 months. This allows Station Commanders to engage with their Watch Commanders who have the station reference for UFAS and put in place management arrangements to engage and educate the duty holders as early as possible. The outcomes of these duty holder engagement sessions are fed into ERRI Area Meetings to monitor and review as required.

ERRI P&P Managers have been working together with NHSGCC and form part of the NHS USAS reduction group. In July the group launched the TAKE5 UFAS reduction project across all NHS premises within Renfrewshire. This campaign focusses on engagement and poster displays within all staff areas, Statistics show that the majority of UFAS incidents are caused by a human action actuating the system, TAKE5 highlights and promotes staff to TAKE5 to think about their actions and how they could impact or activate the fire alarm system.

Future Focus

ERRI P&P Working together with East Renfrewshire Council (ERC) to plan and implement a version of the NHS TAKE5 initiative, that would be bespoke to all council premises including office and education facilities. The future focus for this project is to run a pilot across ERC early 2020 with a view to launching it within Renfrewshire and Inverclyde thereafter.

The Team are working closely together with other Local P&P managers to plan and implement a UFAS education and awareness campaign aimed at the Public. The Be Aware initiative will initially target public sector buildings, including NHS and Education with visible posters displayed within common, waiting and utility areas and will highlight common causes of UFAS by members of the public due to smoking and aerosol use. This initiative will launch across ERRI in January 2020.

ERRI P&P Managers are currently reviewing all UFAS policies and processes in line with our continuous improvement framework. We are engaging with our managers and firefighters across all our local stations. This engagement will allow station based frontline personnel to assist with standardising, streamlining and improving how UFAS are managed across East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde.

Appendix A

B E A W A R E

AVOIDING FALSE ALARMS

98% of all automated fire alarm calls are unwanted fire alarm signals (UFAS) incidents

YOU CAN PREVENT THIS

B BREAK GLASS POINTS

Break glass points are for use in emergencies only. Do not mistake fire alarm break glass points for GREEN door exit points!

E EXTERNAL SMOKING ONLY

Only designated external smoking areas should be used. Do not smoke or vape inside the building or in your room

A APPLIANCES

Take care when using toasters, kettles, dryers, straighteners. All of these can impact on the fire alarm system - always use them well away from smoke detectors

W WATER, VAPOUR, STEAM

Steam can set off alarms, so keep bathroom doors closed and extractor fans on when using baths, showers and sinks. Do not leave them unattended, as overflowing water can damage detection equipment on the floor below

A ACTIONS IN AN EMERGENCY

Raise the alarm! Always call 999 if you discover a fire. Pass your details as well as important info such as address, location within the building, what's on fire and if anyone is trapped

R REMOVAL OF HEADS/DAMAGE

Never remove, cover up or damage smoke or heat detector heads to prevent them activating

E EXITS & ESCAPE ROUTES

Know your escape route and the location of your closest fire exit. Never wedge fire doors open and close doors behind you when evacuating

BE AWARE !

Reducing false alarms

Scottish Business Resilience Centre

Appendix B

TAKE 5
to reduce the number of
FALSE FIRE ALARMS
98% of all automated fire alarm calls are unwanted fire alarm call incidents.
YOU CAN PREVENT THIS.
Testing - Could the fire alarm system be accidently set off?
• Contact the fire alarm call centre and ensure system is offline
• Record in the fire alarm log book that the system is offline before testing
• Ensure all system faults are reported to the maintenace officer immediately
Aerosols - Is there a smoke detector nearby which could be accidentally set off?
• Use Aerosols such as deodorant, hairspray and cleaning products sparingly
• Keep area well ventilated
• Is there an aerosol substitute available?
Knowledge - Have you renewed your fire awareness training?
• Know your fire alarm and evacuation procedure
• Know where your fire alarm panel is located and who is responsible to operate it
• Know if your system detects smoke, fire or heat
Equipment - Are you testing, moving items or working near fire alarm detectors?
• Consider local isolation of area for maintenance and contractor work
• Consider local isolation of area for cleaning processes involving steam or fumes
• Avoid accidental contact with break glass call points
5 - 5 seconds, 5 minutes it doesn't matter?
• Think about your actions, could they activate the fire alarm system?
• Think about false alarm consequences on production, customers and staff
• Each false alarm call puts your community at risk
• Each false alarm costs the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and ERC £2900
SCOTTISH
our values
East Renfrewshire