

Call Filtering

In the period January 11th 2009 to September 30th 2009 Airedale Hospital recorded 28 false alarms, all 28 alarm converted to Unwanted fire signals. (UwFS)

In the period January 11th 2010 (when we introduced the new call filtering procedure) to September 30th 2010 Airedale Hospital recorded 36 False alarms, only 2 of these were UwFS, one of which was purposely 'staged' to test our procedure.

The decision to Call Filter on site was not taken lightly. Preparation began in May 2009, some time after CFOA announced they had written a new procedure aimed at reducing UwFS (September 2008.) We introduced the new procedure after a 3 month advertising, training, and awareness program.

There were more than a few things to consider, the first important thing was to have in place a dedicated fire number, something that the trust didn't have at the time. We needed to change the role of the Fire Warden and give them specific training in order for them to be able to take control of a fire related incident.

We needed a system which could work 24/7 as more than half of the Hospital closes down after 5 pm obviously leaving a lot less personnel on site; we have mental health facilities on site who operate delayed evacuation strategies, so it was important that the plan was workable but more than that, flexible.

The brief outline of the plan is that the Switchboard still receives the fire alarm but instead of calling 999 they wait 6 minutes. If they have not heard from the ward/department within that time, they call 999 and get the F&RS to site.

The procedure across the site now calls for wards/department personnel to search their areas for signs of a fire, and to report their findings to their fire warden who will instigate the second phase of the procedure. If a fire is found a call is sent to switchboard confirming a fire, switchboard then call 999 and confirm a fire thus ensuring the correct attendance by the F&RS.

All Fire Wardens are issued with a fire safety log book, within these books there are ward/department plans and a schematic of all the detection and MCP's in the ward/department, the Fire Warden requests the device address from the fire alarm panel, and by cross referencing with the log book they can determine which detector is active and where the detector is located, this confirms a false alarm situation.

This article gives a very basic overview of the Call Filtering procedure we use at Airedale Hospital, through this procedure we have managed to drastically cut our UwFS and reduce the costs to the F&RS in the process.

If you require any further details please contact Mel Jackson, Fire Safety Advisor, Airedale NHS Foundation Trust (01535 294808) who will be willing to share this information with relevant interested parties.