

Chippenham Area Board Report – 8th October 2018

Automatic fire alarms



Responding to automatic fire alarm (AFA) activations that subsequently turn out to be unwanted fire signals has been identified as a major draw on our resources, resulting in an inappropriate use of emergency crews and equipment.

Such activations cause resources to be diverted away from other, more important, activities, making them potentially unavailable to respond to genuine emergency calls.

Unwanted fire signals have a major impact on the Service and cause concern, as they:

- Render fire crews unavailable, creating the possibility of delayed attendance to genuine emergency calls.
- Create unnecessary risk to fire crews and members of the public when fire appliances respond under emergency conditions.
- Are disruptive to planned work, particularly training and community fire safety activities.
- Can cause a false expectation amongst personnel, especially those attending high numbers of false alarms.
- Impose significant financial burdens on the Service.
- Have a negative impact on employers who release on-call firefighters working the retained duty system.
- Cause problems for the occupiers of affected premises through lost production and general disruption to business continuity.
- Cause complacency among employees, reducing the effectiveness of automatic fire alarms by delaying the initiation of emergency procedures.
- Indicate other failings may exist within the premises' fire safety management.

A properly designed and maintained automatic fire detection system provides early warning of fire. However, a badly designed or poorly maintained system can become a potential hazard due to inappropriate or unwanted activations.

Management procedures should be set in place as part of an emergency plan. Suitably trained personnel should investigate the cause of the alarm activation before calling the fire and rescue service (with the notable exception of residential care providers who should not allow these procedures to cause undue delay in calling 999).

Chinese lanterns



Chinese lanterns (also known as wish, sky or flying lanterns) have origins that go back thousands of years, and they have become increasingly popular as a way of celebrating weddings, birthdays, anniversaries or other special events.

However, there is a high risk of fire from using such lanterns, either through incorrect handling, unspent fuel cells or unexpected flight patterns.

The lanterns are generally made from paper, supported by a wire or card frame that incorporates a holder at the bottom for a solid fuel cell. The paper outer may or may not be fire retardant. Flying times suggested by manufacturers vary from 6-8 minutes and up to 20 minutes, with achievable heights claimed to be up to one mile.

Whilst lighting and launch are largely in the control of the user, the actual flight path and ultimate destination are generally not. There is also no guarantee that the fuel cell will be fully extinguished and cooled when the lantern eventually descends, and any subsequent contact with a combustible surface could result in a fire developing.

It is best to avoid using Chinese lanterns if you are near:

- Areas with standing crops.
- Buildings with thatched roofs.
- Areas of dense woodland.
- Areas of heath or bracken, especially in dry conditions.

Top tips

- Lanterns should be used by responsible adults only.
- Adults should not be under the influence of alcohol or any substance that could affect their level of responsibility.
- When launching the lanterns, make sure you have a water supply to hand in case something goes wrong.
- Keep the launch area clear of combustible materials.
- Don't try and launch damaged lanterns – and be aware that writing messages on the paper can cause damage.
- Don't smoke whilst handling lanterns.
- Ensure that there is sufficient clearance for the lanterns to avoid obstacles such as trees, power lines or buildings.

- Avoid launching lanterns near roads, especially major roads or motorways, as they can be off-putting to drivers.
- Don't try and launch lanterns if it is windy, and be sure of the wind direction as this will affect the flight path.

Fireworks



Fireworks are safe if you use them properly. If you're putting on a home display, you should follow some simple steps to make sure that everyone has a good time without getting hurt:

- Plan your firework display to make it safe and enjoyable.
- Keep fireworks in a closed box and use them one at a time.
- Read and follow the instructions on each firework, using a torch if necessary.
- Light the firework at arm's length with a taper and stand well back.
- Keep naked flames, including cigarettes, away from fireworks.
- Never return to a firework once it has been lit.
- Don't put fireworks in pockets and never throw them.
- Direct any rocket fireworks well away from spectators.
- Never use paraffin or petrol on a bonfire.
- Make sure that the fire is out and surroundings are made safe before leaving.

Download further information on [giving your own firework display](#) or for display organisers and operators [working together on a firework display](#).

Did you know?

- It is against the law to carry fireworks in public if you're under 18.
- Fireworks must not be sold to anyone who is under 18.
- It is an offence to let off fireworks during night hours (11pm to 7am), except on Bonfire Night (midnight), Diwali, New Year, and Chinese New Year (1am).
- It is an offence under the Explosives Act 1875 to tamper with or modify fireworks.
- Sparklers can reach temperatures more than 15 times as hot as boiling water!



After the event

- Never put fireworks, even those which are fully spent, on the bonfire.
- Never dispose of fireworks by burying them.
- Safely dispose of fully spent fireworks.
- Soak misfired or partly spent fireworks in a container of water in an area where they cannot be tampered with (preferably away from the display site) and contact the manufacturer or supplier for advice on disposal.

We have the following guide available to download:

- [Bonfire and firework safety](#)

Safe and Well Visits- Home safety

The Chippenham area has a dedicated Fire Service '**Safe and Well**' advisor who can visit people, within their own homes, advising on home safety and wellbeing.

A Safe and Well visit is **FREE** and normally lasts about one hour covering topics such as:

- Using electricity safely
- Cooking safely
- Making an escape plan
- What to do if there is a fire
- Keeping children safe
- Good practice – night time routine and other points relevant to you
- Identifying and discussing any further support the occupier may need

If you have thatch property, are living alone, have a young family, are over 65 or a smoker please get in contact with us. We want to help make you safer in your own home. If you or someone you know has mobility or sight and hearing impairments, please suggest a Safe and Well visit.

Visit <http://www.dwfire.org.uk/news/new-name-new-contact-details-same-service/> to book one.



Response

Incidents

June 2018

DW FRS were called to 36 incidents in the Chippenham area.

Category	Chippenham (59P1/2)
False Alarm	9
Fire	11
Special Service	11
Total	31

July 2018

DW FRS were called to 54 incidents in the Chippenham area.

Category	Chippenham (59P1/2)
False Alarm	14
Fire	26
Special Service	11
Total	51

Availability of RDS appliance %

June 2018	Appliance	Day (06:00 - 18:00)	Night (18:00 - 06:00)	Total
% Available	KT59P2 Chippenham	63.3%	84.4%	73.9%

July 2018	Appliance	Day (06:00 - 18:00)	Night (18:00 - 06:00)	Total
% Available	KT59P2 Chippenham	76.1%	95.8%	86.0%



Recent Notable Incidents

The Service has been busy throughout this reporting period. The extended period of hot weather resulted in a large number of open space fires. These are resource intensive, take a long time to extinguish and can be extremely challenging.

Community Engagement

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service provides a free service called a Safe and Well visit. We will visit a person's home by appointment and discuss any safety issues in the home. We will also have a conversation about improving an individual's health and well-being.

If you or someone you know need a smoke alarm, some advice or are worried about what to do in an emergency, contact us for a free Safe and Well visit;

<http://www.dwfire.org.uk/safety/safe-and-well-visits/>

Community Safety Plan

DWFRS Community Safety Plan 2018-2022 outlines our plans for the future. It explains the diverse services we provide and how we plan to improve and deliver them over the four-year period. The plan can be found on the DWFRS website <http://www.dwfire.org.uk/community-safety-plan/>

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