Tasmania Fire Service

False Alarm Reduction

Consultation Paper

Tasmania Fire Service

Tasmanian Government

Introduction

Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) is the operational arm of the State Fire Commission. TFS has principal responsibility for responding to fire and other emergencies. TFS monitors fire alarms in approximately 2,000 premises.

The majority of TFS responses to alarmed premises are due to false activation or malfunction – a reason other than fire. This imposes significantly on building owners and occupiers, businesses, emergency services, and the community.

False alarms have the following impacts:

- Disruption to businesses due to building evacuation and loss of productivity.

- Many firefighters are volunteers, and responding to false alarms may unnecessarily impact their personal and work lives.

- Multiple recurrent false alarms create apathy should a real fire emergency occur.

- Responding to false alarms may delay emergency response to real emergencies.

- Responding to emergencies and false alarms increases the risk of injury to firefighters and the community.

- Financial penalties can apply to false alarms.

TFS wants to reduce the incidence of false alarms.

Subsequently, TFS has initiated the False Alarm Reduction Strategy Project (FARS) to take a holistic approach to defining the issues and to identify solutions to work with premises owners to reduce false alarms.

Reducing false alarms requires a coordinated and collaborative approach between TFS and premises owners.

An outcome of the project is to develop a False Alarm Reduction Strategy. In developing this strategy, TFS is seeking input from the community.

This consultation paper introduces a range of issues identified through a process of consultation within TFS.

TFS has identified possible solutions to the issues, and these are presented within this consultation paper.

Responses to this consultation paper will assist TFS to improve systems, business practices, and support to premises owners.

The issues on which comment is sought

1. Policy and Procedures

TFS currently has limited policy or systems regarding the management of and active reduction of false alarms within monitored premises. The lack of guidance hinders the decision-making process and support mechanism to effectively reduce false alarms.

To address this, TFS proposes to develop a suite of policy and guidelines that will provide a consistent and structured approach to reducing the occurrence of false alarms.

Question

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on particular areas that TFS should target through the development of policy and guidelines that will support the decision-making process to effectively reduce false alarms?

2. Training of Frontline Staff

It is identified that frontline staff within TFS are not effectively equipped to provide appropriate advice and guidance to property owners when dealing with instances of false alarms.

It is proposed to develop additional training and support resources for frontline staff so that support and advice may be provided to premises owners to actively reduce false alarms.

Question

What advice and support do you require from frontline staff to take action to reduce the occurrence of repeat false alarms?

3. Education

TFS currently has limited information and education resources to guide premises owners on how to reduce false alarms.

TFS understands the importance of these materials as they underpin other false alarm reduction strategies such as charges and regulations. Education and engagement provide a proactive and collaborative approach to false alarm reduction.

TFS proposes to develop a suite of online and paper-based resources to proactively support premises owners to reduce false alarms.

Question

What type of resources would you find useful to assist in reducing the incidence of false alarms? And, what type of information do you require?

4. The Setting of Fees and Charges

A contemporary and fit-for-purpose methodology for setting network fees, monitoring fees, and false alarm charges has not been established.

TFS propose to develop a comprehensive framework for the development of fees and charges related to premises with monitored alarms. This framework and methodology will be made publicly available.

Question

What considerations do you believe should be incorporated into a methodology for the setting of fees and charges relating to premises with monitored alarms?

5. Business Systems and Practices

TFS has identified inefficiencies in the billing and support mechanisms to premises owners in relation to actively reducing false alarms in a practical and timely way.

Many of TFS' business practices in relation to the management of fees and charges related to alarmed premises are manual and inefficient.

TFS proposes to develop and utilise automated software systems to create a more efficient and effective service delivery.

Question

How might TFS be able to provide an improved service to premises owners in the payment of fees and charges related to alarm premises?

Have you any other ideas on how TFS may be able to provide a more efficient and effective service in relation to alarmed premises?

Invitations for Submission

Publishing submissions

The Tasmanian Government is dedicated to upholding transparency and openness in public consultation processes. To ensure consistency, departments follow a standardised approach when it comes to publishing submissions. This commitment aligns with the community's expectations of having access to information that informs the Government's decision-making on significant policy matters.

Results from the consultation will be published after consultation at https://fire.tas.gov.au except in cases where it is deemed not in the public interest to release the information (e.g., to protect sensitive information) or when submitters explicitly request confidentiality.

Only the organisational information (government, non-government, internal to DPFEM, or external to DPFEM) of the submitter will be published, with no personal details disclosed.

For further information, please read the Tasmanian Government Public Submissions Policy (external link).

Important information to note

1. The results from the consultation will be published, including whether the submission is from government, non-government, internal to DPFEM, or external to DPFEM.

2. In the absence of a clear indication that a submission (or parts of the submission) is intended to be treated as confidential, the Department will treat the submission as public.

3. If you wish to have your submission treated as confidential, whether in whole or in part, please clearly state this in writing at the time of submission. Identify the specific parts you want to remain confidential and provide reasons for your request. In such cases, your submission will not be published to the extent of your confidentiality request.

4. Copyright in submissions remains with the author(s), not with the Tasmanian Government.

5. The Department will not publish submissions, in whole or in part, that contain defamatory or offensive material. If your submission includes information that could potentially identify individuals, certain portions or the entire submission may not be published.

Accessibility of submissions

The Government recognises that not all individuals or groups have equal access to and understanding of information. Consequently, we are committed to ensuring that Government information is accessible and easily comprehensible to individuals with diverse communication needs.

Where possible, we encourage you to submit your comments using the online feedback form. Alternatively, you can download the form via the provided website link, complete it using Microsoft Word, and then submit it to the designated email address.

However, please note that the Government cannot assume responsibility for the accessibility of documents provided by third parties.

From:	TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy
Sent:	████████████████████████████
To:	██████████████████
Subject:	False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

From: no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au <no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au> **On Behalf Of** Tasmania Fire Service
Sent: Tuesday, September 5, 2023 10:09 AM
To: TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy <TFSFARS@fire.tas.gov.au>
Subject: New submission from False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

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1. By making a submission to this consultation you agree to the collection of information you provide in your submission and the use of the information; and non-disclosure of personal information as outlined above.

Agree

2. On who's behalf are you making this submission? (Please select one item only)

I am making this submission on my own behalf.

3. Are you an DPFEM internal employee, external employee, retained or volunteer firefighter?

I am an DPFEM internal employee.

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on particular areas that TFS should target through the development of policy and guidelines that will support the decision-making process to effectively reduce false alarms?

Increase the cost associated with false call outs to ensure the property owner and equipment service provider gets faulty equipment inspected and fixed quicker thus not allowing multiple return jobs over many nights due to lack of urgency.

What advice and support do you require from frontline staff to take action to reduce the occurrence of repeat false alarms?

Sufficient already

What type of resources would you find useful to assist in reducing the incidence of false alarms? And, what type of information do you require?

Higher penalties

What considerations do you believe should be incorporated into a methodology for the setting of fees and charges relating to premises with monitored alarms?

First fine high but not ridiculous, repeat offences go higher and higher.

How might TFS be able to provide an improved service to premises owners in the payment of fees and charges related to alarm premises?

Sticker on the fip explain the higher fees for repeat false alarms.

Have you any other ideas on how TFS may be able to provide a more efficient and effective service in relation to alarmed premises?

Ensure keys and key holder information is regularly checked and kept up to date.

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From: no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au <no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au> **On Behalf Of** Tasmania Fire Service
Sent: Wednesday, September 6, 2023 2:05 PM
To: TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy <TFSFARS@fire.tas.gov.au>
Subject: New submission from False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

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I am making this submission on my own behalf.

3. Are you an DPFEM internal employee, external employee, retained or volunteer firefighter?

I am a retained firefighter.

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on particular areas that TFS should target through the development of policy and guidelines that will support the decision-making process to effectively reduce false alarms?

I'd review the placement of smoke alarms. While 'hallway' might be deemed sensible in dwellings with 200 m2 of space, having them in hallways of significantly smaller dwellings, say 90 m2, asks for false call outs. Wired in alarms being worse, since you can't disable them when they're going off without smoke present. A neighbours was going off from (presumed mould). It wasn't a fire call, though police dispatched them anyway.

What advice and support do you require from frontline staff to take action to reduce the occurrence of repeat false alarms?

Relocate alarms with diligence toward dwelling size and location of kitchen/bathroom/(dryer vent)

What type of resources would you find useful to assist in reducing the incidence of false alarms? And, what type of information do you require?

A more dwelling oriented placement procedure over a bog standard, hallways, bedrooms etc.

What considerations do you believe should be incorporated into a methodology for the setting of fees and charges relating to premises with monitored alarms?

For alarms due to cooking practices, fees to the tenant (not corporation) would presumably make people think twice about cooking in their dorm rooms.

How might TFS be able to provide an improved service to premises owners in the payment of fees and charges related to alarm premises?

Invest in a square/other portable payment option.

Have you any other ideas on how TFS may be able to provide a more efficient and effective service in relation to alarmed premises?

I could think of things.

From:
Sent: ████████████████████████
To: ████████████████
Subject: False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

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From: no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au <no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au> **On Behalf Of** Tasmania Fire Service
Sent: Tuesday, September 12, 2023 5:47 PM
To: TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy <TFSFARS@fire.tas.gov.au>
Subject: New submission from False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

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Agree

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I am making this submission on my own behalf.

3. Are you an DPFEM internal employee, external employee, retained or volunteer firefighter?

I am a volunteer firefighter

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on particular areas that TFS should target through the development of policy and guidelines that will support the decision-making process to effectively reduce false alarms?

Acknowledge that when permit period is out farmers will be burning and not send brigade's unless the call is from the land owner/worker on the property, is effecting services (I.e. power lines or roads) or there are multiple calls from passers by (minimum of 5)

What advice and support do you require from frontline staff to take action to reduce the occurrence of repeat false alarms?

Not create an incident unless there has been a call from the land owner/worker on the property, the fire is effecting services (I.e. power lines or roads) or there are multiple calls from passers by (minimum 5 calls)

What type of resources would you find useful to assist in reducing the incidence of false alarms? And, what type of information do you require?

An app that farmers can utilise to pinpoint their location and register a burn

What considerations do you believe should be incorporated into a methodology for the setting of fees and charges relating to premises with monitored alarms?

More than 1 call that has been triggered by a system fault or malicious intent within a certain period should receive a fine (for systems fault they must contact a service provider after first call, if no action is taken and a second call is triggered they receive a fine)

How might TFS be able to provide an improved service to premises owners in the payment of fees and charges related to alarm premises?

BPAY
PAYPAL

Have you any other ideas on how TFS may be able to provide a more efficient and effective service in relation to alarmed premises?

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From: TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy
Sent: ███████████████████████
To: ███████████████████
Subject: False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper:
                   Feedback Form

From: no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au <no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au> **On Behalf Of** Tasmania Fire Service
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2023 10:01 AM
To: TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy <TFSFARS@fire.tas.gov.au>
Subject: New submission from False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

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3. Are you an DPFEM internal employee, external employee, retained or volunteer firefighter?

I am an DPFEM internal employee.

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on particular areas that TFS should target through the development of policy and guidelines that will support the decision-making process to effectively reduce false alarms?

Do TFS really need to respond to every alarm call?

Consider options for TFS response to alarmed premises we don't necessarily need to respond to, for example, buildings that are staffed 24 hours a day or buildings staffed Monday to Friday between normal business hours?

Changes in policy should include buildings with ECO's in place should be able to monitor and "check" alarm activations, reset and/or dial 000 if there's an issue, reducing the cost on business and TFS call outs.

Unoccupied buildings or buildings that can't provide an ECO would remain status quo.

Building occupiers/owners should be able to opt in or out, understanding the responsibility!

Incentivize this option through policy etc.

Long term, all buildings should be fully sprinkled.

What advice and support do you require from frontline staff to take action to reduce the occurrence of repeat false alarms?

ECO Training would be required.

What type of resources would you find useful to assist in reducing the incidence of false alarms? And, what type of information do you require?

None

What considerations do you believe should be incorporated into a methodology for the setting of fees and charges relating to premises with monitored alarms?

Increase the cost of TFS attendance to false alarms and reduce the cost to buildings that "opt in" to monitoring, resetting, etc.

Not maintaining systems appropriately should attract heavy penalties.

How might TFS be able to provide an improved service to premises owners in the payment of fees and charges related to alarm premises?

As above

Have you any other ideas on how TFS may be able to provide a more efficient and effective service in relation to alarmed premises?

TFS shouldn't have to respond to every alarmed premise.

I'm sure there are capable people who can check etc., ring if there's a problem, reset and manage their own EM arrangements.

Obviously, there would be exceptions to the rule and COOI's to be developed to support.

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Sent: Saturday, September 23, 2023 6:49 PM
To: TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy <TFSFARS@fire.tas.gov.au>
Subject: New submission from False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

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I am making this submission on my own behalf.

3. Are you an DPFEM internal employee, external employee, retained or volunteer firefighter?

I am a retained firefighter.

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on particular areas that TFS should target through the development of policy and guidelines that will support the decision-making process to effectively reduce false alarms?

There will always be false alarms, and incidents that we turn out to that are then downgraded to false callouts, statewide TFS need to be more pro active with dba premise's, and encourageing premises to actively get their premises serviced, the systems and detectors etc serviced to assist with systems that are maintained at a good standard
As a volunteer who works a labour intensive job there is nothing worse than being called out to dba premises at early hours of the morning when the initial isolate of the head could have been done straight up and saved a repeat call out, as we know must happen quite a bit statewide

Im not sure what checks or guidelines there are but when contractors and workers come in to undertake dusty works at these places, a check to make sure affected dectectors are covered so they dont get filled up with dust and contaminated rather than isolating the zone

What advice and support do you require from frontline staff to take action to reduce the occurrence of repeat false alarms?

I go on a case by case basis, if its cooking practises or something similar will do a reset, but if contractors or workmen have been in the area making dust il isolate straight up this did happen recently

It could be worth an update on information regarding dbas, if theres a clear case that a dectector head has been compromised to savw the brigade resetting then 1 hour later reattensing and needs servicing, a statewide update shared throughout to Brigades

What type of resources would you find useful to assist in reducing the incidence of false alarms? And, what type of information do you require?

Interesting question, genuine dbas can and will always happen, a memo or some kind of update to premises to encourage servicing of their systems,

Depending on the information available an update to the coogs or if there is enough information to make a powerpoint presentation for brigades to look at

What considerations do you believe should be incorporated into a methodology for the setting of fees and charges relating to premises with monitored alarms?

Im not sure if there is any information or guidelines on charging premises, for a genuine activation i dont worry about charging, but when we have dbas where contractors have set off heads with dust or similar things i recommend charging, or a place that has had multiple activations that have not been pro active in rectifying the issue
Some more information and guidelines on when and whats applicable for charging would be good

How might TFS be able to provide an improved service to premises owners in the payment of fees and charges related to alarm premises?

Possibily a document regarding the types of situations and circumstances when they may be charged, which hopefully in due time will encouarge premise owners to be more proactive not wanting fees for dbas

Have you any other ideas on how TFS may be able to provide a more efficient and effective service in relation to alarmed premises?

A question i have is how long do dector heads last, we had a dba to a "high risk premise" and one of the activating heads was 20 years old, if domestic smoke alarms are recommend for only 10 years, just wondering on the life span of dba heads

I guess just more awareness, acountability on the premise owners to get there systems serviced to therefor help the TFS

From: TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy

Sent: ██████████████████████

To: ████████████████

Subject: FW: False Alarm Reduction Project: Consultation Paper

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Hi ████

From and industry perspective, and observation on human behaviours, from my perspective this all about education, where that can happen in many ways.

Education for each of:

The responsible System Owner / Manager to educate persons within facilities on how Smoke and Heat Alarms work.
  - Why they alarm under various environmental circumstances.

- What contributing human factors contribute to alarms
- What contamination factors may semi-permanently or permanently affect Detectors causing ongoing alarms
- How change of use to environments will likely affect Detectors
- To understand how proactive maintenance regimes will assist them.
- Understanding where Specific types of Detectors may be inappropriate.

TFS staff who might be providing Client advice:
- Why they alarm under various environmental circumstances.
- What contributing human factors contribute to alarms
- What contamination factors may semi-permanently or permanently affect Detectors causing ongoing alarms
- How change of use to environments will likely affect Detectors
- To understand how proactive maintenance regimes will assist them.
- Understanding where Specific types of Detectors may be inappropriate.

Perhaps a review around legislation where installers are now advised they need Building Surveyor advise / approval to change a detector type from its originally approved design – educated installers used to analyse circumstances and where appropriate advise systems owners where a change was required in their expert opinion.
Current regulatory advice to industry arguably means clients are now potentially having unsuitable Detectors remain in areas where they shouldn't due to 'red tape'.

Whilst Systems are designed by licensed designers, this rarely takes place with any consideration for actual use, or discussion with Owners / Occupiers (sometimes this information is not yet decided) and is based on perceived elements, balanced with AS1670 rules.

Perhaps a review of technology advancements, and whether instituting maintenance rules around proactive software analysis of the FDCIE is appropriate. Modern addressable Fire Panels track the 'live' background sensitivity values of analogue Smoke Detectors, where overtime their optical sensors naturally drift towards alarm thresholds – this simply due to dust building up inside the sensing chambers. Technicians have the ability on systems with these functions (many systems these days and forever increasing where Addressable Technology replaces conventional) to understand where Smoke Detectors maybe tracking towards 'pre-alarm' or 'alarm' levels where the settings values between theses 2 can be close.

We still find that that a lack of understanding from Occupants and even Tradespersons generally about the adverse and potentially damaging effects of dust / steam / water exposure, or introduced environment changes like fog juice, or items causing excessive heat is often behind unwanted Alarms.
Simple things like water leaks in roofs, and a lack of general building maintenance can also contribute in varying ways.

Fees and Changes for false alarms.
Hefty Brigade fines has always changed behaviour – I worked in Victoria where it well known that the MFB charged massively for False Alarms in Metro City areas. Their management plans for 50 story buildings, and the number of appliances and crews dispatched have always been problematic for the Brigades, both at a cost level, but then further at an operational level where huge resources were sent to the classic burnt toast – where those crews and appliances weren't available for real fire issues.

The first thing I was told when taking up the tools in Melbourne was 'don't ever be the cause of a false alarm, as the Company has to pay the MFB fines – that word was heard and spread every day.

That's my 2 minute rundown on, and sadly all I'll have time for by the 13th – clearly some points here that could be elaborated on.

From:
Sent: ████████████████████████████
To: ███████████████
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Sent: Friday, October 6, 2023 4:05 PM
To: TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy <TFSFARS@fire.tas.gov.au>
Subject: New submission from False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

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Agree

2. On who's behalf are you making this submission? (Please select one item only)

I am making this submission on my own behalf.

3. Are you an DPFEM internal employee, external employee, external stakeholder, retained or volunteer firefighter?

I am a external stakeholder

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on particular areas that TFS should target through the development of policy and guidelines that will support the decision-making process to effectively reduce false alarms?

Bill people that don't have necessary permits causing a waste emergency resources

What advice and support do you require from frontline staff to take action to reduce the occurrence of repeat false alarms?

Bill people that don't have necessary permits causing a waste emergency resources

What type of resources would you find useful to assist in reducing the incidence of false alarms? And, what type of information do you require?

Updates/summary of requirements and responsibilities under legislation that are in lamens teems, sent to every home via an app and/or text service

What considerations do you believe should be incorporated into a methodology for the setting of fees and charges relating to premises with monitored alarms?

If the owner is at fault they should bear finacial responsibility

How might TFS be able to provide an improved service to premises owners in the payment of fees and charges related to alarm premises?

Compliant owners reduced fees

Have you any other ideas on how TFS may be able to provide a more efficient and effective service in relation to alarmed premises?

Encourage compliance and early payment

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Sent: Monday, October 23, 2023 2:17 PM
To: TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy <TFSFARS@fire.tas.gov.au>
Subject: New submission from False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

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Other

Please specify

SME - former Assistant Commissioner with Fire and Rescue NSW, with responsibility for management of AFA false alarm charging and reduction initiatives

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on particular areas that TFS should target through the development of policy and guidelines that will support the decision-making process to effectively reduce false alarms?

• Appropriately resource the functional team that will target false alarm reduction – this initiative cannot be run off the side of someone's desk. This includes the resources that will develop and maintain policies and procedures.

• Use false alarm charges to establish revenue-funded uniformed and admin positions in TASFIRE (Building Fire Safety and Community Engagement) focussed on reducing false alarms, improving delivery of the agency's statutory obligations and developing and maintaining policies and procedures.

• Policies and procedures need to identify that false alarms are an operational capacity and capability problem, as well as being costly to fire agencies, the community and the economy. Policies should therefore be able to task local fire crews, who are among those most impacted by false alarms. Mobilising local crews as the credible, trusted voice of authority ensures the agency provides front-line information and guidance to the occupants of high-incidence premises on how to reduce alarms.

• Undertake analysis to identify the premises that are the 'frequent flyers' – the worst performers in generating unwanted alarms – and target reduction activities at these sites first. This needs to be collaborative approach with solutions acceptable to TASFIRE embedded in policy and procedures, including consideration of alarm delay facilities and the possibility of having automatic alarms to the fire brigade connected to the sprinkler/hydrant system, rather than the smoke detection system.

• Engage with the fire protection industry and building owners, managers and occupants to determine what are these best, most reliable and cost-effective technical solutions can be installed to reduce false alarms, and then embed these solutions in policy.

• Policies and procedures should make clear that these is a 'carrot and stick' approach to reducing false alarms. For example, the first false alarm in a determined period (which could be 30 days, 60 days, 90 days?) does not incur a charge, followed by fines for repeat false alarms over this period.

• Policies and procedures need to be developed for charging that reflect the true cost-recovery of fire crews' attending

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unwanted alarms, and to ensure the party causing the alarm is the one who pays.

• As an incentive, a clear and easily accessed procedure to waive false alarm charges, conditional on the building owner/management instead investing the funds waived into alarm system upgrades/reconfiguration to reduce unwanted alarms.

What advice and support do you require from frontline staff to take action to reduce the occurrence of repeat false alarms?

• Use the false alarm incident, when firefighters have the attention of the occupants, to reinforce fire safety and false alarm reduction messages. Ensure fire crews who have responded to a false alarm talk with management/occupants of the building about how to reduce unwanted activations, rather than hop into the truck and get back to the station ASAP.

• Local crews to schedule follow-up pre-incident planning visits and education/awareness sessions for occupants of premises that have a high rate of false alarms, supported by the central unwanted alarm reduction team.

What type of resources would you find useful to assist in reducing the incidence of false alarms? And, what type of information do you require?

• For building owners and managers, recommended technical solutions, as well as consumer information to help change occupant behaviours that trigger unwanted alarms.

• An agency false alarm reduction webpage containing all available information, accessible through a QR code that can be used on 'calling cards' for buildings targeted for false alarm reduction intervention.

• An engaging, informative professional presentation (PowerPoint, video, etc) that local crews and the unwanted alarm reduction team can use in their community engagement with high-incidence premises. This material should also be publicly available.

• Tips on how to reduce unwanted alarms on a fridge magnet, which can be handed out to occupants following an unwanted alarm.

• Regular social media posts on the problem and how to help reduce it.

What considerations do you believe should be incorporated into a methodology for the setting of fees and charges relating to premises with monitored alarms?

• Calculate the charge based on the principle of cost recovery, requiring the fire agency to know the average cost of responding to an unwanted alarm.

• Be aware there are strong indications that false alarm charges drive perverse behaviours i.e. 1. building alarm systems being isolated during business hours, when there is the greatest life risk, and being switched on only when the building is unoccupied; and 2. isolating zones and sections for extended periods.

• Fire agencies can also become dependent on the revenue generated from unwanted alarm fines, giving at least the perception there is minimal motivation to reduce false alarms because the charges fill a budgetary need. A simple, solid waiving process and positive collaboration with building owners, managers and occupants to reduce false alarms will help dispel this perception.

• Ensure that the person causing the false alarm is the one being charged – 'user pays' principle.

How might TFS be able to provide an improved service to premises owners in the payment of fees and charges related to alarm premises?

• Work with the building owner, management and occupants to educate people and upgrade systems in ways specifically designed to reduce unwanted alarms. Preventing the false alarm from happening reduces the need to levy and pay a charge.

• Have in place an easily accessible waiver program that allows the value of false alarm charges to be used to upgrade systems and implement local unwanted alarm reduction initiatives.

Have you any other ideas on how TFS may be able to provide a more efficient and effective service in relation to alarmed premises?

• Consider encouraging the installation of an alarm delay function, allowing residents, workers or building management to clear a non-emergency problem (e.g. steam from a shower or fumes from cooking) before transmitting an unwanted alarm signal to TASFIRE.

• Where this is an option, encourage building owners to have their alarm connection to TASFIRE installed on their wet/sprinkler system, rather than their smoke detection system.

• I would welcome further discussion with the project team, if this can assist - my contact details (not for publication):

From: TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy
Sent: ████████████████████████
To: ████████████████
Subject: False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

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From: no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au <no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au> **On Behalf Of** Tasmania Fire Service
Sent: Monday, October 30, 2023 9:28 AM
To: TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy <TFSFARS@fire.tas.gov.au>
Subject: New submission from False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

1. By making a submission to this consultation you agree to the collection of information you provide in your submission and the use of the information; and non-disclosure of personal information as outlined above.

Agree

2. On who's behalf are you making this submission? (Please select one item only)

I am making this submission on behalf of a business.

3. Are you an DPFEM internal employee, external employee, external stakeholder, retained or volunteer firefighter?

I am an external employee.

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on particular areas that TFS should target through the development of policy and guidelines that will support the decision-making process to effectively reduce false alarms?

I suggest looking into the impolimentation of a policy to allow the use of Alarm Delay Facility into monitored premises. I would see this as something that could be applied for by businesses and organsiations maanging complex sites so that there isnt an immediate call out to a false alarm when a site has suitably experienanced and/or trained Wardens to assess the need for a call out.

What advice and support do you require from frontline staff to take action to reduce the occurrence of repeat false alarms?

Continued upskilling of crews on the use of TAKTIS Fire Alarm Panels.

What type of resources would you find useful to assist in reducing the incidence of false alarms? And, what type of information do you require?

NA

What considerations do you believe should be incorporated into a methodology for the setting of fees and charges relating to premises with monitored alarms?

NA

How might TFS be able to provide an improved service to premises owners in the payment of fees and charges related to alarm premises?

NA

Have you any other ideas on how TFS may be able to provide a more efficient and effective service in relation to alarmed premises?

NA

From: TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy
Sent: ████████████████████████████████
To: ██████████████████
Subject: False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

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From: no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au <no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au> **On Behalf Of** Tasmania Fire Service
Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2023 4:09 PM
To: TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy <TFSFARS@fire.tas.gov.au>
Subject: New submission from False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

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Agree

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I am making this submission on my own behalf.

3. Are you an DPFEM internal employee, external employee, external stakeholder, retained or volunteer firefighter?

I am a volunteer firefighter

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on particular areas that TFS should target through the development of policy and guidelines that will support the decision-making process to effectively reduce false alarms?

Every detector is impacted by foreign particles and micro organisms present in the atmosphere it monitors. The contract (if there is one) issued by TFS to have premises monitored must contain a stringent maintenance clause, as every activation has a cause. It is impossible to have an activation without reason.

What advice and support do you require from frontline staff to take action to reduce the occurrence of repeat false alarms?

After an activation the TFS emails the premise owner of the detector in question, and that is all that happens. There is no follow up to TFS or the local brigade to advise if the situation has been remedied.

What type of resources would you find useful to assist in reducing the incidence of false alarms? And, what type of information do you require?

Education of premise owners/fire wardens is required with regard to maintenance of detectors and correct work practices. Any contract should have guidelines for implementing procedures to enable optimum performance out of these detectors e.g. when to isolate zones if creating an atmospheric hazard.

What considerations do you believe should be incorporated into a methodology for the setting of fees and charges relating to premises with monitored alarms?

Fees are relevant when activations are work related I.e. failing to take appropriate remedial steps before commencing work.

How might TFS be able to provide an improved service to premises owners in the payment of fees and charges related to alarm premises?

TFS brigades already have an efficient and effective service to DBA calls. What is imperative is that we cease being a non emergency monitoring agency. We are an emergency response service same as SES, Police & Ambulance.

Have you any other ideas on how TFS may be able to provide a more efficient and effective service in relation to alarmed premises?

The Act states that we must attend DBA's. Perhaps the regulations should include the words "smoke activated alarms" then we could work towards a better solution. Check out Western Australia's approach to false alarms.
I believe each detector should have a 'buddy' whereby the first activation goes to TFS, who then talk to the premise fire warden. If the second 'buddy' goes off (they can be close or 2m away) TFS hit the big red button. This eliminates any doubt

about why the detector activated. No doubt legal requirements must be dealt with but with appropriate training fire wardens would have the rights to assess and isolate detectors and reset as we do.

False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

Instructions: Please provide answers to the questions that have been asked as they relate to the identified categories in which we seek comment. There are no word limits to your responses.

Consultation is open from Friday September 1 to Friday November 3, 2023.

Collection of Information

Before answering any of the questions, or providing any of your details, please ensure you have read and understood the below statements.

All submissions and comments will be published. All personal details will remain in confidence and not used beyond the scope of this consultation. Your comments and feedback will only be used to help inform the best way forward for the development of the False Alarm Reduction Strategy. The Tasmania Fire Service will handle your personal information in line with the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* (<u>View - Tasmanian Legislation Online</u>).

For further information relating to how the feedback from this consultation will be used, refer to the relevant section within the "False Alarm Reduction Project - Consultation Paper".

It is not a requirement of this survey to declare any of your personal details.

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   ☒ Agree   ☐ Do not agree

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   ☐ I am making this submission on behalf of a business.

   ☐ I am making this submission on behalf of an industry body.

   ☐ I am making this submission on behalf of a government agency or employee.

3. Are you a DPFEM internal employee, external employee, retained, or volunteer firefighter?

☐ I am a DPFEM internal employee.

☐ I am an external employee.

☐ I am a retained firefighter.

☒ I am a volunteer firefighter.

The following questions are specific to the consultation relating to false alarm management.

Please refer to the consultation paper regarding the information provided, which forms the basis of these questions for your response.

Policy & Procedures

4. Question

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on particular areas that TFS should target through the development of policy and guidelines that will support the decision-making process to effectively reduce false alarms?

Building Safety are to ensure premises are adhering to the as1851-2012 standard specifically Appendix G – Fire Detector Testing Detector Testing – Point Type Smoke Detectors G5 POINT TYPE SMOKE DETECTOR SENSITIVITY•All smoke detectors shall be replaced with cleaned and calibrated or new detectors every 10 years followed by the functional test (G4); unless the sensitivity is tested or verified in accordance with G6 or G7. G6 POINT SMOKE DETECTOR IN SITU SENSITIVITY TEST Test sensitivity of all detectors in situ using test equipment listed and calibrated in accordance with a national or international standard Test to be conducted after 10 years from installation and then every 5 years Report all detectors that fail the testG7 SMOKE DETECTORS CAPABLE OF REPORTING 'OUT OF SENSITIVITY RANGE' Where the sensitivity or 'out of sensitivity range' can be indicated or read at either the CIE or at the detectors, carry out the relevant procedure in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions yearly. Report all detectors that indicate they are at the end of the manufacturer's sensitivity range. Prevent installers siting/installing of smoke detectors in environments prone to activating these type of devices E.G. Kitchens, Bathrooms high dust environments. Ensuring when a site changes work practices they are not have an unintended consequence of activating of a device. Ensuring contractors working in monitored premises they are aware of the contractor obligations regarding isolation and the monetary fine imposed if they activate a device etc. Aged Care and Hospital environments Class 9a/9C look at rationalising the siting

of Manual Call Points in publicly accessible locations. No requirement for MCP's under the latest edition of AS1670.1:2018 (need to be verified for 9a/9c class buildings). These could be sighted in Nurse Stations or equivalent locations with sufficient covers to prevent accidental activations. These therefore would only be accessible by staff.

Training of frontline staff

5. Question
What advice and support do you require from frontline staff to take action to reduce the occurrence of repeat false alarms?

More detailed reports of activations. Model of the FDCIE, Type of activated device. Who activated it. No cause found more details. Ensure photos of the FDCIE and the activated device are taken for all DBA. This can be corelated to see if there is a trend that can be identified to help reduce the activations.

Education

6. Question
What type of resources would you find useful to assist in reducing the incidence of false alarms? And, what type of information do you require?

Have a brochure to give to the premises to help education them on reducing false alarms E.G Work practices / isolations etc. These could be sent out with the bill

The setting of Fees and Charges

7. Question
What considerations do you believe should be incorporated into a methodology for the setting of fees and charges relating to premises with monitored alarms?

Look at the FRV and RFS type of fee structure where each appliance that attends is charged out at $1000 each or more and then once on site, they are billed extra in 15-minute blocks of time. Could be $250 per 15 minutes per truck. This could also be an additional revenue stream for the TFS outside of Government financial control.

Business systems and practices

8. Question

How might TFS be able to provide an improved service to premises owners in the payment of fees and charges related to alarm premises?

Provide Aged Care and Hospitals more support when residents/patients activate devices. Maybe a set an amount free callout per financial year (4?). Show them on the invoice what they could have been charged then discount accordingly and show how many free activations they have left.

9. Question

Have you any other ideas on how TFS may be able to provide a more efficient and effective service in relation to alarmed premises?

Provide TFS staff and Volunteers training on the use of FDCIE in their response areas or develop TFS manuals for them. Ensure brigades are given sufficient notification when new FDCIE are installed in their brigade response areas and are then given sufficient training on the operation of the new FDCIE. Have stickers placed on the FDCIE at each premises that indicates the amount of the fines for false alarm activations.

National Fire Industry Association

Australia

Contractors at the Frontline of Fire Protection

TFS False Alarm Reduction Consultation Paper

Submission

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☐ I am a volunteer firefighter.

Introduction

The National Fire Industry Association thanks the Tasmanian Fire Service for the opportunity to comment on this important topic. The NFIA sees this issue as an opportunity for the State to advance towards implementing the recommendations published in the 2018 Building Confidence Report, developed by Peter Shergold and Bronwyn Weir. Greater regulation for the Fire Protection Industry in Tasmania is crucial to quality assurance; the safety of our built environment and all those that live, work and play in it. As a natural result there will be a reduction in false alarms and a safer environment for all.

The Australian Fire Protection Industry

Fire protection in Australia is typically achieved via three means:
- Active fire protection (fire sprinklers, fire hydrants and fire alarm systems);
- Passive fire protection (fire rated walls, floors and ceilings and fire sealing); and
- Education.

The Fire Protection Industry contributes over $2.5 billion to the Australian economy every year. Over 2000 businesses pay nearly $700 million in wages each year and industry revenue is projected to increase at an annualised rate of 1.5% over the five years through 2025-26, to reach $2.7 billion.

The IBISWorld Industry Report OD5424 Fire Protection Services in Australia (November 2020), claims that despite the presence of vertically integrated multinational giants, the industry has a low level of market share concentration. The two major companies have a combined market share of only 10% and are both part of large multinational companies operating globally across several related industries. Twenty years ago, the two major companies are estimated to have had 80% of the market.

There are numerous regional and local players that construct, install and service fire protection systems to small, medium, and major buildings across the full scope of class 2 to 9 buildings as well as higher risk facilities such as fuel depots, harbours, and similar developments. Over half the industry enterprises employ between one and 19 people. As the minor players have increased their share of the total market, the industry has become more diverse, while also growing substantially.

Where twenty years ago, the two major companies offered a form of institutionalised but limited "industry" training to their people, it could be argued that the industry was less in need of regulation. However, as the industry has grown substantially and its make-up evolved it is now predominately made up of many more, smaller independent contracting companies. That market growth and diversification has provided customers with better contractor choices, better outcomes, and better pricing but, at the same time, raised the need for more over-arching regulation.

The National Fire Industry Association (NFIA)

The National Fire Industry Association, Australia (NFIA) is an Australia-wide community of commercial fire protection contractors, their people, suppliers, and industry stakeholders representing a wide and varied membership from the smallest sub-contractor through to large Australia-wide construction and service businesses. Our Members work at the frontline of fire protection with an estimated 80 per cent of the fire protection work undertaken in Australia completed by Members of NFIA.

NFIA utilises the resources of other Australian and International industry organisations and associations.

NFIA is committed to the delivery of quality fire protection practitioners across all aspects of fire protection safety. To this end, NFIA has sponsored and supported the growth of the world leading fire industry Registered Training Organisation (RTO), Fire Industry Training (FiT), which now delivers fire industry required training for all of Australia at its campuses in Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney.

NFIA believes that an appropriate regulatory framework should be one that protects the safety of the community and property, provides adequate consumer protection, recognises, and accommodates industry practice and standards, requires registration of practitioners, and is linked to the national training package framework.

Submission

1. Policy and Procedures

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on particular areas that TFS should target through the development of policy and guidelines that will support the decision-making process to effectively reduce false alarms?

The NFIA recommends that the best way to reduce false alarms is to increase licensing for the Fire Protection Industry in Tasmania. With greater regulation, increased compliance with the Australian Standards will inherently follow. The two main reasons behind ongoing false alarm issues in Tasmania are a lack of skilled labour and dated, obsolete systems, which both can be rectified by greater fire protection licensing.

As you will be aware, the Building Confidence Report (BCR) was commissioned by the Building Ministers Forum (BMF) in 2017 and published in 2018. The BCR includes 24 recommendations to improve the effectiveness of compliance and enforcement systems for the building and construction industry across Australia. On 18 July 2019 the BMF "agreed to a national approach to the implementation of the *Building Confidence* Report*"* and all jurisdictions supported "a national framework to address the issues identified in the Shergold Weir *Building Confidence* Report". Whilst this national approach received commitment from all jurisdictions, there has been inadequate progress so far in the adoption and implementation of the 24 recommendations. The NFIA supports all recommendations from the BCR and their adoption and implementation nationally, however, for the purpose of this Consultation Paper, we refer to those recommendations that speak directly to improving false alarms.

Recommendation 1 of the BCR identifies that whilst fire safety systems are a critical component of commercial buildings and feature heavily in the National Construction Code (NCC), most States and Territories do not have a requirement to register the practitioners who have expertise in fire safety system design, installation or maintenance. Furthermore, most complex fire safety systems in commercial buildings require maintenance and testing and, not dissimilar to design and installation, many States and Territories do not require those undertaking maintenance work to be registered. Given that most of the alarm and detection system work is currently undertaken by electricians, which is not covered in their apprenticeship and often do not receive adequate on the job training, a lot of this work has not and is not being performed correctly.

Recommendation 2 outlines the different requirements across jurisdictions for registration, as well as the limited availability for nationally consistent training packages. Without a nationally consistent approach, Automatic Mutual Recognition of registered practitioners operating across borders will be complex and as it currently stands, the process of being deemed a permit holder by the Tasmanian Fire Service can be onerous, which is not assisting with the skills shortage.

Recommendation 19 addresses inspection and certification of fire safety system installation. Developing from Recommendation 1, it recommends mandatory implementation of certification of the testing and commissioning of fire safety systems and certification should not be performed by the system installer. There must be government registration and a licensing framework for certification, as urgently as for design, installation and maintenance. The NFIA suggests that the current Tasmanian system of permit holders submitting a commissioning document to the TFS on their own works, is problematic and the implementation of a third-party certification system is recommended.

We are seeing many existing alarm systems being twenty to forty years old and have never been upgraded. Detectors are unlikely to last more than ten years and anything beyond that, it is recommended that they, as well as the fire panel, are upgraded. Improved fire protection licensing will see an uplifting of the standards of practitioners on the ground who in turn will drive building owners to upgrade systems rather than the current culture of contractors being told to patch up problems, rather than properly maintaining to the latest systems.

Further, the upgrade of these obsolete systems will create the opportunity for Fire Contractors to install/upgrade detections to one that best suits the environment, as well as programming alarm dependency, so that they don't go off instantly when not required. An example of this is when we see repeat false alarms caused by people vaping inside of buildings, now a common occurrence, however, dated systems have not been programmed to handle this kind of situation.

2. Training of Frontline Staff

What advice and support do you require from frontline staff to take action to reduce the occurrence of repeat false alarms?

The NFIA suggests that the TFS could support their frontline staff with some additional technical training, which will in turn assist Fire Contractors in the field.

On a conventional system, when there is a false alarm and the Brigade attends, frontline staff need to isolate the alarm only, to allow Fire Technicians to attend the site and diagnose the issue. Currently, there are lots of cases where frontline staff are attending sites and both isolating the false alarm and resetting the system. This results in the attending Fire Technician being unable to easily diagnose which alarm was faulty, if at all and will continue in that alarm signalling falsely until identified and fixed.

This is a simple example of where frontline staff are not sufficiently trained in the fundamentals of fire detection systems. Some feedback indicates that frontline staff are concerned that isolating the alarm only will leave the building unprotected, which is not the case.

Further training from trained Technicians will allow the TFS and Fire Contractors to work more harmoniously in the field, as well as reducing repeat false alarms. The NFIA considers that if

at least one frontline staff member per call out has the basic knowledge of fire panels required, this will greatly improve the issue.

The NFIA would be more than happy to provide additional assistance and information around this to assist the Tasmanian Fire Service.

3. Education

What type of resources would you find useful to assist in reducing the incidence of false alarms? And, what type of information do you require?

The NFIA submits that this comes down to the design of each system, which varies from building to building. Whilst policies and procedures for each particular site may assist in some circumstances, prevention of false alarms is key. As highlighted in Questions 1 and 2, system design, age and usability are the key factors in the triggering of false alarms. Greater fire protection licensing will put the onus on the building owner to ensure compliance.

4. The Setting of Fees and Charges

What considerations do you believe should be incorporated into a methodology for the setting of fees and charges relating to premises with monitored alarms?

The NFIA does not wish to submit on this matter, other than the settings of fees and charges should be fair and reasonable. The NFIA suggests that looking at other state models might assist in determining what to consider, for example the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services model which operates suitably.

5. Business Systems and Practices

How might TFS be able to provide an improved service to premises owners in the payment of fees and charges related to alarm premises?

Have you any other ideas on how TFS may be able to provide a more efficient and effective service in relation to alarmed premises?

Other than what has already been outlined above, the NFIA has nothing further to submit on this matter.

From:
Sent: ████████████████████████████
To: ████████████████
Subject: False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper:
Feedback Form

From: no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au <no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au> **On Behalf Of** Tasmania Fire Service
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I am making this submission on behalf of an industry body.

3. Are you an DPFEM internal employee, external employee, external stakeholder, retained or volunteer firefighter?

Other

Please specify

None of the above

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on particular areas that TFS should target through the development of policy and guidelines that will support the decision-making process to effectively reduce false alarms?

A clearly written policy or guideline on false alarms will help to increase awareness and understanding about the issues. They should outline some of the major causes of false alarms, the consequences if an alarm is activated inappropriately, and how they can be prevented.
Some of the areas that a policy or guideline might cover could include:
• why false alarms are a problem;
• causes of false alarms – poor maintenance, cooking, steam, aerosols; smoking, candles, and incense; dust or fumes from construction work; malicious or accidental activity; poorly installed or located detectors; poor ventilation; and insect infestation;
• penalties for false alarms – include escalating penalties for recurring incidents;
• what detectors should be used in different areas of a residence, and different types of detection;
• the importance of building maintenance;
• who should install/maintain detectors and following the CoP as per permit conditions.
• the education of occupants.
• TFS personnel should undergo training on various fire panels to ensure accurate information is communicated to the service provider regarding false alarms. Service provider details should be displayed on the fire panel at each site, and a copy of the incident report should be sent to the service provider in addition to the client.
• TFS personnel should be skilled in operating fire pumps and sprinkler systems. Companies are required to adhere to specific standards and obtain approval from TFS building safety. However, there is currently no training for TFS staff on interpreting block plans and understanding the fire services infrastructure installed in buildings throughout Tasmania, and how to utilize this information in a fire emergency.

What advice and support do you require from frontline staff to take action to reduce the occurrence of repeat false alarms?

Training is essential not only for frontline staff but should also be made available as an option for individuals responsible for false alarms, aiming to educate them about the associated risks.
In cases where a technician's error leads to a call for Tas fire to attend the site, there shouldn't be a requirement for a full investigation. The attending crew can communicate with the technician to identify the issue and quickly resume their duties, minimizing downtime for the responding team

What type of resources would you find useful to assist in reducing the incidence of false alarms? And, what type of information do you require?

As previously mentioned, training is essential not only for frontline staff but should also be made accessible as an option for individuals responsible for false alarms, providing them with education about the associated risks.

This training initiative should be accessible to a wide range of individuals, including TFS staff, property owners, occupants, bodies corporate, strata managers, practitioners, and the general public. The content of the training should be tailored to address specific concerns relevant to each segment.

The training could follow the same structure as identified in question 4. Some potential questions for consideration might include:

• how do smoke and heat detectors work?
• how to identify smoke, heat and other alarm types?
• what are false alarms?
• Why do they occur? What factors cause them (e.g. human, contamination, environmental)?
• Why are they a problem?
• How can we minimise false alarms?

Implement guidelines mandating that properly trained and authorized individuals handle the operation of fire systems and perform isolations when necessary. Unfortunately, numerous unqualified individuals engage in activities that hinder the functioning of the fire system., such as:

• Open the door to stop local alarm.
• Turn EWIS key to manual or isolate.
• Leave ASE key in isolate.
• Isolate bells/ sounder via control buttons.
• Use plastic wrap, rubber gloves or detector covers to prevent false alarms, then forget to remove them when the work is completed.
• No isolation logbook entries completed. This causes confusion as to the state of the fire system for other people attending site.

What considerations do you believe should be incorporated into a methodology for the setting of fees and charges relating to premises with monitored alarms?

Charges for false alarms need to be just, appropriate, and proportionate. Instead of immediately imposing fees for false alarms, the agency should prioritize educating individuals responsible for them, aiming to prevent future occurrences. If fees are implemented, they should increase in severity for repeated incidents and be specifically directed at the individuals triggering the alarms, such as residents, rather than burdening the building's body corporate.

Consider displaying signs indicating penalty costs for system resets, especially in locations like hotels.

How might TFS be able to provide an improved service to premises owners in the payment of fees and charges related to alarm premises?

Prioritizing education over financial penalties provides owners with a chance to implement measures preventing future violations. This educational initiative should focus on the necessary approval procedures for modifying sanctioned fire systems, addressing the common lack of understanding among facility managers regarding the process, especially when it comes to changing detector types.

Have you any other ideas on how TFS may be able to provide a more efficient and effective service in relation to alarmed premises?

Having a skilled and experienced workforce to install these systems can decrease the likelihood of incorrectly placed or installed detectors triggering inappropriate activations.

There is a pressing need to expand the limited pool of technicians specializing in both dry and wet fire systems. Considering individual permits as a supplement to the existing company permit system is crucial. This approach guarantees that technicians working on these systems possess the necessary expertise, rather than merely being employees of a business holding a permit.

It is evident that TFS operational crews lack comprehensive training in operating all fire systems in Tasmania, particularly when it comes to larger sites. Increasing their site visits and inspections, especially in significant establishments, would be invaluable.

It could be beneficial for TFS operational crews to receive training on all fire systems. Additionally, increasing their presence in larger sites for inspections might enhance their understanding of the installed fire systems.

Explore the feasibility of introducing a minor works category specifically for changing false alarming device types. This category could be limited to cases where the change is endorsed by an approved Fire Services Designer, such as those specializing in dry fire, and provided a start work form is submitted. Presently, the permit type system allows companies and their employees to undertake these tasks.

Simplify the procedure for upgrading fire panels from conventional to addressable systems.

From:	TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy
Sent:	████████████████
To:	████████████
Subject:	False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

From: no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au <no-reply=tasfire.clients.ionata.com.au@mailgun.clients.ionata.com.au> **On Behalf Of** Tasmania Fire Service
Sent: Friday, November 3, 2023 5:12 PM
To: TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy <TFSFARS@fire.tas.gov.au>
Subject: New submission from False Alarm Reduction Project Consultation Paper: Feedback Form

1. By making a submission to this consultation you agree to the collection of information you provide in your submission and the use of the information; and non-disclosure of personal information as outlined above.

Agree

2. On who's behalf are you making this submission? (Please select one item only)

I am making this submission on behalf of a government agency or employee .

3. Are you an DPFEM internal employee, external employee, external stakeholder, retained or volunteer firefighter?

I am an DPFEM internal employee.

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on particular areas that TFS should target through the development of policy and guidelines that will support the decision-making process to effectively reduce false alarms?

It should be made clear the cost to the community of false alarms so as any prevention measures can be apportioned to the true reduction in costs. This should be imbedded in policy so it can be read and understood.

It is critical that the TFS continue to regulate the fire protection industry to ensure compliance with the industry code of practice. A move away from this process will lead to a watering down of requirements for permit holders.

Premise owners and occupiers should be encouraged to modernise their fire detection and suppression systems to actively reduce false alarms. TFS may be able to assist with this by reducing the cost of assessing improvements to fire safety systems in buildings where there is a tangible benefit to reducing the chance of false alarms.

Fire evacuation plans should have the process for isolating and reinstating a fire detection system documented. This will provide direction for internal staff to isolate fire safety systems to reduce the chance of a false alarm. Where a fire safety system is installed, this should be a mandatory field in the fire evacuation approval process.

TFS need to develop a training program for owners and occupiers of premises with fire detection systems installed to allow them to legally isolate zones and detectors to reduce the chance of false alarms but still maintain a level of fire protection within a building. This training should inform them on the process for isolating and reinstating a system and the risk assessment process they need to use to assess the need and identify the areas/zones that need to be isolated. The training should also include the information required for ECO members and the coordination of building occupiers and contractors involved in the works causing the isolation.

What advice and support do you require from frontline staff to take action to reduce the occurrence of repeat false alarms?

Training systems and processes need to be developed to inform, educate and support responding fire crews to be able to inform building occupiers of the cause of the alarm and how they can reduce the chance of false alarm reoccurring. This approach needs to be considered and measured so it is seen as the start of a process and not the beginning and end. Additional training needs to be imbedded in existing training programs where it becomes second nature to actively look for causes and assess possible solutions.

This training can provide support for responding crews to educate occupants on any strategies to reduce false alarms and work practices that may be the cause of those false alarms. Responding crews may also be able to check the maintenance regimes of fire safety systems and alert the Building Safety Unit if there are any issues identified.

This training needs to be supported by good tools to support their advice including handouts that clearly explain the process and a comprehensive website portal that further develops the advice and guidance provided by crews on the ground. Additionally, human resources need to be made available to follow up and provide support and accountability to resolving issues. These resources need to be aligned with fire safety auditors so as a holistic approach to ensuring the fire safety of premises can be achieved. This whole process must be joined up, transparent and proactive about actively reducing false alarms and ensuring the safest possible outcome for building occupants.

Further training needs to be provided to responding crews on the importance of accurate and timely reporting through the Australian Incident Reporting System (AIRS). With enhanced training in this area, better decision making can be undertaken, and more accurate data can be captured for the purposes of reporting.

What type of resources would you find useful to assist in reducing the incidence of false alarms? And, what type of information do you require?

Both physical and human resources need to be dedicated and developed to support a focused education program for building occupiers. This program must encourage change in building occupant behaviour, fire safety systems and provide a structured approach to ensuring there is support in place for building occupiers to take a proactive approach to reducing false alarms.

This must be supported by easy-to-use information that is available in literature form and online through a dedicated website. The information must be comprehensive, available in one location and provides a solutions-based approach to actively reducing the chance of false alarms.

This information must provide real tangible solutions and include issues such as:

• Cost and benefits to the investment in modern fire safety system that reduce the chance of false alarms.
• Systems and technology available to assist building occupiers to actively reduce false alarms.
• Incentives to owner/occupier for genuine effort of owners for upgrading/amending fire safety systems in a genuine
• The cost to provide the brigade to attend a false alarm and that future false alarms will cost 'this much', so you need to take action to prevent this from happening.
• How permit holders (service contractors) can provide services to ensure systems are operating at the optimum level.

What considerations do you believe should be incorporated into a methodology for the setting of fees and charges relating to premises with monitored alarms?

Fees and charges need to be transparently available for public review including the methodology behind networking fees, monitoring fees and false alarm charges. This must be clearly called up in a policy.

There are concerns that high false alarm costs/charges may result in unintended consequences with premise occupiers installing switches to take a fire alarm system 'offline' to reduce the chance of alarms going through to a fire jurisdiction and initiating a response that may trigger a false alarm charge. Where a work practice that is completely avoidable causes a false alarm then this needs to be charged for in a measured way to prevent this from happening in the future. This dovetails with comments made around the training of front-line staff and better education and information for premise occupiers.

A more efficient and effective process needs to be implemented for debt recovery for outstanding fees and charges. It is unacceptable that the taxpayers are owed a significant amount of money that essentially compensates the taxpayer for the provision of unfunded services that protect the premises and occupants for which they have a legal obligation to provide. DPFEM must have a clear, transparent and documented debt recovery process that is available for public scrutiny.

False alarm charges must be consistent across career and volunteer service delivery models. Although the false alarm charge should be a better reflection of the cost to provide the service, it should not be looked upon as a revenue raising process but rather as an influencing factor for premise occupiers to take action to prevent false alarms from occurring in the future.

How might TFS be able to provide an improved service to premises owners in the payment of fees and charges related to alarm premises?

DPFEM need to consider the implementation of a system that allows a single pathway for managing false alarms and premise intelligence across the state. The current practice of having old software that is not fit for purpose slows down progress and hinders a practical approach the management of alarmed premises and the active reduction in false alarms. This system should also support operations so that premise intelligence can be shared for the benefit of operational fire crew Familiarisation and the use during emergencies. The system should be accessible by all internal stakeholders so as the most contemporary information can be maintained within the database.

The Building Safety Unit need to work closer with the building owners and proactively engage to offer sound technical advice on system upgrades, and looking at other features and measures that could result in better outcomes. (Things such as bulkheads to create a barrier between a detector and a cooking source, or mechanical ventilation on a motion sensor as an example. This would take training and resources. But should not be understated as this should always result in a better fire safety outcome for occupants and firefighters and result in net benefit to the community.

The decision-making process for determining false alarm charges needs to be well enshrined in policy and business

practice and where possible a single point of making the decision so as a holistic consistent approach is taken. Any system or process put in place needs to be supported by appropriately skilled human resources.

Have you any other ideas on how TFS may be able to provide a more efficient and effective service in relation to alarmed premises?

Resource this body of work appropriately as it is critically important to the success or not of this work. This project cannot be run of the side of someone's desk. Any dedicated resources need to maintain business as usual as well as develop and maintain policy and procedures and provide support to premise occupiers.

Submission

False Alarm Reduction Project

3 November 2023

Who we are

The Australian Institute of Building Surveyors (AIBS) is recognised nationally and internationally as the peak professional body representing building surveying practitioners in Australia.

Our Mission

AIBS is committed to ensuring a safer Australia through continuous improvement and development of the profession of Building Surveying. The overarching objective of the Institute can best be summarised as follows:

To achieve the highest standard of professionalism through Professional Development, such as education pathways and training, and Advocacy in representing the profession and establishing standards.

Professional Standards

The Australian Institute of Building Surveyors (AIBS) Professional Standards Schemes for Building Surveyors operates across all states and territories and is a legislative instrument that obliges AIBS, to monitor, enforce and improve the professional standards of members under the Scheme, thereby reducing risk for consumers of professional services.

The AIBS Professional Standards Scheme upholds the professional standards of Scheme Members, who are building surveyors, and ensures that clients have access to appropriately qualified and skilled building surveyor practitioners for representation and advice.

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Preparation

This submission has been prepared in response to the request to provide comment on a consultation paper examining Tasmania Fire Service's False Alarm Reduction project.

Overview

In principle, efforts to reduce the incidence of false alarm generation should receive widespread support, noting that frequent false alarms are associated with elevated levels of occupant complacency regarding the sounding of an alarm which can be highly detrimental in the event of a threat to safety necessitating orderly and timely evacuation. Appropriate steps taken to mitigate the public safety risks of false alarms is supported by AIBS.

AIBS notes that the need for detection and occupant warning systems in Tasmania exceeds that of other jurisdictions as a means of addressing brigade response times that are may be extended in some areas of Tasmania compared with other jurisdictions. This inflates the numbers of premises that are prone to false alarm compared with other jurisdictions, a matter not adequately addressed in the consultation paper. If additional brigade stations were able to be established to reduce response times, the numbers of premises that need early warning of a fire to be transmitted to the local brigade could safely be reduced.

AIBS also notes that Tasmania is relatively unique amongst Australian jurisdictions regarding the lack of choice for building owners regarding how detection systems are monitored. This can be used by some to criticise the Tasmanian Fire Service where it looks to increase fees, increase the numbers of buildings that require monitoring, or like measures that would cause preservation or growth in revenue for the Tasmanian Fire Service from the monitoring fees it charges.

AIBS believes that there is not likely an undue cost of this service and we have no view that the proposed changes have any sort of revenue motive, only raising this point because there are opportunities for this criticism from building owners and others owing to the opaque nature of fee setting and the like.

AIBS recommends that further consideration of the broader opportunities for fire alarm reduction occur in addition to consideration of the detailed comments on the consultation paper following.

In detail

AIBS has identified a number of detailed points that arise in response to the consultation paper as follows:

1. Firstly, to reduce the number of False Alarms is to also reduce the number of operational training opportunities for brigade intervention. Although a false alarm these callouts offer an unpredictable opportunity for firefighters to review the passive and active fire suppression systems in a building and conduct familiarity training and review of building footprints.

2. TFS needs to manage the perceived conflict of interest within TFS when providing the following services:

   - TFS has a Statutory role in the installation of smoke detection and alarm systems

   - TFS is the only service provider for alarm monitoring charging a fee for the monitoring service

   - TFS is proposing to establish a further call-out fee for brigade attendance at spurious alarm calls.

Where the TFS has a role in installation requirements followed by connection to a monitoring service not subject to any competition and now possible further revenue stream by charging for brigade intervention to false alarms the potential for a conflict of interest is clearly established. For this reason, a FULL Risk Analysis and Economic Impact Analysis should be undertaken on the entire service delivery from Statutory, monitoring, and call-out fees.

3. Spurious Alarms could be reduced by minimising the number of buildings attached to the FireCom monitoring system.

   TFS could contact building owners with "Non-Required Systems" connected to FireCom monitoring and advise of their options to remove non-required monitoring and evert to a Local Alarm. Many owners are not aware that monitoring is optional.

   Some of these are legacy monitoring systems that TFS has no interest in disconnecting as it would be a loss of revenue to the bottom line of the service. (Perceived Conflict of Interest).

4. Undertake a review in consultation with the Director of Building Control and Industry of the **National Construction Code (NCC) Tas Appendix Section E** regulations that require the installation of Smoke Detection and Alarm Systems in a greater number of buildings than is required of buildings in other states. The need for these monitored systems in some circumstances is over-regulation and overreach.

5. If the TFS is to implement a service fee for False Alarms then the fee MUST be TRANSPERANT and be APPLIED EQUALLY and FAIRLY across the building stock of both the PUBLIC & PRIVATE Sectors.

   This means whether the brigade attends the Launceston General or Hobart Hospitals or a privately owners Factory or Warehouse the false alarm fee applies equally no matter who the owner is. Further, if it is to be charged for 1 call-out the fee should be charged for 10 callouts. If the intention is to have building owners reduce their false alarms through penalty and subsequently those building owners eventually invest in having their alarm systems upgraded and or repaired to prevent false alarms then the fee has to apply across the board and no matter the number of callouts.

   (Any such fee for false alarms invoiced to the Launceston General Hospital will break them over time)

In closing

AIBS is committed to working with industry associations industry and key stakeholders to continually improve the building regulatory system throughout Australia.

Please contact us for any clarification or further information that may assist.