

From: TFS False Alarm Reduction Strategy
Sent: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
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.