

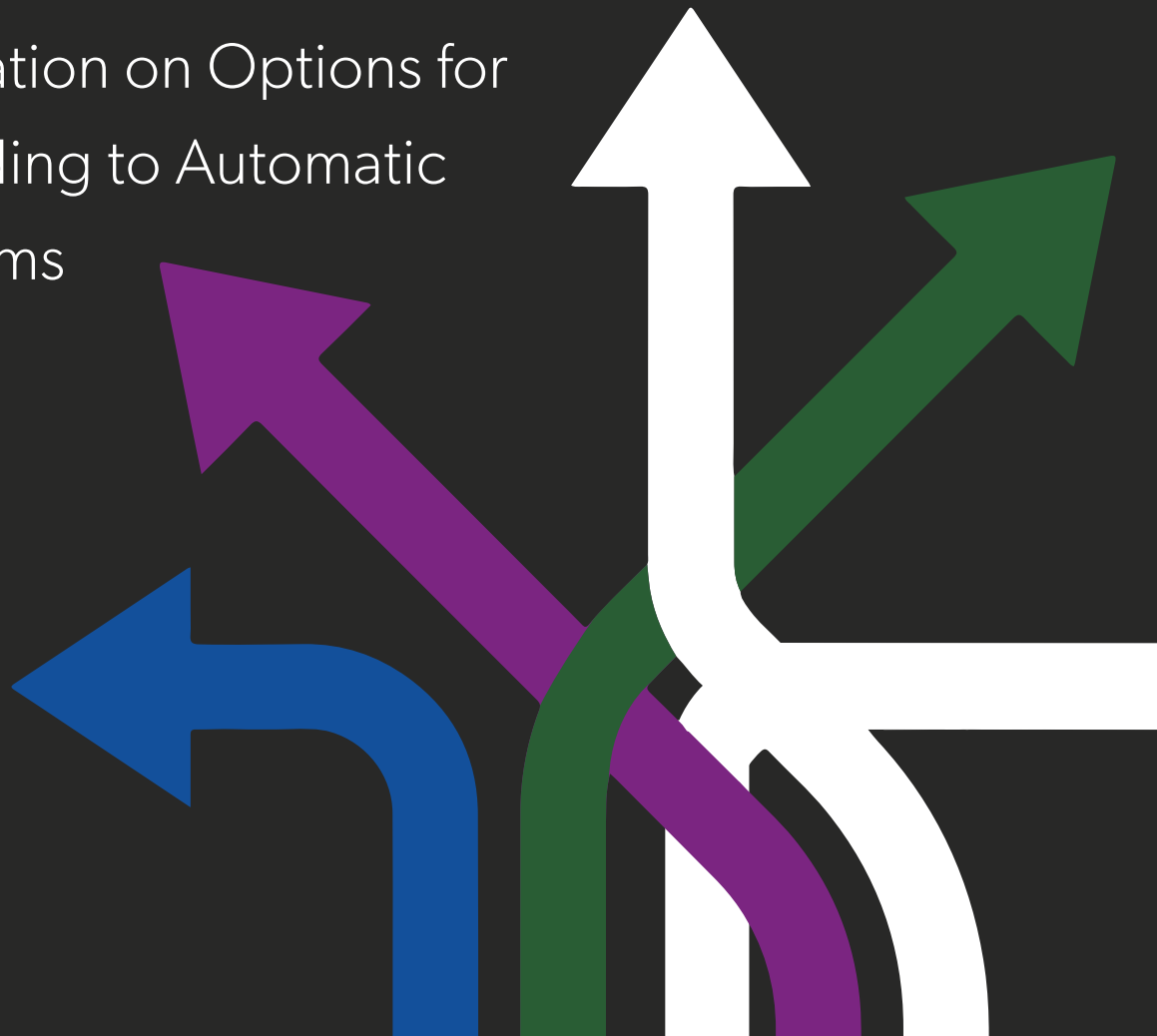


# Time for Change

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## Reducing Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals

Consultation on Options for  
Responding to Automatic  
Fire Alarms



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# INTRODUCTION

Every year the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) responds to an average of 28,479 unwanted fire alarm signals (UFAS) that are caused by automatic fire alarms (AFAs) in the workplace.

These systems are designed to provide early warning of fire and save lives but in the workplace 97% of the calls we receive are false alarms. This type of false alarm (UFAS) is often caused by factors such as cooking fumes, dust and lack of maintenance.

UFAS make up 31% of all the incidents we attend and we send out an average of two fire appliances to every UFAS.

**This means we are making around 57,000 unnecessary blue light journeys every year.**

We believe we could do more to keep the people of Scotland safe if we change how we respond to AFAs.

Any change we do make, will not affect how we respond to calls from AFAs that are real fires. If there is a confirmed fire, we will respond as we normally would for any emergency.

Also, any changes will not affect how we respond to alarms in private homes – we are only reviewing how we respond to false alarms in workplaces that have fire safety responsibilities under the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005.

We are committed to solving this problem in partnership with our key partners, stakeholders and the people of Scotland - which is why we are holding this 12-week public consultation.

This document sets out why we need to change our response to AFAs, the potential options for doing this, the process we will follow to make any changes and how you can get involved in shaping this decision.

Your input is invaluable to us and we would like you to complete our survey on Page 20 to help us identify a preferred option. There are eight questions in total and the survey will only take 5 minutes to complete. You can send the completed survey to us using our Freepost address or alternatively you can complete our online survey.

This survey is just one method in which we are engaging with those who have an interest.

We are engaging with our staff, local authorities, health boards, duty holders and others who will be directly affected.

If you feel that you would like to talk to us about how this may affect you, then please contact us on:

[SFRS.UFASConsultation@firescotland.gov.uk](mailto:SFRS.UFASConsultation@firescotland.gov.uk).

## What is AFA versus UFAS?

An AFA (automatic fire alarm) is a system that warns people of a possible fire by automatic or manual means. This is very different to a UFAS.

An unwanted fire alarm signal (UFAS) is a false alarm generated from an automatic fire alarm activation that the fire service responds to.

# 1. The case for change

Our figures show that the number of UFAS in Scotland has been increasing since 2013/14.

This was caused by a number of factors such as the number of AFA systems increasing in new builds and the creation of the SFRS in 2013, which standardised the response across the country.

Attending almost 30,000 UFAS every year impacts heavily on our resources and causes significant disruption to businesses, hospitals and health centres, schools and universities.

Almost all of us will have experienced the long wait outside a building while firefighters confirm there is no fire.

It is no surprise that complacency - "oh, it's just another false alarm" - may set in and cause staff to be less willing to act quickly when an alarm activates.

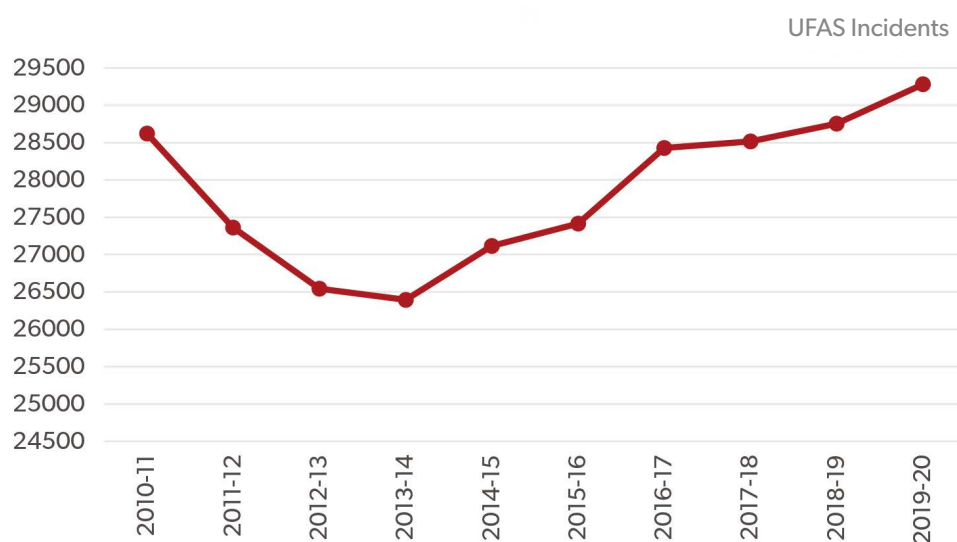
Only two per cent of AFA actuations that were received by the SFRS were actual confirmed fires, with almost two thirds of these requiring no action by us i.e. they were out on arrival.

Overall, the property damage by fire was minimal, with no building damage being recorded in more than half of all properties where AFAs were confirmed as actual fires.

These facts reflect the high levels of fire safety standards required of duty holders under the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, and the good standards of fire safety we find when auditing buildings.

Because we treat every call from an AFA as if it was a real emergency, typically we respond under blue light conditions. These types of journeys are more dangerous for our firefighters and for members of the public.

Accidents involving fire appliances responding to false alarms can - and do - happen. The cause and effect of these accidents and injuries are avoidable and unacceptable and we want to cut unnecessary blue light journeys caused by UFAS.



## 1.1 Legal Responsibility

**Did you know, we are not legally required to attend a business or workplace when an automatic alarm goes off?**

It is the people with fire safety responsibilities in the building - the duty holder. They should ensure the safe evacuation of people from the building, investigate the cause of the alarm, then notify us if they discover an actual fire.

Mostly all other UK fire & rescue services now require a confirmed fire before they send fire appliances.

## 1.2 Impact of UFAS

Every UFAS involves nine firefighters and two fire appliances. It takes an average of 15 minutes from the appliance leaving the station to the cause of the alarm being identified, but in reality dealing with these calls often takes twice as long.

That is over 64,000 productive hours lost each year responding to UFAS. To put this into context, that's the equivalent cost of £3.5m (this is what we would describe as an opportunity cost).

Inevitably, this lost productivity causes significant disruption to our training, fire safety and community safety work and, crucially, while firefighters are investigating the cause of the alarm, they cannot attend real emergencies.

Equally, attending UFAS incidents creates avoidable financial costs such as fuel costs, vehicle wear and tear and call-out payments. Under our duty of best value, we are accountable to the public for every pound spent. We must therefore explore every opportunity to become more efficient and effective at tackling UFAS.

## 1.3 Target set to reduce UFAS

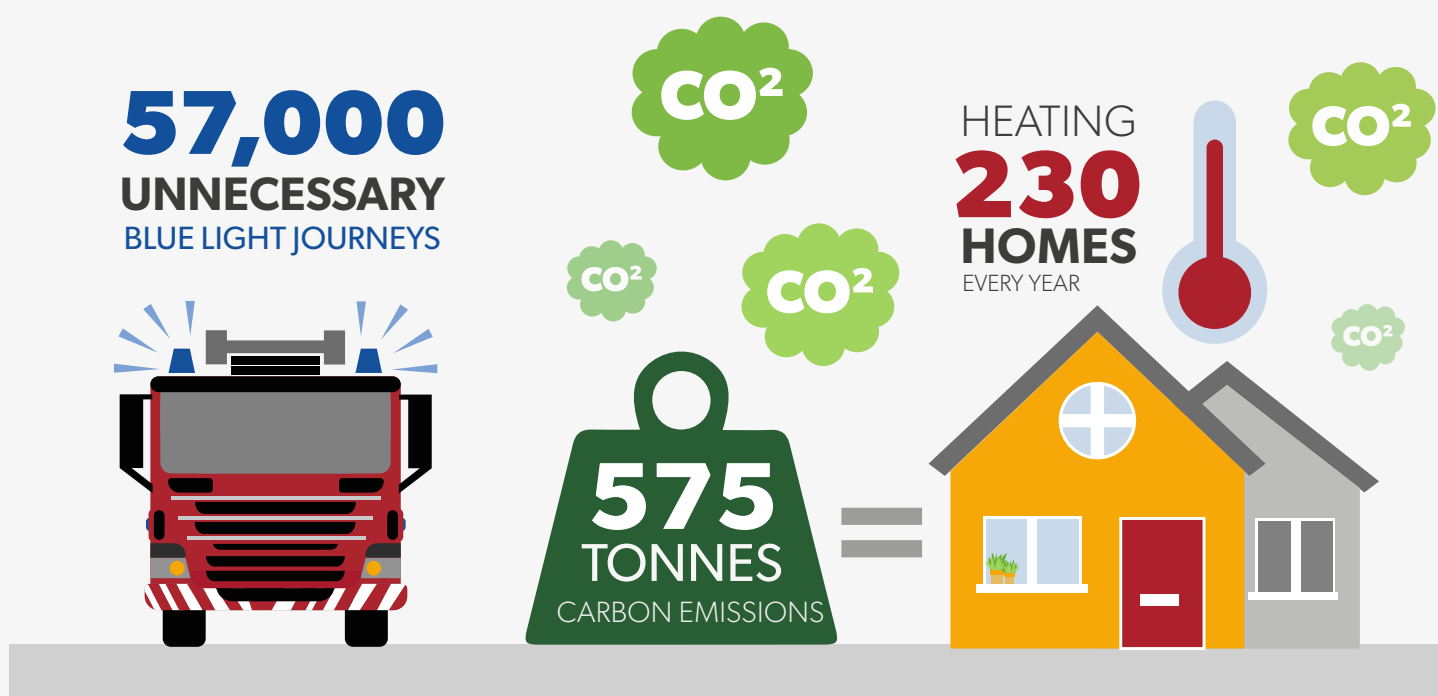
The Scottish Government asked us to reduce UFAS and we set a target to reduce these incidents by 15% between 2017 and 2020. We have been unable to meet this target under our current response model.

In fact, from April 2017 to end March 2020, UFAS increased by 3% across Scotland. This is despite the efforts of the Service and its partners to reduce them.

We have also set ourselves challenging targets to support the Scottish Government's ambition of achieving Net Zero carbon emissions by 2045.

By undertaking around 57,000 unnecessary blue light journeys every year caused by UFAS, we are producing around 575 tonnes of carbon emissions. That is the carbon equivalent of heating 230 homes every year.

Reducing the number of UFAS and unnecessary blue light journeys will help us become a more environmentally sustainable organisation.



## 1.4 Impact of COVID-19

Like all organisations, the COVID-19 pandemic meant we had to change our practices to ensure we maintained our core services to keep our staff and communities safe, as well as protecting the NHS.

One of the changes we made was in our response to AFAs, to help minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus for our firefighters and the public.

From May 2020, we began sending a single fire appliance to AFAs of certain property types. This reduced blue light journeys by an average of 21%.

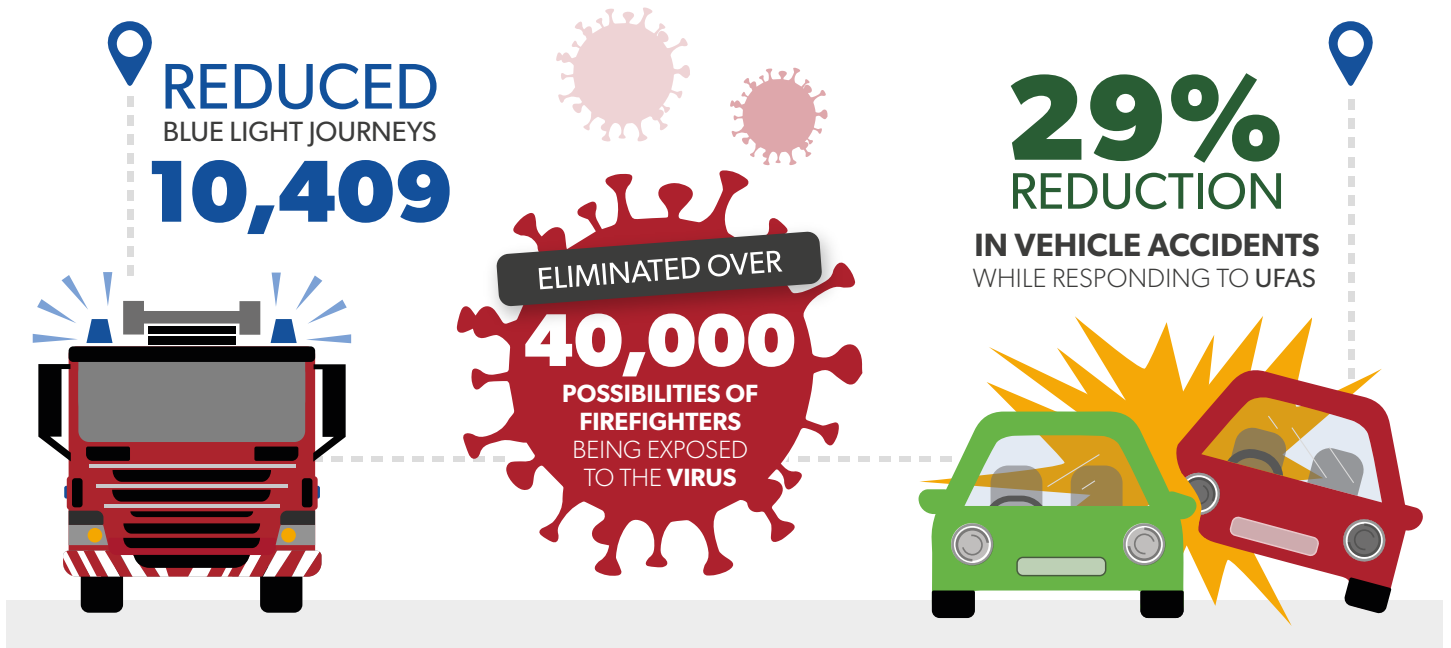
As of 30 April 2021, we have reduced blue light journeys by 10,409 and therefore eliminated well over 40,000 possibilities of firefighters becoming exposed to the virus. These figures are based on a minimum crew of four in a responding fire appliance.

We reviewed the overall impact of this interim response during January 2021 and there was no evidence that its implementation had any detrimental impact.

In fact, we found that there were 14 less vehicle accidents associated with responding to false alarms, which is a drop of 29% and a real positive impact on reducing road risk caused by blue light journeys. You can see the [findings of this review](#) on our website.



We asked staff for their views of the COVID-19 interim one-pump response to AFAs. More than half of the 318 staff responses received, supported the interim COVID-19 response. We used their feedback to shape the assessment of the options we are consulting on.



## 1.5 Benefits of reducing UFAS

### Upskilling and training

Reducing unnecessary activity means our firefighters can focus on building and maintaining their skills to meet the new demands and risks that Scotland's people and communities face.

We respond to many different emergencies including road traffic collisions, rope rescue, water rescue, hazardous materials, building collapse and flooding, as well as assisting our partner agencies to keep our communities safe.

Our firefighters are among the best equipped and most highly trained in the world. This is a continuous improvement process that requires upskilling to maintain effectiveness in highly technical areas such as water and rope rescue.

By reducing the amount of time we spend on UFAS calls, we can spend more time training and developing our firefighters in more technical areas.

### Increased prevention work

The best way to deal with an emergency is to prevent it from happening in the first place, and our role starts long before any 999 calls are made. We work closely with our key partners right across Scotland to deliver crucial fire safety messages and create safer communities.

By working together for a safer Scotland, we can help reduce the number of fires and continue to play a key role in ensuring the overall safety and wellbeing of the people of Scotland.

We can do more of this by reinvesting the time saved through reduced UFAS calls. This would include more time spent working with duty holders on measures to prevent AFAs occurring in the first place.

### Less impact on key staff

Around half of our operational firefighters are Retained and Volunteer Duty Staff (RVDS). This means they have full time jobs working within our more remote communities and are paged when they are required to attend an emergency.

This could be when they are at work, meaning each time an RVDS responds to an AFA, their primary employer is releasing their staff member to attend an incident that is often a UFAS.

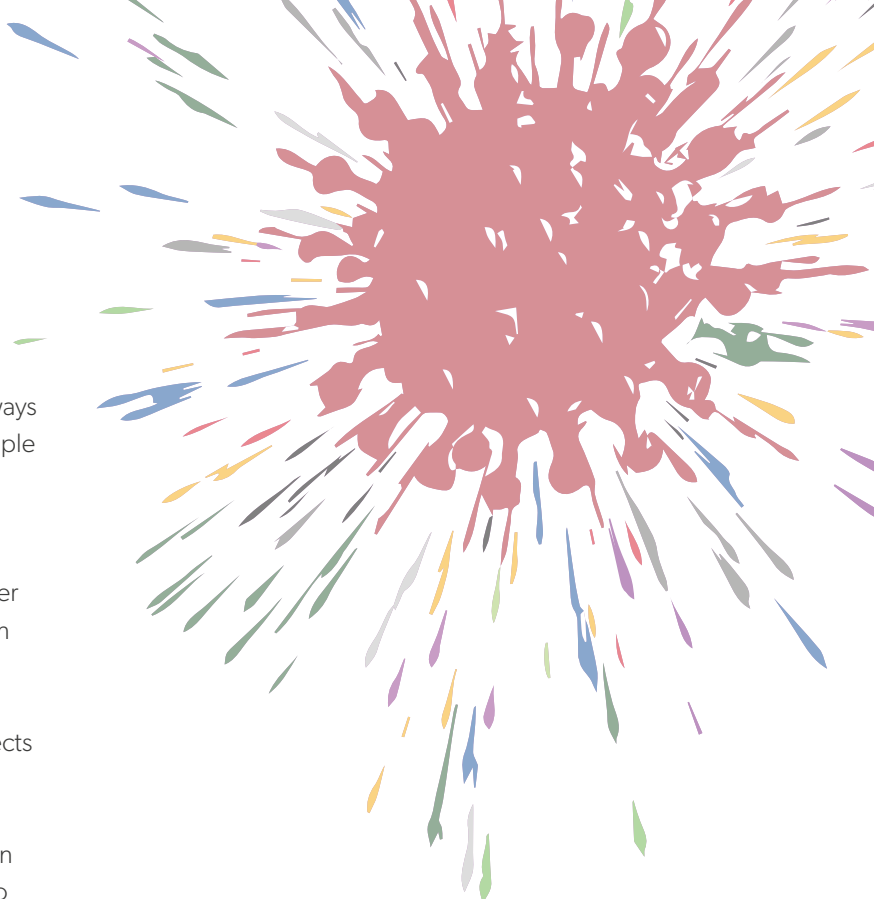
Our RVDS are essential in keeping our communities safe and we need to make sure it is a rewarding job that minimises unnecessary disruption to our firefighters and their primary employers.

By reducing the amount of time they spend on UFAS calls, we can improve their work/life balance, maximise the role they perform for us in their communities and reduce the impact on their primary employer.

### Improved safety

Through the review of our COVID-19 interim response to AFAs, we have shown that by changing our response and reducing blue light journeys, we can make real improvements to firefighter and public safety without compromising the Service's ability to maintain an effective response to AFAs.

We regard the safety of firefighters and the public as being absolute priorities. By reducing unnecessary blue light journeys we will significantly reduce road risk to firefighters, road users and pedestrians. Additionally, it will have the effect of helping to minimise the environmental impact of our fleet.



## More agile and resilient

The pandemic has required us to explore different ways of delivering our service, to ensure we keep the people of Scotland safe during the crisis.

It tested our business continuity plans and has demonstrated the need for all organisations, however big or small, to be able to weather major, unforeseen disruption.

We have learned that there were many positive aspects from introducing the COVID-19 interim response to AFAs. This interim response, which cut down blue light journeys, reduced risk and minimised disruption enabled us to adapt more quickly and successfully to the challenges of the pandemic.

By reducing unnecessary blue light journeys caused by UFAS, the Service will have a more agile and resilient response model that can cope with future demands and uncertainties.

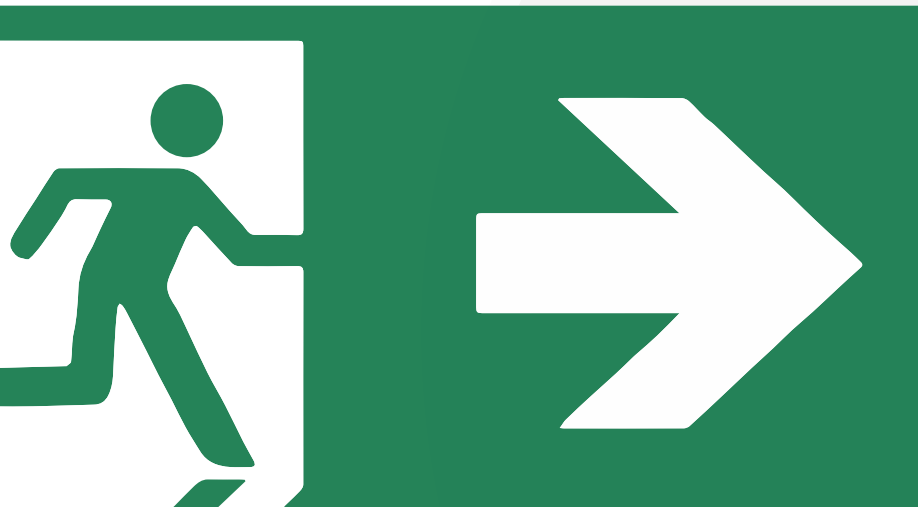
## Improved Business Productivity

Every AFA that leads to a false alarm and ultimately a UFAS, creates avoidable disruption. Not just to the SFRS but also upon businesses and our partners.

Lost production and custom affect profitability and interruption to critical services, such as healthcare for example, which can impact upon the treatment of patients.

Duty holders are expected to only report fires, not false alarms to us, so that staff and customers are able to re-enter the premises once it is safe to do so.

This avoids businesses and services having to wait unnecessarily for our attendance to confirm that there is no fire and to allow their business operations to resume with minimum disruption.





## 2. Developing the Options

### 2.1 UFAS review

UFAS is not a new issue for the SFRS. In March 2020 we reported the findings and recommendations of a [Stocktake Review](#) to identify why we were unable to reduce the number of UFAS incidents across Scotland.

This review identified opportunities for better engagement with our key stakeholders and ways to improve training for firefighters. The most notable review recommendations were to tackle the longer-term challenges of increasing numbers of UFAS.

This has led us to act on the recommendations of the UFAS Stocktake Review by prioritising an evaluation of options for responding to AFAs.

### 2.2 Long-Term Vision

We have been discussing with staff and communities how the SFRS can evolve to meet the changing needs which Scotland faces, particularly around challenges created by climate change, increasing terror threat and our ageing population.

To meet these needs, we must create additional capacity. When we ask staff for their views on how to do this, their first response is always to reduce our response to UFAS.

## 2.3 The Options Appraisal

### Where we are

This consultation is about how we decide the best response to AFAs, to reduce the burden placed on the Service and partners by UFAS.

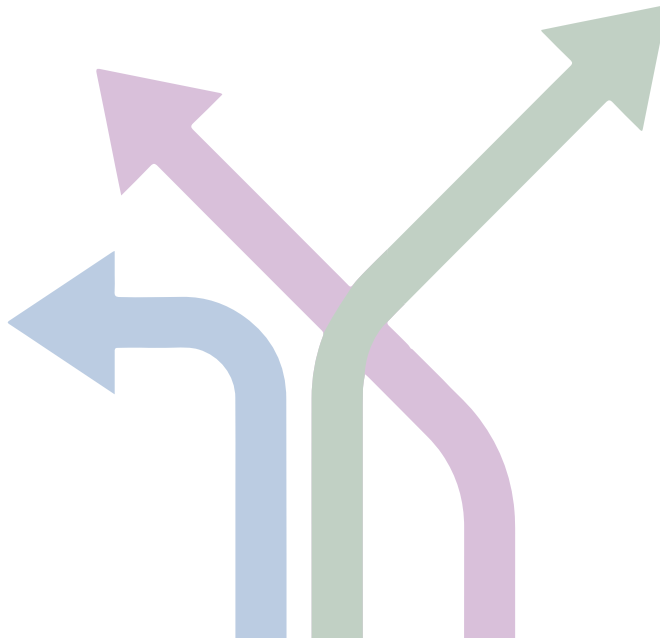
The work we have done so far with our staff and stakeholders in testing options has been crucial and has influenced the options we are consulting on.

#### We do not have a preferred option.

Each of the options we are consulting on will deliver significant UFAS reductions. The associated benefits need to be considered alongside the potential risks and mitigations for limiting them.

The Service is now in **stage 5** of this process and the stages to date (see diagram) have provided the basis for this public consultation.

The outcomes of this consultation will inform a final business case to allow a decision to be made by the SFRS Board, on a preferred option near the end of the calendar year 2021.



## KEY STAGES

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Defining the Options Appraisal Objectives	Developing the Options	Assessing and Analysing the Options	Ranking the Options	<b>Carry out Public Consultation</b>	Report Findings and Agree Preferred Option	Implement Preferred Option

## How we got here – the long list

We initially identified 15 potential options for responding to AFAs. In identifying these options, we considered approaches already employed by other UK fire & rescue services.

### Do Nothing (Baseline Comparator)

- |    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 01 | Our Pre-COVID 19 Response – Operations Control (OC) staff challenges all AFAs from non-domestic premises and responds with a minimum pre-determined attendance (PDA) of one fire appliance. Exemptions apply to high-risk premises and calls originating from Alarm Receiving Centres (ARC) |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### Immediate Response

- |    |                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 02 | With premises full PDA                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 03 | With a PDA of one fire appliance                                                                                                                                                              |
| 04 | With a PDA of two fire appliances                                                                                                                                                             |
| 05 | COVID-19 Response - a PDA of one fire appliance with exemptions applying to certain high risk premises                                                                                        |
| 06 | Business vehicles                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 07 | PDA is determined by the premises risk type (e.g. commercial normal risk attracts a one fire appliance response whereas a non-domestic sleeping risk attracts a two fire appliances response) |
| 08 | PDA is determined by the time of day                                                                                                                                                          |
| 09 | PDA is determined by the time of day and premises risk type                                                                                                                                   |

### Call challenge by Operations Control (OC)

- |    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All AFA calls from non-domestic premises</li><li>Where call challenging has failed to remove attendance, or premises type is high risk and exempt from call challenging</li><li>PDA is one fire appliance regardless of time of day</li></ul>  |
| 11 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All AFA calls from non-domestic premises</li><li>Where call challenging has failed to remove attendance, or premises type is high risk and exempt from call challenging</li><li>PDA is two fire appliances regardless of time of day</li></ul> |
| 12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All AFA calls from non-domestic premises</li><li>Where call challenging has failed to remove attendance, or premises type is high risk and exempt from call challenging</li><li>PDA is dependent on time of day and premises type</li></ul>    |
| 13 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All AFA calls from non-domestic premises</li><li>Where call challenging has failed to remove attendance</li><li>No exemptions to call challenging</li><li>PDA is dependent on time of day and premises type</li></ul>                          |

### Non-attendance

- |    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All AFAs from non-domestic premises, unless back-up 999 call confirming fire is received</li><li>No exemptions apply</li></ul>                                                                                    |
| 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All AFAs from non-domestic premises, unless back-up 999 call confirming fire is received</li><li>Exemptions apply to high-risk premises types</li><li>PDA is dependent on time of day and premises type</li></ul> |

Two workshops involving a Staff Review Group, were held during **October 2020**, to assess and score each option and come to a decision regarding a final shortlist.

The criteria that was used to assess and score the options and full results from the workshops, can be found on our [website](#).

## The Final Shortlist

Following assessment of all 15 options, five were then selected and tested at a Stakeholder Options Appraisal workshop event in February 2021.

OPTION	FINDINGS
1	Do Nothing – maintain the status quo (baseline comparator)
2	COVID-19 Interim Response – with immediate one pump Exemptions apply to high-risk premises
3	<p>Call challenge all AFAs from non-domestic premises. No response is mobilised, if questioning confirms there is no fire, or signs of fire. Sleeping risk premises are exempt from call challenging and will receive the following immediate response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential Care Homes receive a PDA of two fire appliances regardless of time of day</li> <li>• All other sleeping risks receive a PDA of one fire appliance between 0700-1800hrs and two fire appliances out-with these hours</li> </ul>
4	<p>Call challenge all AFAs from non-domestic premises. No response is mobilised, if questioning confirms there is no fire, or signs of fire.</p> <p>No exemptions to call challenging apply (i.e. all AFA calls received are call challenged, regardless of premises type and caller).</p>
5	<p>Non-attendance to all AFAs from non-domestic premises, unless back-up 999 call confirming fire, or signs of fire is received. Sleeping risk premises are exempt from non-attendance and will receive the following immediate response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential Care Homes receive a PDA of two fire appliances regardless of time of day</li> <li>• All other sleeping risks receive a PDA of one fire appliance between 0700-1800hrs and two fire appliances out-with these hours</li> </ul>

## Stakeholder Options Appraisal Workshop

The Stakeholder Options Appraisal involved a range of key stakeholders including representatives from health boards, universities, schools, local authorities, fire industry, businesses and our own staff. The event was independently facilitated.

Participants were asked to complete a pre-workshop questionnaire ahead of the event. At the workshop

they discussed, assessed and scored the five shortlisted options on the balance of benefits and risks.

The results of the assessment and scoring were compiled and reviewed to deliver an overall scoring and ranking of the options, as well as areas for consideration.

### BENEFITS

OPTION	OVERALL SCORE	OVERALL RANKING
4	1346	1 greatest benefit
5	1328	2
3	1042	3
2	804	4
1	300	5 least benefit

### RISK

OPTION	OVERALL SCORE	OVERALL RANKING
5	178	1 highest risk
4	170	2
3	134	3
2	114	4
1	60	5 lowest risk

In summary, the review concluded that:

- Options 1 and 2 did not deliver a significant or, in the case of Option 1, any benefit to the Service
- Options 4 and 5 were identified as delivering the most benefit in terms of UFAS reduction but also carried the highest risk
- Option 3 offered a middle ground

As Options 3, 4 and 5 can deliver a significant reduction in UFAS, these are the three options we are consulting on. We refer to them now as Options A, B & C.

The full report on the [Options Appraisal](#) can be found on our website.

## 2.4 Benefits and Risk Analysis of each option

The options for public consultation, along with estimated UFAS reductions, are as follows:

<b>A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Call challenge all AFAs from non-domestic premises, unless exempt</li><li>• No response is mobilised, if questioning confirms there is no fire, or signs of fire</li><li>• Sleeping risk premises are exempt from call challenging and will receive the following immediate response:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Residential Care Homes receive a PDA of two fire appliances regardless of time of day</li><li>• All other sleeping risks receive a PDA of one fire appliance between 0700-1800hrs and two fire appliances out-with these hours</li></ul></li></ul>	<b>61%</b> REDUCTION
<b>B</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Call challenge all AFAs from non-domestic premises</li><li>• No response is mobilised, if questioning confirms there is no fire, or signs of fire</li><li>• No exemptions to call challenging apply (i.e. all AFA calls received are call challenged, regardless of premises type and caller)</li></ul>	<b>85%</b> REDUCTION
<b>C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Non-attendance to all AFAs from non-domestic premises, unless back-up 999 call confirming fire, or signs of fire is received</li><li>• Sleeping risk premises are exempt from non-attendance and will receive the following immediate response:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Residential Care Homes receive a PDA of two fire appliances regardless of time of day</li><li>• All other sleeping risks receive a PDA of one fire appliance between 0700-1800hrs and two fire appliances out-with these hours</li></ul></li></ul>	<b>71%</b> REDUCTION

# OPTION A

Our Operations Control (OC) staff will call challenge AFAs from non-domestic premises. No response will be mobilised, if questioning through call challenge confirms there is no fire, or signs of fire. Property types recognised by us as having sleeping provision will be exempt from call challenging and therefore will receive the following immediate response to an AFA:

- Residential Care Homes will receive a PDA of two fire appliances regardless of the time of day
- All other sleeping risks will receive a PDA of one fire appliance between 0700-1800hrs and a PDA of two fire appliances out-with these hours

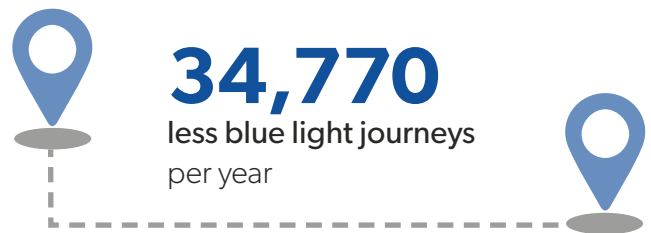
## Key Benefits

- Improved firefighter and community safety through the reduction of blue light journeys
- Improved availability of resources and more time to focus on upskilling, training and prevention work
- Reduced response costs
- Reduced fleet carbon emissions
- Least risk of all options
- Automatic response to AFAs where people are sleeping

## Key Risks

- Increased risk of building damage
- Increased risk to building occupants
- Increased risk to firefighter safety
- Fire and rescue reputational damage
- RVDS retention and recruitment issues

## What does a 61% reduction look like?



**22** less vehicle  
accidents  
per year



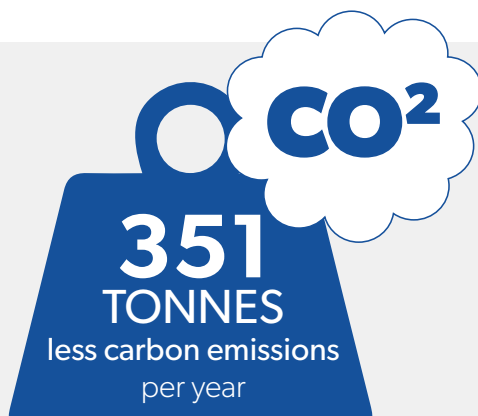
**4** fewer personal  
accidents  
per year



**8,683**  
hours of less  
disruption  
per year



**2,135,000**  
reduction in  
opportunity costs  
per year



**39,087**  
hours of extra time  
for firefighters to utilise  
more productively



# OPTION B

Our OC staff will call challenge all AFAs from non-domestic premises. No response will be mobilised, if questioning through call challenge confirms there is no fire, or signs of fire. No exemptions to call challenging apply (i.e. all AFA calls received are call challenged, regardless of property type and caller).

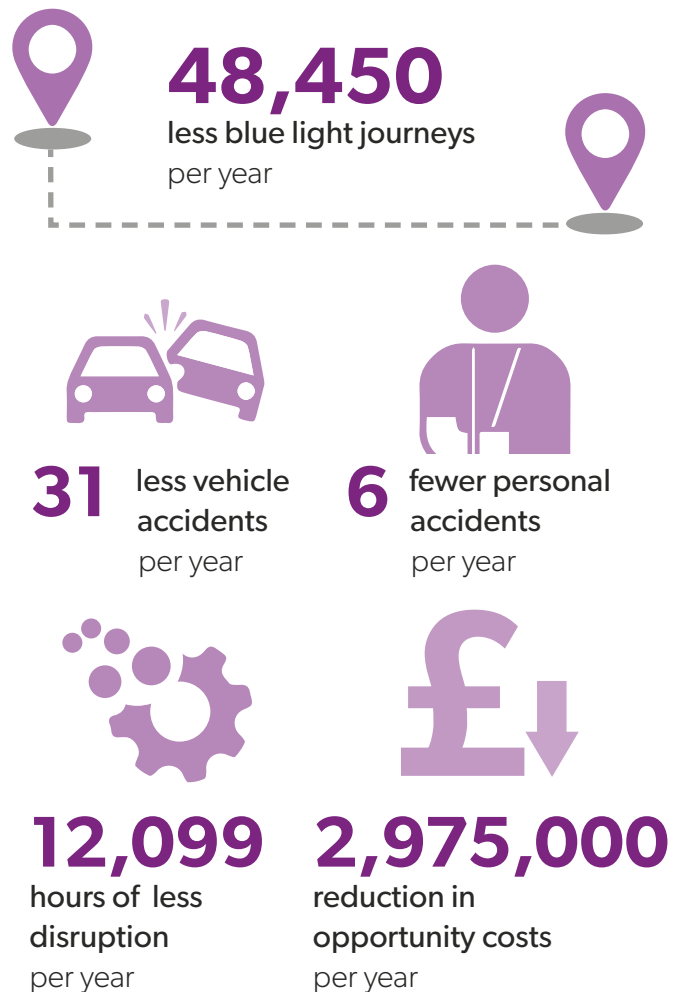
## Key Benefits

- Improved firefighter and community safety through the reduction of blue light journeys
- Improved availability of resources and more time to focus on upskilling, training and prevention work
- Reduced response costs
- Reduced fleet carbon emissions
- Highest reduction in UFAS attendance

## Key Risks

- Increased risk compared to Option A of building damage
- Increased risk compared to Option A to building occupants
- Increased risk compared to Option A to firefighter safety
- Fire and rescue reputational damage
- RVDS retention and recruitment issues

## What does a **85% reduction** look like?





# OPTION C

Non-attendance to AFAs from non-domestic premises. Our OC staff will advise the caller that we will not attend unless a back-up 999 call confirming fire, or signs of fire is received. Property types recognised by us as having sleeping provision will be exempt and therefore they will receive the following immediate response to an AFA:

- Residential Care Homes will receive a PDA of two fire appliances regardless of the time of day
- All other sleeping risks receive a PDA of one fire appliance between 0700-1800hrs and a PDA of two fire appliances out-with these hours

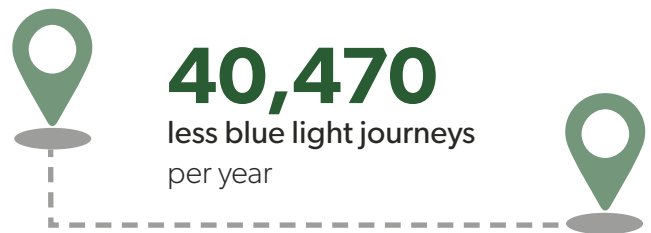
## Key Benefits

- Improved firefighter and community safety through the reduction of blue light journeys
- Improved availability of resources and more time to focus on upskilling, training and prevention work
- Reduced response costs
- Reduced fleet carbon emissions
- Automatic response to premises where people are sleeping

## Key Risks

- Greatest risk of building damage
- Greatest risk to building occupants
- Greatest risk to firefighter safety
- Fire and rescue reputational damage
- Retained and Volunteer Duty System (RVDS) retention and recruitment issues

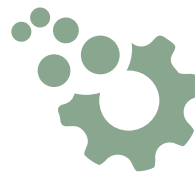
What does a **71% reduction** look like?



**26** less vehicle  
accidents  
per year



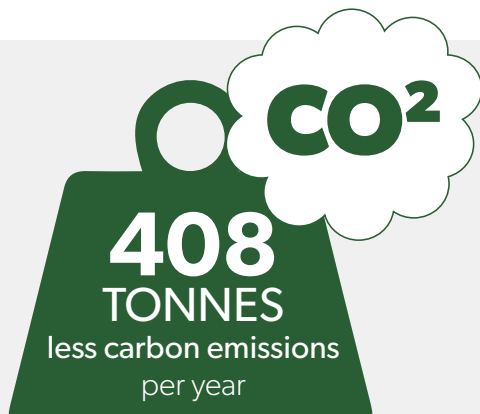
**5** fewer personal  
accidents  
per year



**10,107**  
hours of less  
disruption  
per year



**2,485,000**  
reduction in  
opportunity costs  
per year



**45,495**  
hours of extra time  
for firefighters to utilise  
more productively



## Mitigating the Risks

We recognise that the options we are consulting on carry with them an element of risk and uncertainty and, in considering the key risks in this document, we have an opportunity to highlight mitigating factors and outline controls that we believe will limit the risks materialising.

Key risks	Measures we will take to mitigate any risk
<p><b>Increased risk of building damage</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are very few fires linked to AFAs - around 2% lead to a fire and the majority of these are already out on arrival, or require very little intervention from the Service. We will monitor these figures to ensure we do not see an increase in building damage as a result of any change to our response.</li> <li>• We will work with duty holders to provide advice and guidance. This will include providing advice on considerations for fire protection, fire evacuation and reinforcing the need for making an early call to the SFRS, if a fire is confirmed.</li> <li>• We will ensure the call challenge process is designed around asking the most relevant questions of the caller to establish if the AFA is a confirmed fire. All calls received that are confirmed fires will be treated as a priority and should not result in a notable delay in sending appliances.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Increased risk to building occupants</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are very few casualties linked to AFAs – less than 2% of all fire casualties. We will monitor these figures to ensure we do not see an increase in the risk to people as a result of any change to our response.</li> <li>• The most likely risk to people is when they are asleep. These properties are exempt under Options A and C and would therefore continue to receive an automatic response.</li> <li>• For Option B we would regularly check and test the fire safety arrangements of buildings where there is a sleeping risk through our fire safety enforcement framework.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Increased risk to firefighter safety if faced with a more developed fire</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing core skills training, will ensure firefighters can safely, competently and effectively deal with the risk of a more developed fire.</li> <li>• We will monitor and review incidents, to ensure any lessons are learned and improvements in firefighter safety are made.</li> <li>• The recent review of the COVID-19 interim response, showed no increased risk to firefighter safety because of a reduced response to AFA actuations.</li> <li>• Based on vehicle accident and injury statistics relating to attending UFAS, it could be argued that road risk from unnecessary blue light journeys is greater than any risk to firefighters from more developed fires because of implementing any of the proposed options.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fire and rescue reputational damage</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will ensure our final decision considers the feedback of stakeholders and reflects any significant concerns they have.</li> <li>• Any changes we implement following consultation will be done through a carefully planned and managed approach, which will include working with stakeholders who may be directly affected, to ensure they are prepared for any changes we make.</li> </ul>
<p><b>RVDS retention and recruitment issues</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While a reduction in call-outs may impact upon RVDS staff who are paid for each call they attend, there are other duties they will be able to take on with any additional capacity created. We are involving staff in the decision-making process.</li> <li>• Longer term, different remuneration models are being considered through the RVDS Strategy Project.</li> <li>• Reduced UFAS call-outs may improve RVDS retention and recruitment issues, due to reduction in disruption to their primary employment and a better work/life balance.</li> </ul>

## What do we mean by call challenge?

AFA calls received by us usually come from someone at the property dialling 999, however some come from Alarm Receiving Centres (ARCs), that monitor their customers' alarm systems and alert us whenever an alarm goes off.

One of the best ways that the SFRS can establish whether to respond to a call from an AFA, is by speaking to the person who made the call.

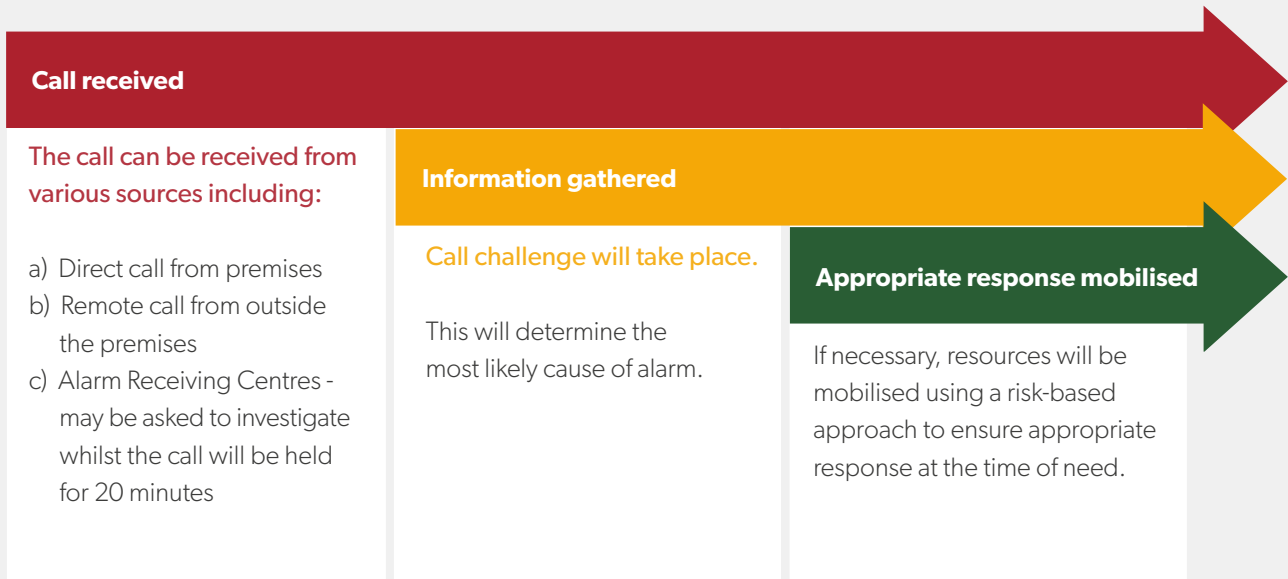
This enables our OC Staff to ask relevant questions of the caller and, if then necessary, send the appropriate number of fire appliances to save life and protect property. This is known as 'call challenge' and is proposed under Options A & B.

The main purpose of call challenge is to ascertain if there is a fire within the premises. This is currently the legal responsibility of the duty holder but custom and practice has resulted in this investigation being undertaken by fire crews.

Our OC Staff already ask callers for many details, so the additional information required under these options will not significantly impact on call-handling times.

Our call challenge process is summarised below. A more detailed account of how it will work in practice is on our [website](#).

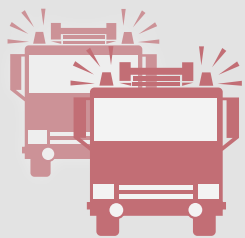

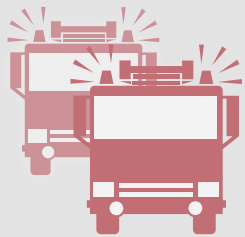
OC staff will make the appropriate decisions with the information available and always have the autonomy to adjust mobilisation.



## What are the exemptions?

Under Options A & C, we propose to continue sending an appropriate number of fire appliances to all AFA calls we receive from property types recognised as having sleeping provision, therefore ensuring a proportionate response to AFAs based on life risk.

The following sleeping risk property types will be exempt and receive an immediate response to investigate the cause of the AFA.

Property types exempt	Number of fire appliances they will receive to an AFA	Reason for response
<p><b>Residential Care Home</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential Nursing/Care Home</li> <li>• Children’s Residential Home</li> <li>• Retirement/Elderly Residential Home</li> <li>• Sheltered Housing - not self contained</li> <li>• Other Residential Home</li> </ul>	<p>A PDA of two fire appliances regardless of the time of day</p> 	<p>Residential Care Homes house our most vulnerable residents in our communities. Building design and construction, numbers of staff/residents and the nature of the occupancy place these types of property in our highest risk to life category from fire. It is for this reason that a response of two fire appliances is maintained always.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boarding House/B&amp;B for homeless/ asylum seekers</li> <li>• Boarding House/B&amp;B other</li> <li>• Boarding School accommodation</li> <li>• Hospital</li> <li>• Prison</li> <li>• Student Hall of Residence</li> <li>• Youth Hostel</li> <li>• Military/barracks</li> <li>• Monastery/convent</li> <li>• Hostel (e.g. for homeless people)</li> <li>• Hotel/Motel</li> <li>• Nurses’/Doctors’ accommodation</li> <li>• Other Holiday Residence (cottage, flat, chalet)</li> <li>• Young Offenders’ Unit</li> </ul>	<p>A PDA of one fire appliance between 0700-1800hrs</p>  <p>and two fire appliances out-with these hours</p> 	<p>The response to these exempt properties is based on suitably trained staff being present to manage a fire evacuation and investigate the cause of an AFA, ensuring an appropriate response is maintained at night when people are asleep.</p>

3. What do  
**you think?**



# QUESTIONS

1 To help us analyse all feedback, please tell us if you are responding as a:

- member of the public
- member of SFRS wholetime & support staff
- RVDS staff
- retained employer
- community group
- voluntary organisation
- local authority
- emergency service organisation
- public sector body

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, or as a retained employer, please state the name of your organisation:

If you are responding as an individual, please provide the first part of your postcode e.g G77, EH1:

Please choose your **rating scale** for these statements:

strongly disagree   disagree   neutral   agree   strongly agree

- 2 The number of UFAS we attend in Scotland is a problem that needs to be addressed now.
- 3 To reduce the impact of UFAS, we should stop sending fire appliances to AFAs unless it is for a confirmed fire or to premises on the exemption list.
- 4 The exemptions proposed for **OPTION A** and **OPTION C** provide a proportionate response to AFA calls based on risk.
- 5 Did you feel the consultation document provided you with enough information to enable you to give an informed response?

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6 Please rank each **OPTION** from most preferred **(1)** to least preferred **(3)**

- |          |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>A</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Call challenge all AFAs. No response is mobilised if questioning confirms no fire or no signs of fire. Sleeping risk premises are exempt and will receive a PDA based on premises type and time of day. |
| <b>B</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Call challenge all AFAs. No response is mobilised if questioning confirms no fire or no signs of fire. No exemptions to call challenging apply.                                                         |
| <b>C</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Non-attendance to all AFA's, unless back-up 999 call confirming fire or signs of fire is received. Sleeping risk premises are exempt and will receive a PDA based on premises type and time of day.     |

7 Would you like to suggest any other options to put forward for consideration?

8 What else could we have provided or done to ensure it was easy for you to respond to the consultation?

9 Do you have any further comments?

# EQUALITIES MONITORING FORM

We would like to ask a few more questions about you. Because we have a duty to meet the needs of people across our diverse communities, it would help us to know the range of people who gave us feedback.

We can also use monitoring to determine whether our services are accessible, whether our policies have a disproportionate, unfair or positive impact on particular groups and whether members of those groups are satisfied with the service they receive. This section is optional. Any responses you do provide will be anonymised.

## 1 Your Age

- Under 16
- 16-25
- 26-40
- 41-55
- 56-70
- Over 70
- Prefer not to say

## 2 Your Sex

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

## 3 Trans - Do you consider yourself to be trans, or have a trans history?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

## 4 Your sexual orientation

- Heterosexual
- Gay/Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Prefer not to say

## 5 Disability

Do you have any of the following, which have lasted, or are expected to last, at least 12 months?

- Deafness or partial hearing loss
- Blindness or partial sight loss
- Full or partial loss of voice or difficulty speaking (a condition that requires you to use equipment to speak)
- Learning disability (a condition that you have had since childhood that affects the way you learn, understand information and communicate)
- Learning difficulty (a specific learning condition that affects the way you learn and process information)
- Developmental disorder (a condition that you have had since childhood which affects motor, cognitive, social and emotional skills, and speech and language)
- Physical disability (a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, lifting or carrying)
- Mental health condition (a condition that affects your emotional, physical and mental wellbeing)
- Long-term illness, disease or condition (a condition, not listed above, that you may have for life, which may be managed with treatment or medication)
- Other condition
- No Condition
- Prefer not to say

## 5 Caring Responsibilities

Do you look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either: long-term physical / mental ill-health / disability; or problems related to old age?

- Yes – unpaid care provider full-time
- Yes – unpaid care provider part-time
- No
- Prefer not to say

## 7 Care Experienced

Care experienced means you are or were formally looked after by a local authority, in the family home (with support from social services or a social worker) or elsewhere, for example, in foster care, residential/secure care, or kinship care (with family friends or relatives) and you have not yet reached your 26th birthday.

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

## 8 Ethnicity – what is your Ethnic Group?

Please select only one item:

### A. White

- Scottish
- Other British
- Irish
- Gypsy/Traveller
- Polish
- Roma
- Showman/Showwoman
- Other white ethnic group (Please write below)

### B. Mixed or multiple ethnic groups

- Any mixed or multiple ethnic groups  
(Please write below)

### C. Asian, Asian Scottish or British Asian

- Pakistani, Scottish Pakistani or British Pakistani
- Indian, Scottish Indian or British Indian
- Bangladeshi, Scottish Bangladeshi or  
British Bangladeshi
- Chinese, Scottish Chinese or British Chinese
- Other white ethnic group (Please write below)

### D. African, Scottish African or British African

- African, Scottish African or British African  
(please write below - for example, NIGERIAN,  
SOMALI):

### E. Caribbean or Black

- Caribbean or Black  
(please write in below - for example, SCOTTISH  
CARIBBEAN, BLACK SCOTTISH)

### F. Other Ethnic Group

- Arab, Scottish Arab or British Arab  
Other, please write below (for example, SIKH, JEWISH)

### G. Prefer not to say

## 9 Religion or Belief

- None
- Prefer not to say
- Church of Scotland
- Roman Catholic
- Other Christian  
(please write in denomination or school below)
- Muslim  
(please write in denomination or school below)
- Sikh
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Buddhist
- Another religion or body  
(please write in denomination or school below)



# How to get involved

We would like to encourage everyone to participate and share their views on the options for changing our response to UFAS incidents.

An online survey can be accessed from our website:

[www.firescotland.gov.uk](http://www.firescotland.gov.uk)

Responses can also be emailed to SFRS:

[UFASConsultation@firescotland.gov.uk](mailto:UFASConsultation@firescotland.gov.uk)

## By post:

FREEPOST SFRS Communications  
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
Westburn Drive  
Cambuslang  
G72 7NA

If you would like more information or require this document in an alternative format, please email us at [SFRS.UFASConsultation@firescotland.gov.uk](mailto:SFRS.UFASConsultation@firescotland.gov.uk)

If you would like to be kept updated on this and other public consultations from the SFRS please [visit our website](#)

## Next steps

The public consultation will close on 11 October. All the feedback we receive will be collated and analysed.

A full report, with the recommended preferred option for responding to AFAs in Scotland will be prepared and form part of the submission to the SFRS Board in December.

We will then look to start implementing any changes in early 2022. This will be done through a carefully planned and managed approach, which will include working with our stakeholders directly affected by any changes we implement.



# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

TERM	MEANING
<b>Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA)</b>	An automatic fire alarm (AFA) is a system that warns people when smoke, fire or other fire-related factors are detected. These alarms may be activated automatically from smoke detectors and heat detectors, or may also be activated via manual fire alarm activation devices such as manual break glass call points.
<b>Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC)</b>	<p>An alarm receiving centre (ARC) is a monitoring station, operated by people 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Teams who work in ARCs monitor a range of systems, including fire and intruder alarms, systems for monitoring elderly people and CCTV cameras.</p> <p>Once an activation signal is sent to a monitoring centre, for example a fire alarm being triggered, the monitoring team carefully filter activations to sort which alerts are false alarms and which alarms require emergency services. In the event of a genuine alert, the ARC team contact the relevant emergency services on behalf of their clients.</p>
<b>Business Continuity</b>	A process that outlines the potential impact of disaster situations, creates policies to respond to them and helps an organisation recover quickly so it can function as usual.
<b>Duty Holder</b>	The person who has legal responsibility to oversee fire safety for the whole business. Generally this is the employer, owner or occupier and their responsibilities include conducting a fire risk assessment of the premises.
<b>Fire Appliance</b>	A heavy road vehicle that carries firefighters and equipment to a fire or other emergency.
<b>Fire (Scotland) Act 2005</b>	The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 deals with the law relating to fire prevention, and the operation of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. Part 3 of the Act sets out the fire safety responsibilities for employers, employees, managers, owners and others in relation to fire safety in the workplace.
<b>Operations Control (OC) staff</b>	<p>Our OC staff handle all SFRS's 999 emergency calls. OC staff have a vital role and are trained to deal with any 999 call that they might receive, from a house fire to a serious road traffic collision or cliff rescue.</p> <p>OC staff help callers identify their exact location, provide fire safety advice to people who might be trapped inside a burning building and continue to reassure until the moment firefighters arrive on the scene. They are also trained in dealing with other incidents, including chemical, radiological, biological and nuclear incidents.</p> <p>When OC staff receive a call, they assess the situation the caller is in and then mobilise a fire appliance(s) to the incident. OC staff are then responsible for the needs of the firefighters by dispatching further resources as required, arranging relief crews, liaising with other agencies and providing important operational information for the duration of each incident.</p>

<p><b>Pre-Determined Attendance (PDA)</b></p>	<p>The incidents SFRS attends can be divided into types - for example, fires, hazardous substances and road traffic collisions etc.</p> <p>For each type of incident the SFRS has determined in advance what resources will need to be sent, or 'mobilised'. This includes the number of fire appliances, specific equipment and specialist teams. This is called a Pre-Determined Attendance (PDA).</p>
<p><b>Retained and Volunteer Duty Staff (RVDS)</b></p>	<p>Retained and volunteer duty staff (RVDS) are professional firefighters who may have full-time employment outside of the Service but respond to emergency calls within their local area, as and when required.</p> <p>They are called upon to deliver the same wide range of emergency services as wholetime firefighters, such as: fires, floods, road traffic collisions, chemical spills and more. They also promote fire safety messages, as well as carrying out free home fire safety visits within their communities.</p> <p>When required to answer an emergency call, RVDS are summoned to the fire station by a radio pager. They are required to live or work near to the fire station they serve which allows them to respond to emergencies within an acceptable time. Typically RVDS are employed in rural areas or in large villages or small towns.</p>
<p><b>Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Board</b></p>	<p>The SFRS Board ensures the effective governance and financial management of the SFRS within the context of public service delivery and reform for the benefit of improving the safety and wellbeing of the people of Scotland.</p>
<p><b>Strategic Leadership Team</b></p>	<p>Based in Cambuslang, the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) is responsible for delivering the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service on behalf of the Board.</p>
<p><b>Unwanted Fire Alarm Signal (UFAS)</b></p>	<p>When a call is received as a result of an AFA in the workplace which has not been caused by a fire, to which the SFRS responds, – then this is termed as an Unwanted Fire Alarm Signal (UFAS).</p>



SCOTTISH  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland

[firescotland.gov.uk](https://firescotland.gov.uk)

## Reducing Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals

Consultation on Options for Responding to Automatic Fire Alarms

Version 2 - July 2021