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Auto fire alarms need a 999 before fire service respond in Surrey

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Surrey Fire and Rescue Service has changed the way it now responds to **automatic fire alarm** call outs (AFAs) to residential and domestic properties, by only attending if there's been a 999 call to confirm there is a fire or signs of fire.

This change, introduced last month, covers AFAs at properties including hotels, boarding schools, care homes and any other residential types, including those that contain single private dwellings.

98% of the residential and domestic AFA call outs that Surrey Fire and Rescue Service attended from October 2022-March 2023 were false alarms. These accounted for 976 mobilisations – that's more than 5 fire engines a day being sent out on blue lights to false alarms where there isn't a fire.

This change is the second phase of work, after making the switch in 2022 and only attending non-sleeping business calls when a fire is confirmed. Since then, false alarm visits have decreased by over 95%.

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service would like to reassure residents that nothing is changing in their response to a real fire. Only now, the call handlers will ask a series of questions designed to determine the nature of the call and whether there is a fire, or signs of fire, and depending on the response received, crews may still attend to investigate the reason for the AFA.

Group Commander and project lead for the change, Rob Jenks said: "*We're committed to keeping our communities safe, and if there's a fire, or signs of a fire, we will always respond immediately.*

"*After successfully making the switch for business AFA call outs in 2022, this new change is another positive step for our communities. We spend many hours and resources on responding to false alarms, and now, our crews and pumps will be more readily available when there's a confirmed emergency.*"

If at any time you discover signs of fire, raise the alarm, get out using the nearest fire exit and call 999.

For residents responsible for these types of premises, the service is urging you to visit their dedicated webpage for more information and advice on how to investigate an automatic fire alarm activation, and steps you can take to make your property as safe as possible.

Please visit: **https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/community/fire-and-rescue/community-safety/automatic-fire-alarms** to find out more about how this will affect you or your property.

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