

Reducing The Costs Of False Alarms

The curse of false alarms continues to plague UK industry and public-sector organizations alike. In this article I will illustrate some of the costs associated with false alarms and what can be done by Facilities Managers to mitigate against these events.

Statistics from the Fire Industry Association and regional fire brigades showing the effect of false alarms are widely known and a lot of data exists that quantifies these costs.

False fire alarms cost the UK up to £1 billion per year, a fire engine is called to attend a false alarm in London, every 12 minutes! Over a third of all emergency calls are false alarms. In Wales so far this year, 41% of fire brigade call outs were false alarms with the crews tied up for an average of 23 minutes, and at a cost of £300 per engine!

These figures represent the costs to the fire service but what about the cost to the business, school or hospital that activated the alarm? Lost production, staff disruption due to evacuation, inconvenience to customers, increased insurance premiums and increasingly, charges for attendance by some fire brigades!

It doesn't stop there though. Multiple false alarms can impact on the organizations reputation and may create an image of complacency with regard to employee health and safety. In some cases it may result in prosecution!

Whilst a good maintenance program of installed fire safety equipment is vital, this is only as good as the management of an alarm activation. In this respect time is very much of the essence.

Integrating the site fire alarm system to the on-site radio network with BrabourneAlert can save vital minutes once an alarm activation has occurred. By way of an example, a large academy in north London employs a Facilities Manager who is rarely in his office and whose only means of communication is by mobile phone. When a fire alarm activation occurs staff manning reception have to read the message shown on the alarm panel and then attempt to contact the FM. The time taken to dial a telephone number, wait for it to connect and then be answered costs valuable time and increases the risk of unnecessary brigade attendance, evacuations etc.

With BrabourneAlert integrated with the master fire panel, an alarm activation is received and the message displayed on the master panel is replicated on the Facilities Managers radio, in real time. Wherever he is on site he has instant notification of the type and location of the alarm activation and can make a rapid and informed decision thus avoiding many of the issues described earlier.

BrabourneAlert is a gateway that connects external devices to radio networks. As such it can be used to connect other alarm panels such as intruder alarms and to control systems such as building systems, plant and machinery etc. For more information on reducing the costs of false alarms contact simon@brabournecommunications.com or call 01332 363135.