

Common Causes of Fire Alarm False Activations

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1 Overview

1.1 Purpose

1.1.1 One recurring problem with works being carried out by contractors is false fire alarm activations. When fire alarms are falsely activated our buildings have to be evacuated causing inconvenience to staff and students and interruption of teaching activities.

2 Definitions

Clause	Term	Meaning
2.1		

3 Guidance Text

3.1 Most false fire alarm activations could be avoided by better planning and a bit more thinking. Where operations are likely to affect fixed automatic smoke detectors through the creation of dust, fume or smoke for example, it may be necessary to either isolate the fire alarm system or a part of it e.g. the likely affected zone or the detector heads in the affected area must be temporarily covered (bagged). Where large quantities of dust or smoke are expected then it may be necessary to isolate the fire alarm zone or loop to prevent activation and also bag off the detector heads to protect from dust contamination.

3.2 Typical causes of false activations associated with contractor's activities are:

- Dust from works being carried out such as downtakings, drilling or cutting masonry, brickwork and concrete, work on ventilation systems etc. It should be noted that dust in areas adjacent to the work area e.g. floors below and above can also be dislodged by vibration.
- Smoke, fume and aerosol producing activities such as: cutting, welding, hot air welding of floor coverings, emissions from vehicles and machinery (particularly diesel driven) or petrol driven tools etc carried out in the vicinity of smoke detectors (including external activities carried out near open windows or doors).
- Floor brushing activities in the vicinity of smoke detectors creating excessive amounts of dust. This should be avoided, and vacuum cleaners used instead.
- Break glass points which are still active being left unprotected in areas where materials are being moved. There is a high risk of accidental activation as materials are knocked against these points.
- Existing ventilation systems not adequately sealed off to prevent ingress of dust or fumes into the ventilation ductwork (potential for transfer of dust or fumes into areas occupied by the University).
- Steam/water ingress into detectors.
- Objects interrupting the beam of beam type detectors.

4 References

4.1 Internal References

4.1.1 *Procedures*

4.1.1.1 None

4.1.2 *Other Internal References*

4.1.2.1 None

4.2 External References

4.2.1 None