

False alarm calls in East Lothian drop thanks to new fire crew policy

The number of false alarms fire crews in East Lothian have had to respond to has fallen to its lowest in the last five years after they stopped automatic responses to businesses.

Scottish Fire and Rescue said it has seen a drop in call outs for all incidents during the first half of this year in the county with the fall in false alarms a major factor in the change.

The emergency service introduced a new policy in July last year which saw them no longer automatically responding to business premises when an alarm was set off in a bid to reduce what it called 'unwanted' call outs.

A report to East Lothian's Police and Fire Rescue Board today revealed the impact of the new approach locally was a huge drop in the number of false alarms crews attended.

It said so far this year they had responded to 104 unwanted fire alarms (UFAs), compared to 189 last year and 298 the year before.

The board was told: "The figure of 104 highlights a decrease in the number of UFAs incidents attended compared to the same period last year and is the lowest over a 5-year reporting

period.

“The changes to the way we response to automatic fire alarms from July last year has seen a significant reduction in the number of false alarms incidents attended by our operational crews.

“The reduction in calls attended allows personnel to focus on core activities such as training and community safety engagement.”

The board heard that in the first six months of this year fire crews in East Lothian were called out to 710 incidents, 231 of which were fires with 348 false alarms and 131 special service incidents.

Board member Councillor Colin McGinn praised the work of fire crews and drop in incidents, in particular regarding false alarms, saying: “The drop in call outs is to be commended.”

The board also heard that the number of incidents dealt with over fireworks week had been low with around 10 related incidents which were ‘easily absorbed’ into normal cover.

A spokesperson for the service said: “I am pleased to report there was no physical or verbal abuse towards any fire crews within East Lothian.”

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter