How to Investigate a Fire Alarm for Commercial Premises

On an actuation of a fire alarm carry out your emergency plan. The plan may consist of a full evacuation, part evacuation, or no evacuation dependant on the type of premises and people working within the premises. This should be highlighted within your risk assessment. Nominated staff should be appointed and receive sufficient training to carry out your emergency plan. As part of your policy we would recommend that the following points are either adopted or adapted to assist your policy.

1. A nominated member of staff should be given the role of coordination for your plan. All staff should check the area they are working in for signs of a fire and report any findings to the nominated person. The nominated person may also be responsible for calling the fire and rescue service or a further member of staff appointed.

2. If there is no immediate sign of fire, then a managed and controlled investigation of the reason for the activation should take place. Where possible this should be by a nominated person.

3. Check the fire alarm panel to find where the alarm has activated – it’s vital that you have a full zone or detector plan displayed immediately adjacent to the panel.

4. Where possible have another member of staff at the alarm panel and remain in contact with them (a mobile phone or short range radios are ideal for this purpose).

5. Understand the construction of the building using protected routes and be aware of alternative fire exits.

6. When searching the property a methodical approach should be carried out clearing any rooms and/or floors and report any signs of fire to the nominated person responsible for calling the fire and rescue service.

7. When investigating look, listen and smell for signs of fire. It might be smoke, unusual noises or heat and could be any one, some, or all of those signs.

8. Before opening a door feel it with the back of your hand, as high up the door as you can reach, for signs of heat. If it is hot do not open the door.

9. Remember you are looking for signs of a fire and not a fire itself. If there’s an obvious fire get out and call the fire and rescue service on 999.

10. When the call to the fire service is made, clearly state that an investigation has taken place and this is a call to a FIRE and not just an alarm sounding