

Factsheet 1: Hoax calls 1/2

Hoax calls cost lives. When an emergency services vehicle is attending to a hoax call, there may be someone in another location who genuinely needs its help. A fire engine cannot be in two places at once.

Things to remember

Hoax calls are illegal

- Making a hoax call to the emergency services is against the law.
- Anyone caught can face a fine of up to £5,000 or six months in prison.

Hoax calls can be traced

- Hoax calls can be traced. All calls to the emergency services, including those made from mobile phones and payphones, are recorded and, with the latest technology, the telephone number and address of a caller is often displayed in the fire control room even before they have started to speak.
- The Fire and Rescue Service has the power to have a mobile phone disconnected from the networks if they believe a hoax call has been made from it.
- Telephone service providers will terminate contracts if telephones,

particularly mobile telephones, are misused in this manner.

Hoax calls waste money

- Every year nearly 75,000 hoax calls are made to the Fire and Rescue Service.
- Each hoax call the Fire and Rescue Service responds to costs around £1,700.

In a REAL emergency

In a real emergency, follow these steps to make a call to the Fire and Rescue Service:

1. Dial 999 (from any phone, mobile or landline, calls to 999 are free).
2. The operator will ask you which service you require: Fire, Police, Ambulance or Coastguard.
3. When you are put through to the Fire and Rescue Service the operator will ask you:
 - your name, address and telephone number;
 - where the incident is taking place – try to be as specific as possible;
 - what is happening.

Try to stay calm and provide all the information you are asked for by the operator. Remember, if you really believe there is a fire and make an emergency call and it turns out that there is no fire, you will not be prosecuted.

Hoax call case studies

Did hoax call kill woman?

An elderly widow died while firefighters were attending a schoolboy's hoax call, it was revealed today.

The prank, which diverted a crew from the real fire, could have been responsible for the 73-year-old's death, a fire chief believes.

Barry Jordan, a community commander, said: "We will never know if she would have survived if we hadn't been called out to the other fire. Our engine was heading out in the opposite direction and things could have been very different if we had got there earlier."

Factsheet 1: Hoax calls 2/2

999 crash after hoax

Five firefighters were injured when their engine toppled over and crashed through railings while rushing to respond to a hoax call. The 11-tonne Volvo appliance and its five crew turned out from Wythenshawe station to reports of a fire at Wythenshawe Hospital at 9.30pm last night. As it turned off the roundabout it turned over and knocked down a lamp post before crashing through railings and coming to rest on its side, 10 metres from a community centre. All five firefighters were pulled out by colleagues who had been following in another engine. They were taken to Wythenshawe Hospital to be treated for shock, concussion, cuts and bruises. When they left the hospital they were told that the fire had been a malicious call. Someone had smashed the glass on a fire alarm point at the hospital.

A Fire Brigade investigation team is now trying to find out why the engine toppled over and who triggered the hoax call.

999 hoax death

A father of three died when his car hit a fire engine answering a hoax 999 call.

Fire hoax caller's phone cut off

A hoax caller has had his mobile phone disconnected after three calls were made to a fire control centre.

Fire and Rescue Service officials have warned people to think of the consequences of making false 999 calls after receiving a spate of them.

A Fire and Rescue Service spokesperson warned that anyone making hoax calls from a mobile phone would face being cut off.