



UK-AFI

UNITED KINGDOM
ASSOCIATION OF
FIRE INVESTIGATORS®

Whistleblowing Policy

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Table of Contents

Policy Statement.....	3
What is whistleblowing?	3
Support for whistleblowing	4
Procedure (whistleblowing):.....	5
Further Reading	6



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Policy Statement

This Policy Statement sets out the UK Association of Fire Investigators (UK-AFI) position on whistleblowing, together with guidance and advice available to members.

The UK-AFI believes that members should understand their professional obligations to their industry sector, the Criminal Justice Systems within the UK and to the Association.

Whilst whistleblowing is not a legal requirement, the Board of the UK-AFI consider it appropriate that members know how to raise a concern and / or know where to go to for support when they have a concern that they believe should be raised.

The UK-AFI is committed to meeting its public benefit obligations to society through its Corporate Social Responsibility Policy. Developing a culture where individuals feel supported in raising a concern and speaking up in the public interest is part of meeting this commitment.

A 'concern' might be a financial matter, other legal related matter or an allegation of a breach of the UK-AFI's Code of Ethics.

What is whistleblowing?

'Whistleblowing' is defined by the UK Whistleblowing Commission as 'the raising of a concern, either within the workplace or externally, about a danger, risk, malpractice or wrongdoing which affects others'. The term 'concern' is used throughout this document as shorthand for any or all of these situations.

Concerns that count as whistleblowing

You're protected by law if you report any of the following:

- a criminal offence, for example fraud
- someone's health and safety is in danger
- risk or actual damage to the environment
- a miscarriage of justice



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- the company is breaking the law, for example does not have the right insurance
- you believe someone is covering up wrongdoing

This Policy Statement applies in whichever country a member is working. The underlying law applicable to the individual or the employer may be the law of the country in which they are working, but if their contract of employment is made in England it will remain subject to English law. There are other combinations of circumstances which may create more complexity and, in many instances, both English and local law may be relevant.

Support for whistleblowing

There are potentially serious public and personal consequences if a member does not raise a concern. For this reason, the UK-AFI have undertaken to provide guidance for its members such that it is understood by them that appropriate support will be available should they raise a concern.

However, the UK-AFI are unable to provide any form of representation to members where their actions may render them liable to any action taken by their employer, the legal systems or any other organisation.

In the first instance the concern should be raised with the individual's employer, manager or suitable peer. All communications relating to the reporting of your concern should be made in written form. If there is no internal procedure or the concern relates to the employer or manager this should be communicated to an external party, dependent on the nature of the concern, which may be the UK-AFI.

Where you believe you are acting in the public interest you are entitled to certain protections in law. These protections may vary depending on the nature of the concern or the jurisdiction in which the object of your concern was raised / occurred. The UK-AFI may be able to provide advice on identifying the appropriate channel through which you should raise your concern.

This procedure must not be used to address a personal disagreement or grievance relating to your employment.



Procedure (whistleblowing):

1. All concerns will be treated in strict confidence with the initial assessment of the concern conducted by the Compliance Officer / Manager. The receipt of the concern will be communicated to the member raising the concern, where contact details are provided.
2. If the member has a concern relating to a criminal matter, they should in the first instance report this directly to the relevant enforcement body. The UK-AFI will not act as a proxy on the member's behalf.
3. If the member's concern relates to a situation where the administration of a fair judicial system is jeopardised, by the failure of an individual to follow the relevant directions applied to their practice or failure to observe the conditions contained within Codes of Practice / Conduct produced by other bodies to which cognisance should be given, the UK-AFI will advise the member to report their concern directly to the statutory authority with the ability to carry out the appropriate actions. The UK-AFI will not act as a proxy on the member's behalf.
4. If the concern relates to an alleged breach of the UK-AFI's Code of Ethics, the UK-AFI will ask the member raising the concern to provide sufficient information regarding the identity of the member who is alleged to be in breach and documented details of the alleged breach, including the reporting member's grounds for believing the Code of Ethics has been breached. The Ethical Practices and Grievance (EP&G) Committee will commence an investigation upon receipt of all required information.
5. It is possible that the concern being reported relates to more than one of the above. In the event that the concern includes an alleged criminal offence, any due process in law takes precedence over the UK-AFI internal procedure.
6. The UK-AFI anticipates that members will feel sufficiently supported to identify themselves when raising a concern. Concerns raised anonymously will be considered and where there is sufficient information provided, to warrant further investigation, this will occur. Concerns



that have insufficient detail, appear vexatious or frivolous in nature will be recorded but not actioned.

7. The UK-AFI's guidance to members on whistleblowing makes members' obligations clear but also advises that a member can make a request to the UK-AFI for 'peer support' in relation to the concern raised.

On receipt of any such request the UK-AFI will endeavour to locate a peer member to provide this support. The process of making these arrangements will include appropriate steps to ensure that there is no conflict of interest for the member providing the peer support in relation to the subject matter of the concern and that the 'reporting member' is happy with the peer member being proposed by the UK-AFI before the name and contact details of the 'reporting member' is divulged to the 'peer member'.

Further Reading

1. <https://www.wbuk.org/#overview> (Accessed 01/10/2020)
2. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415175/bis-15-200-whistleblowing-guidance-for-employers-and-code-of-practice.pdf (Accessed 01/10/2020)
3. <https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing> (Accessed 01/10/2020)
4. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/whistleblowers.htm> (Accessed 01/10/2020)
5. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/og/og-00033.htm> (Accessed 01/10/2020)