



FALSE ALARM PREVENTION TIPS

What is a false alarm?

The activation of an alarm system through mechanical failure, accident, malfunction, misuse, improper activation or negligence. False alarms shall not include alarms caused by acts of God or other causes which are beyond control of the alarm agent, alarm business or alarm user.

Did you know?

The three main causes of false alarms are: 1) user error, 2) installation/service error, and 3) equipment failure.

- More than 80 percent of all false alarms are caused by user error.
- There are easy steps you and your alarm monitoring company can take to prevent false alarms.
- False alarms present a serious threat to the effectiveness of our local police, fire and Emergency Medical System (EMS) departments, as well as to the safety of our citizens.
- False alarms are costly and dangerous because they divert police officers from proactive crime prevention efforts and can deny response to true emergency calls.

Major Causes of False Alarms: *Problem sites or actions of the following:*

- Unlocked or loose doors or windows
- Children, neighbors and visitors
- A cleaning crew, repair workers, pet sitters
- Pets or other wildlife
- User error
- Equipment malfunction

Before you activate your alarm system:

- Are you and others who use the security system fully educated on its proper operation? This may include domestic/cleaning crews, children, neighbors, caretakers, employees and temporary staff for your business.
- Make sure you securely close and lock all protected doors and windows.
- If you are leaving your home or business, make sure the door you leave by is closed tightly.
- Keep pets, balloons, plants, fans, heaters, etc. away from motion sensor areas.
- Know and rehearse the process to cancel an accidental alarm. Anyone with a key to your house or business should know this process.
- Know how much time you have after you arm your system to leave and to disarm your system when you enter.

Review with your alarm company the procedures you expect them to follow when your alarm activates.

- Do you want them to attempt to call more than one person on your contact list before requesting emergency dispatch?
- Do you only want the police notified if exterior and interior zones are both activated?
- Put your instructions in writing and mail/email or fax them to your alarm company. Get confirmation that your instructions have been received and entered correctly into their database.

Know what to do if you set off your alarm accidentally.

- First, *don't panic*. Carefully enter your disarm code to reset your system.
- Wait for your Alarm Company or central monitoring station to call you (on the phone number you have given them); give the agent your password or ID card number.
- ***Do not leave your home or business until you have talked with your monitoring station!*** If they do not call you soon, have their phone number posted by your control panel and contact them to cancel the police dispatch.
- DO NOT call 911 to cancel alarm activations – you must call your monitoring station. Once an alarm call is received by police dispatch, only the monitoring company can communicate with police dispatch to cancel the response by the police or fire departments. This prevents people not authorized to enter your home or business from overriding a burglar or fire alarm.
- You can arrange to have your alarm monitoring station call you or other designated persons first before the police are called whenever your alarm is activated.
- If you are aware of a mechanical problem with your alarm system, please call your alarm monitoring company or police dispatch before a false alarm occurs to prevent unnecessary police responses at 463-6262. The dispatchers will advise you how we can handle such issues.

At Home: *Avoid objects that trigger your alarm:*

- Unlocked, loose fitting, or open doors or windows. Always keep doors and windows locked when the alarm is in an "ON" mode to reduce the chance that friends, neighbors or children enter and cause the alarm to activate.
- Unsupervised pets – if you have pets, take special care to purchase an alarm system that is tolerant of pets. You may not want to purchase motion detectors if your pets have free run of the house when the alarm is on. Also, sometimes barking dogs can activate glass break detectors.
- Balloons or hanging decorations move and cause motion sensors to go off. Also, drafts may move plants or curtains, setting off motion sensors.
- **DO NOT call 911 to cancel alarm activations** – you must call your monitoring station.

At Your Business: *Watch for these pitfalls which may activate your alarm:*

- Swinging doors or windows
- Banners or signs, Mylar balloons, plants or curtains caught in drafts.

- Stacked items, such as boxes, which may fall, setting off motion detectors.
- Unsupervised guests.
- Untrained, unaware, or uncaring employees.
- Alarm equipment, such as motion sensors or overhead door magnets being hit by a forklift.

Contact Your Alarm Company if:

- If you plan any home improvements or renovation projects, such as changing phone systems, the configuration of a room, adding a wall, rearranging cubicles, installing skylights or ceiling fans, or even fumigating.
- If you plan to change your system batteries, causing an interruption in your systems power supply.
- If you plan a fire drill.
- If you acquire a pet or hire a cleaning crew that may be active outside normal business hours.

Enhance your alarm system's potential with people:

- Train responders (such as home health caretakers) with keys on complete system operation.
- Instruct cleaning, home construction or repair persons on how to fully operate your system. Or, consider not arming the alarm system if it will be more troublesome than helpful when such people are on the property.
- Use dead bolt locks for added security.

Some Consequences of False Alarms:

- Divert emergency resources away from true emergencies.
- A nuisance to you and your neighbors.
- Make your security system less reliable.
- Costs you and your community money.

Recommendations:

- Have a maintenance contract with a licensed alarm company and have your alarm system checked every year.
- If you are apprehensive about using your system, call your alarm company TODAY!
(Discuss changes to the system, its sensors, or the procedures to make it easier for you to use quickly and without so much stress.)

Do your part to prevent false alarms by following the tips listed above.

Thank you!

