

FARA
False Alarm Reduction Association

**RESIDENTIAL FALSE ALARM
PREVENTION**

**Does YOUR Home Security System
Cry Wolf?**

- False Alarms Cost System Users \$\$\$
- False Alarms Waste Valuable Law Enforcement Resources
- “Crying Wolf” Can Delay Response When You Really Need It

RESIDENTIAL FALSE ALARMS

- Did you know that the three major causes of false alarms are:
 1. use errors
 2. installation or service errors; and
 3. equipment failures?
- Did you know that more than 80% of false alarms are related to preventable user errors?
- Did you know that 20% of alarm users cause 80% of all false alarms?
- Do you think alarmed locations are entitled to unlimited law enforcement response?
- Do you think you are at greater risk when officers, accustomed to responding to chronic false alarms, respond to a real emergency at your location?

The reality is that patrol resources are limited and should never be wasted. Thousands of patrol hours are spent

investigating alarm reports that turn out to be “false alarms.”

Alarm companies and alarm users must be responsible for the use and maintenance of alarm systems to help assure prompt law enforcements response when an emergency really does exist.

FARA has been working with state and national alarm associations, and studying the false alarm problem and solutions for some time. Working with law enforcement, businesses and the community, there is documented proof that response to false alarms can be dramatically reduced.

WHAT IS A FALSE ALARM?

A false alarm is notification of an alarm to law enforcement when the responding authority finds no evidence of criminal offense or attempted criminal offense.

**COMMON CAUSES OF FALSE
ALARMS**

1. Inadequate training of people allowed access to your security system (children, neighbors, cleaning personnel, real estate agents, guests, relatives, babysitters, service and delivery personnel, etc.).
2. Weak system batteries.
3. Open, unlocked or loose fitting doors and windows.
4. Drafts from heaters and air conditioning systems that move plants, curtains, balloons, etc.

5. Wandering pets.

FALSE ALARMS...

- Take Officers and Fire Fighters away from real emergencies. This embarrassing situation endangers responding authorities and the whole community by needlessly diverting public safety resources.
- Desensitizes communities to actual incidents of crime and fire and can lead to neighbors ignoring your alarm when it goes off.
- Make your security system less reliable and credible.
- May make you reluctant to arm your system, exposing your home and property to undetected theft or fire.
- Cost citizens time, personal security and money, as many jurisdictions assess costly fines for excessive false alarms.

**INSTALLING & ACTIVATING AN
ALARM SYSTEM**

- Check with your local jurisdiction to see if you are required to register your alarm system.
- When purchasing an alarm system, you must remember that you are a vital part of the alarm function. You must completely understand how the system works, what it does and does not do, and what you must do to keep it in proper operating condition.
- Ensure all users of your system are provided adequate and thorough instruction on using and testing the

system. Ask your alarm company to provide you with written instructions, as well as give you a physical demonstration.

- Ensure outside audible alarms are set to sound for no more than 10 minutes (or whatever time limit is defined in your ordinance) before resetting.

HOW CAN YOU PREVENT FALSE ALARMS?

1. Before activating your alarm system...
 - Lock all protected doors and windows.
 - Keep pets, balloons, fans, heaters, plants, curtains, seasonal decorations, etc. away from motion sensor areas.
 - Know how to cancel the alarm if the system activates.
2. Educate alarm system users...
 - All users, key holders or any person with legal access to your property must be thoroughly trained in how to operate your system, including knowledge of correct arming codes, pass codes, telephone numbers and procedures for canceling accidental alarm activations.
3. Notify your security company if...
 - You think your system isn't working properly.
 - You plan any remodeling, including replacing doors or windows, hanging drywall, sanding floors, installing attic flooring or basement ceiling, changing phone systems, installing DSL, VoIP,

FIOS or intercoms, siding, ceiling fans or skylights, fumigating, installing wiring for cable or other electronics, installing anything near the system control panel or keypads.

- You hire domestic help, get a new pet, plan to sell your house, or are testing your system.
4. Contact your jurisdiction's Alarm Coordinator if...
 - You have a phone service or name change, or if situations change, such as a disabled person now residing at the residence, etc.
 5. Have your security company check and service your system regularly. Routine maintenance can help prevent many false alarms.
 6. Your central monitoring station **should not** request a law enforcement dispatch for power outages, low battery signals or loss of telephone connections.
 7. Request that your monitoring company uses Enhanced Call Verification (ECV), which means that if they receive no answer at the alarm site, they call a responsible party's or authorized user's cell phone prior to requesting law enforcement dispatch.
 8. ***Dirty or wet phone lines, telephone repairmen and service interruptions do not require law enforcement response!***
 9. Upgrade old alarm systems to current equipment conforming to Security Industry Association (SIA) false alarm prevention standards.

CHECK LIST

- ✓ Are you and others who use the system fully educated on its proper operation?
- ✓ Does everyone with a key to your home know how to operate your security systems?
- ✓ Do you take care to eliminate possible causes of false alarms?
- ✓ Have you rehearsed alarm cancellation procedures with all who use your system to cancel accidental alarm activations?
- ✓ Do you communicate with your security company regularly, advising of schedule changes, problem areas or maintenance needs?
- ✓ Do you notify your local Alarm Coordinator when phone numbers or situations change?
- ✓ Do you have your security system instruction book and alarm company names and telephone numbers readily available in order to call and cancel accidental alarm activations?

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