

City of Atlanta False Alarm Reduction Program

Guidelines on How to File a Dispute



What is a false alarm?

The City of Atlanta's false alarm ordinance defines a false alarm as: *"the activation of an alarm system to summon emergency personnel which occurs as a result of mechanical or electronic failure, malfunction, improper installation, or the negligence of the alarm user, his/her employees or agents, unless the request for response was cancelled by the alarm user or his/her agent before the Atlanta Police Department or the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department arrives at the alarm site. An alarm is false within the meaning of this Article when, upon inspection by the Atlanta Police Department or the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department evidence indicates that no unauthorized entry, robbery, other such crime was committed, attempted, or occurred in or on the premises, which would have activated a properly functioning alarm system, or no fire occurred which would have activated a properly functioning alarm system. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a false alarm shall not include an alarm, which can reasonably be determined to have been caused or activated by violent conditions of nature, nor does it include other extraordinary circumstances not reasonably subject to control by the alarm user or alarm system. In addition, an alarm activated during an alarm system testing procedure shall not be considered a false alarm if the alarm user first notifies and receives permission from the user's alarm company, or designee, to test the system and the alarm company upon receiving such permission does not request Emergency dispatch".*

Dispute Process:

Civil penalties imposed as a result of the operation of an alarm system without a valid permit, or other civil penalties imposed against persons not holding up-to-date alarm permits, may be disputed by filing a False Alarm Dispute Form with the City of Atlanta Municipal Court. The Dispute form and additional instructions can be found on this website by clicking on the linke that reads "View Fillable Dispute Form" under the heading of Registered Alarm Users.

When filing a dispute, please be sure to include the following details:

- False Alarms disputes **must be submitted within 14 days of the date printed on the mailed citation.**
- False alarms **must be filed with the Municipal Court** via email (falsealarm@atlantaga.gov), mail (150 Garnett Street, SW Atlanta, GA, 30303) or in person at the Municipal Court.
- Submit one (1) dispute form per citation.
- Submit one (1) attachment per dispute form.
- In order to properly process your dispute form you must include a copy of your citation and be sure to include your name, the alarm system location, date of the false alarm, your permit number and rationale for the dispute along with any supporting evidence.
- To ensure an expeditious review, please be sure to bring copies of all submitted materials with you to your Court hearing.
- Once a dispute is filed, you **must** personally appear in Court on the assigned hearing date. Failure to

appear for scheduled court hearing may result in additional penalties being imposed.

- **Withdrawal.** If at any time after you file a dispute with the court you decide not to dispute the citation you may file a withdrawal letter with the Court stating your wish not to dispute the charge. This will be reviewed by the Court and then you will be allowed to pay the fine or accept the warning. Withdrawals must be received by the Court 7 business days prior to the date you are scheduled to appear.

Disputes are *not* generally granted as a result of the following common situations which trigger false alarms:

1. Faulty, defective or malfunctioning equipment supplied by an alarm business.
2. Improper installation or maintenance by an alarm business.
3. Improper monitoring by an alarm business.
4. Alarm activations that occur while alarm technicians are repairing or servicing the alarm system.
5. An occurrence where no evidence of criminal activity is present.
6. Mistakes made by private contractors, maids, cleaning crews, visitors, etc.
7. Item(s) within the home or business that move causing motion detectors to activate (i.e. curtains, signs, balloons, etc.).
8. Doors and/or windows that become loose and cause a break in the contacts that activate the alarm system.
9. Caretakers who watch homes or businesses when owners are away and who activate the alarm in error or are not familiar with required codes or passwords.
10. Pets, rodents or wildlife movement in or near the home or business.
11. Alarms caused by Apartment Management Employees.

In the case of items 1 and 2 above, if you suspect the false alarm was due to faulty equipment or improper installation contact your alarm company. In such cases, the system should be inspected and repaired where necessary.

*** The above described events are hypothetical only and do not bind the Municipal Court in any way**