

City of Atlanta False Alarm Reduction Program

False Alarm Prevention Tips



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"*.

Did you know?

Three main causes of false alarms are: 1) user error, 2) installation/service errors, 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 dealer can take to prevent false alarms
- False alarms present a serious threat to the effectiveness of our local police, fire and 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:

- Unlocked or loose doors/windows
- Children, Neighbors and Visitors
- Pets or other wildlife

- User Error
- Equipment Malfunction
- Poor maintenance or low batteries
- Inadvertently setting off motion detectors
- Power surges

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.
- 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 tightly closed.
- Keep pets, balloons, fans, heaters, etc. away from motion sensor areas.
- Know and rehearse the process to cancel an accidental alarm. Anyone with your key 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.

Know what to do if you set your alarm off 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, give 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, have the number posted by your control panel and contact them to cancel the police dispatch.
- If your alarm is monitored, please **DO NOT** call 911 to cancel alarm activations--you must call your monitoring station.
- You can arrange to have your alarm monitoring station call you or another designated person first before the police are called whenever your alarm is activated.
- If you are aware of a problem with the system, you can cancel the police dispatch.

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 customers 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- that move can cause motion sensors to go off.
- Drafts that move plants and curtains.

At your business:

Watch for these pitfalls that 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 forklifts

Contact your alarm company:

- If you plan any improvement or renovation projects, such as changing phone systems, reconfiguring a room, adding a wall, rearranging cubicles, installing skylights or ceiling fans, or even fumigating.
- If you plan to change your alarm system batteries. This can cause an interruption in your system's power supply which may trigger an alarm activation.
- Also alert your alarm company if you hire domestic help or acquire a pet.

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.

With people:

Enhance your alarm system's potential:

- Train responders with keys on complete system operation.
- Ensure that anyone authorized to use your alarm system is properly trained in its usage.
- Use dead bolt locks.

False alarms:

- Divert emergency resources away from true emergencies.
- Are 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!
- Do your part to prevent false alarms.