

# False Alarm Prevention Tips

## What is a false alarm?

Louisville Metro Codified Ordinance Chapter 127 defines false alarms as:

- A **false burglar alarm** dispatch is defined as a request to the police department when the responding officer finds no evidence of a criminal or attempted criminal offense.
- A hold-up alarm dispatch is defined as a request to the police department on silent alarm signal activation to signal a robbery in progress. When the officer arrives on scene and there is not a robbery in progress it is a **false hold-up alarm**.

## Did you know?

Three (3) 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
- Cleaning Crews/ Repairmen/ Pet Sitters
- Pets or other wildlife
- Mistakes made by users, employees, family members, cleaning crews, private contractors, maintenance/apartment managers.
- Equipment Malfunction
- Batteries that need to be replaced
- Hold-up alarms placed on freezers
- Improper installation from the alarm company

- Holiday decorations

### **Before you activate your alarm system:**

- Are you and others who use the security system fully educated on its proper operation? This may include 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 closed tight.
- Keep pets, balloons, fans, heaters, holiday decorations, etc. away from motion sensor areas.
- Know and rehearse the process to cancel an accidental alarm. Anyone with an access 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 Monitoring Station to call, give them your passcode.
- ***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.
- **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.
- Holiday decorations that move or have flashing lights.

## **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 employees
- Alarm equipment, such as motion sensors or overhead door magnets, being hit by forklifts
- Holiday decorations that move or have flashing lights.

## **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 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 want your alarm company to call more than one number (preferably your cell phone number)?
- 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.
- Be sure they know your passcode to cancel a police response if the alarm was set off accidentally.
- 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 to get more training.
- Do your part to prevent false alarms.