

False Alarm Prevention Tips

What is a false alarm?

The Cobb County Alarm Ordinance defines a False Alarm as: “the activation of an alarm system to summon law enforcement personnel which occurs as a result of mechanical or electronic failure, malfunction, improper installation, or the negligence of the alarm user or his employees or agents, unless the law enforcement response was cancelled by the alarm user or his agent before law enforcement personnel arrive at the alarm location. An alarm is false when, upon determination by the responding officer, no unauthorized entry, robbery, or other crime was committed or attempted in or on the premises which would have activated a properly functioning alarm system.”

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
- Cleaning Crews/ Repairmen/ 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.
- 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, 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.
- **DO NOT** call 911 to cancel an alarm activations--you must call your monitoring station.
- Except in the instance of duress, ambush or robbery alarm activations, the monitoring company must make at least two attempts to contact a representative of the alarm site by telephone or other electronic means and attempt to confirm a valid alarm before making a dispatch request.
- 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 and cause motion sensors to go off.
- **DO NOT** call 911 to cancel alarm activations--you must call your monitoring station.
- 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 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 alarm system batteries causing an interruption in you systems power supply.

- Also alert your alarm company if you acquire a pet or hire domestic help.

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

- Do you only want the police notified if exterior and interior zones are both activated?
- You may want to name a private guard service for your alarm company to call for response to an alarm activation instead of the police, thereby, saving police resources and fine assessments.
- Put your instructions in writing.

With people

Enhance your alarm system's potential:

- Train responders with keys on complete system operation.
- Instruct domestic or repair persons on how to fully operate your system.
- 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.