



FALSE ALARM AWARENESS CLASS

What we will cover

- What is an alarm system?
- How alarm systems really work?
- What is a False Alarm?
- Causes & Impacts of false alarms.
- How to reduce and eliminate false alarms.
- And more ...

What is an alarm system?

CONTROL PANEL - is the brains of the system. It interprets signals from the sensors based on the nature of the emergency. It can notify all occupants of the home or business by noise or beeping and sends out the call to your alarm monitoring company if sensor is violated.

KEYPAD – It is your way of controlling your system. Some systems now come with key fobs – a wireless keypad you can use to turn your system on and off remotely. Key fobs must be handled with care. Make sure your alarm company has provided you with a recessed dual action key fob that will activate an audible alarm.

GLASSBREAK DETECTOR - The “hearing aid” of the system are used to detect the sound of glass breaking during an intrusion. Some sensors are made with dual technology linking an acoustic device with a shock device.

MOTION DETECTORS - The inside “eyes” of the system. They detect very small changes in a room that indicate movement. Make sure your alarm company has installed a “pet friendly” motion detector if you have any pets in the home. If your pet wanders freely through the home or if you have a cat, you may want to “bypass” the motion detector or confine your pets to an area away from it.

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CONTACTS - The perimeter “ears” of the system. They are located on the doors and windows. They report to the control pad if a door or window is opened. All doors and windows should be closed securely and locked before arming your alarm system.

SIREN/SPEAKER - The “voice” of the system. The siren can be heard inside buildings, outside or both. Some systems also come with lights that indicate an alarm. People who are hearing impaired may want to ask their alarm company about having strobe lights installed.



What happens when monitoring station receives a signal

An open door or window or other part of the system tells the control panel something is wrong. Your control panel seizes your phone line and calls your monitoring company. If you pick up your phone while this is happening, all you’ll hear is static. Automation within the central station interprets the signal and directs the operator to the proper course of action.

The central station receives information from your control panel: name, address, and type of alarm. Your alarm company will call inside the premises to try to verify whether the alarm is true or false. False alarms have become such a problem that monitoring companies are now required by state law to make two phone calls for general intrusion alarms. If they do not receive an answer on the first call, they must make another call to a different phone number before contacting the police department This procedure is known as **Enhanced Call Verification or (ECV)**.

ALARMS: Your first line of defense

Used properly, alarm systems are one of the most effective ways to deter burglaries and break-ins.

There's just one Problem ... False Alarms

The Problem

- 99% of general intrusion alarm calls received by the City of Palm Bay were false alarms
- The city has over 16,655 residential and commercial alarm systems
- The number of new alarm systems is growing by 9% per year
- Palm Bay Police Department responded to 2,026 false alarms last year, using 1,588.64 police officer man-hours and 1,040 dispatcher man-hours
- Most false alarms are caused by the alarm user
- False alarms waste law enforcement resources & taxpayer money
- Cause police officers to become complacent in responding to alarm calls
- False alarms are costly to the alarm user, the alarm company and law enforcement
- Increase risk of police officer having accident responding to alarm calls
- Annoy neighbors
- May eventually result in limited or no law enforcement response to alarms
- Limited police resources available to handle calls
- Divert police from crime prevention efforts

What Causes False Alarms?

- User Error
- Misapplication of Equipment
- Installation Quality
- Weather



What Can You Do To Prevent False Alarms?

Call your alarm company:

- Before you start any remodeling
- When you add or change a new authorized alarm user or emergency contact
- When you change your phone number or phone service
- When you add a pet to your home
- When you are moving
- When you have an unexplained false alarm
- If you have any concerns about how to use your alarm system
- Hear “funny” sounds coming from it
- Think your alarm system is not working properly
- To schedule annual inspections

Train All Alarm Users:

- Everyone who has a key must know how to use your system.
- Includes – housekeepers, guests, neighbors, relatives, cleaning crews, new employees etc. Anyone who may stay at your home while you are not there.
- Every person who uses the system should know your password or identification code for verification with the central station.
- Schedule meetings with all employees to “refresh” them on the proper operation of the alarm system.
- Know your company’s procedure to cancel a false alarm.
- Know the phone number of your monitoring company. You can store the number in your cell phone for quick retrieval.
- Schedule regular training sessions for all employees to “refresh” their memories on the operation of the alarm system and how to cancel false alarms.

Motion Detector Alarms:

- Motion detectors are a major cause of false alarms as any movement, no matter how slight can set them off.
- Should be kept clean and free of spider webs
- Do not install near ceiling fans or wherever there may be a draft
- Do not use if pets roam freely through home
- Make sure you “bypass” the motion detector while someone is in the home
- Consider using cross-zoning in problem areas
- Be aware of what can cause motion detector alarms:

> *Helium balloons*

> *Pets*

> *Bugs on the lens*

> *Curtains*

> *Signs*

> *Plants*

> *Drafts*

> *Ceiling fans*

> *Holiday decorations*

Doors & Window Alarms:

- Doors and windows must be tight fitting & locked
- Close and lock windows and doors. This prevents doors and windows that aren’t secured from being opened by the wind or by a draft from your air conditioning system.

Re-Entering:

- Don’t play “beat the clock”, if you re-enter your premises because you’ve forgotten something, turn off the alarm & re-set it when you leave again.

Bypass Zones

- Know how to “bypass” (shut off) the motion detector when you are at home
- Know how to shut off a malfunctioning component (Zone) until repair is completed

Inspect Your Alarm System

- Schedule annual inspections of your alarm system with your licensed alarm company
- Follow your alarm company's instructions on testing the system regularly – don't test it by intentionally setting it off.
- Have your alarm company replace batteries as needed; wireless systems generally require this more often.

Make Sure Your Alarm Company is Making Two Verification Calls

- Contact your alarm monitoring company and make sure they are in compliance with Florida State law and making a second phone call to verify an alarm activation if they do not get an answer on their initial call before they contact the police department. This is called Enhanced Call Verification (ECV).

Make sure your alarm company is licensed in the State of Florida. You can check licensing on the state's website at www.MYFLORIDALICENSE.com under electrical contractors. You can report any unlicensed activity at 1-866-532-1440 or by contacting your local police false alarm reduction office.

What Should I Do If I Have a False Alarm And Don't Cancel It?

- Don't panic
- Turn your system off – disarm it
- Wait a few minutes for your alarm company to call you
- Give them the password or code
- DO NOT call 911 and ask to cancel an alarm – they do not know if you are being forced to make the call and their first concern is your safety
- Police will come to the alarm site
- Follow directions from them or directions from emergency communications center personnel who may call you
- Explain the circumstances of the false alarm
- Have ID ready to show the police that you belong at the alarm site

What Does Palm Bay's Alarm Ordinance Say About Alarm Systems?

- Applies to all alarm systems that will signal the occurrence of an illegal or unauthorized entry or other activity requiring immediate attention and to which law enforcement is requested to respond. This does not include motor vehicle, boat, fire, domestic violence alarms or alarms designed to elicit a medical response.
- Includes systems that are self-monitored
- All alarm systems must have a permit and be registered with the city
- Alarm monitoring must provide your permit/registration number when they call for police response.
- Annual renewal

What Does Palm Bay's Alarm Ordinance Say About Alarm Systems? *continued from previous page*

- Permits expire on the one year anniversary of the issue date
- Cost is twenty dollars (\$20), but the renewal is free if you have not had any false alarms in the previous year.
- A twenty dollar (\$20) fine plus a twenty-five dollar (\$25) non-compliance fee if you are not registered within 30 days of permit renewal date, installation date or date of notice to register.

Fees for False Alarms:

We know that accidents happen, so you get two “free” false alarms every permit year. Fees start at the 3rd false alarm.

FALSE ALARM FEES AND OCCURANCES
First False Alarm Occurs = \$0 to be paid for the Police response
Second False Alarm Occurs = \$0 to be paid for the Police response
Third False Alarm Occurs = \$50 to be paid for the Police response
Fourth False Alarm Occurs = \$100 to be paid for the Police response
Fifth False Alarm Occurs = \$150 to be paid for the Police response
Sixth or more False Alarm Occurs = \$200 to be paid for the Police response

Alarm users are not charged when:

- > *Severe weather*
- > *Phone service fails*
- > *Electric power fails for more than 4 hours*
- > *Your alarm company cancels the alarm with the city before police units are dispatched*

Now that you know all about false alarms and how to prevent them

You're almost done ...

If you want to have one false alarm fine of up to one hundred dollars (\$100.00) waived, you can take the following short quiz – only ten questions (this fee can only be waived once in a twenty four month period). Make sure you have entered your name and address at the end before you submit it.

Take The Quiz Now

www.pbfl.org/quiz