

# **False Alarm Reduction Program for YOUR Home or Workplace**

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# False Alarm Reduction Program for YOUR Alarm Company

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<h3 style="margin: 0;">Chapter 1</h3>	
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Successful False Alarm Reduction Programs take time and effort. The key is to find the appropriate amount of resources to effectively manage the problem.

The purpose of this manual is to assist you to start a successful false alarm reduction program in YOUR home or business.

**IT IS EVERYONE'S  
RESPONSIBILITY TO**



**FALSE ALARMS**

	<h2 style="margin: 0;">False Alarm Reduction Program for YOUR Home or Business</h2>
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In order to create, implement or refine a false alarm prevention program it is helpful to be aware of the causes, impact of false alarms and the solutions to reduce them. Consumers need to take responsibility for their alarm systems and be aware of the ramifications of false alarms and how they affect public safety response.

## Major Causes of False Alarms

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False alarms are caused by a number of reasons:

### User Error

- Everything from failing to properly secure the doors/windows before setting the alarm to forgetting the passcode to disarm the system or trying to “beat the clock” when exiting can activate an alarm.
- Cooking the popcorn too long will create enough smoke to trip any smoke alarm.



### Lack of User Training



- One of the main reasons for user error is lack of good, comprehensive training on how to use the system, what to do if the system activates and how to cancel a false alarm, should one occur.
- Alarm users must constantly be re-educated on the proper use of their alarm systems and this responsibility falls directly on the alarm company.
- Also, a plan of attack must be developed to train new employees and visitors.

### Improper Design

- An alarm system must be designed with the alarm user’s lifestyle/business environment in mind.
- If there are pets that have free run or even limited run of the alarm user’s home, did the salesperson sell, and did the technician install, interior motion detectors?
- Did you assume that cats can only jump so high? If so, it is a false alarm waiting to happen.



### Lack of Maintenance



- Lack of maintenance covers both alarm system maintenance, as well as physical site maintenance.
- If you move into a new house and after six months to a year you notice that your doors start to stick, or your windows no longer open and shut as they should, it is probably due to settlement that has occurred.
- This should be repaired immediately, as it may cause false alarms.
- If windows and doors are not tight in their frames, the contacts may become separated or out of alignment, which can signal an alarm activation.
- Also, alarm systems should be inspected on an annual basis by a licensed or

certified alarm technician to ensure the system and all components of the system are operating properly.

### Wear and Tear

- Just like any electronic component, alarm systems wear out and must be serviced on a regular basis.
- Would you expect to never change the oil in your car and not eventually have engine trouble?
- The same thing holds true with alarm systems and alarm users must properly maintain their systems to ensure proper operation.
- Detectors need to be cleaned.



## Extreme Weather



- Extreme weather causes a huge number of false alarms, and for the most part, it should not.
- An alarm system should not activate just because there is a thunderstorm (unless the panel receives a direct hit by lightning) or because it happens to be a windy day.
- Yet, we all have stories about how we tracked a thunderstorm by where alarms were going off. If at all possible, do not excuse false alarms due to weather.
- Alarm systems should be designed and installed, and alarm users should

maintain their facilities appropriately, so that false alarms do not occur during most weather events.

## Power Failure

- Power failures, as well as surges, occur on a fairly frequent basis. They should not, however, be the cause of a false alarm.
- If the power goes out for any reason, the alarm system's battery backup should kick in and avoid a false alarm.
- Most backup batteries last for a minimum of four hours and some jurisdictions even have a time frame built into their ordinance mandating how long the backup battery must last.



## Unsecured Pets



- A family pet moving throughout the home may be large enough to activate a motion sensor. Special sensors are available to adapt to some pets.
- Problems occur with new pets or as pets grow over time.

## Objects Inside An Alarm Location

- Hanging or moving signs or decorations will activate motion detectors, especially when heating or air conditioning systems come on or gusts of wind are strong enough to move them.



## **Major Impacts of False Alarms**

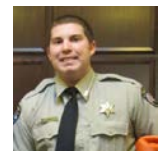
The biggest problem with home and business security systems is the number and frequency of false alarms. There are costs associated with false alarms for several categories.

### Costs to Public Safety



- **Billions of dollars in wasted resources and wasted manpower and time** - False alarms cost police, fire and EMS billions of dollars every year in wasted time, manpower and money driving our cars and trucks all over our jurisdictions responding to non-crimes, non-fires, non-emergencies.
- **Complacency** - False alarms cause officer safety issues. Responding to the same location over and over again and not finding any criminal activity lends itself to officer complacency, where they may not be prepared for the "real thing" when it happens. This is when officers, and others, can get hurt or worse.
- **Not available for actual calls** - Officers who respond to false alarms are not available for community outreach or response to real crimes, medical emergencies or fires.

LOUISIANA DEPUTY KILLED  
RESPONDING TO ALARM  
Posted by Law Officer  
Apr 30, 2017 | Officer Down |



### Costs to Alarm Industry

- **Staff at central stations to answer calls** - Increased level of activity, whether they are false alarms or not, means more staff at the central stations to answer the calls.

- **Technicians to respond to troubleshoot** - Capable, trained alarm technicians are required to visit their alarm sites to troubleshoot the cause of the false alarm.
- **Customer service staff to deal with alarm users** - Customer service staff to handle questions and problems with the alarm user and to re-educate them on the proper use of their alarm systems is required.
- **Increased training costs** - There may be increased training costs for alarm companies to educate their employees on how to deal with false alarms.
- **Time** - Trying to determine the cause of false alarms, educating the customer and fixing problems can take a significant amount of time - time that is now not available to sell new systems, sign up new customers and grow the company.
- **Fines** - Finally, many jurisdictions assess fees or fines for excessive false alarms. Those fees or fines can either be passed on to your company by the alarm user or may even be assessed directly to you by the authority having jurisdiction.

### Costs to Alarm Users

- **Imposition of fees/fines** - Alarms users are faced with paying false alarm response fees/fines imposed by local jurisdictions, which may range from \$25 to as much as \$4000 per false alarm.
- **Maintenance costs** - Maintenance agreements or higher maintenance costs are required to troubleshoot and repair any equipment false alarm related problems.
- **Monitoring fees** - Monitoring fees may increase based on the volume of calls their central station has to handle.
- **Time and Aggravation** - Users have to deal with the time and aggravation involved in understanding why they had false alarms and to correct the problem. This could mean time away from work to wait for service technicians, as well as listening to their neighbors complain about how their alarm went off again.



### Costs to Public at Large

The public at large also bears costs associated with false alarms, when they themselves may not even have an alarm system.

- **Officers not available when you need them** - If officers are responding to what turns out to be a false alarm, they may not be available to respond to real criminal activity, which puts citizens at greater risk.
- **Subsidizing those with alarm systems** - The huge costs to public safety to respond to false alarms can be borne by the entire community through higher taxes, etc.
- **Increased risk of car crashes** - When officers do respond to alarm signals with lights and sirens, which some still do, there is an increased risk to the general public on the highways.
- **Annoyance factor** - There is the annoyance factor - having to listen to your neighbor's alarm siren going off all hours of the day and night.





# False Alarm Reduction Program for YOUR Home or Business

## Chapter 3

### How to Select a System

#### Alarm Services 101

Under what circumstances should/would you install a burglar or fire or medical alert system? What are the main differences and can you expect to pay for this service or receive it free?

#### Burglar Alarm – “Someone is breaking into my house!”

- You will pay for intrusion detectors, wiring and equipment that will sound the alarm when activated.
- For monitoring to work, you must turn the alarm on at night, or when you leave the house, and turn it off in the morning, or when you return.
- If you contract for the service, a message will be sent to the monitoring company when an alarm is triggered. The monitoring company should call you to confirm the need for law enforcement response.
- The monitoring company will charge you a fee for monitoring.
- A message may be sent to you and or your friends and family to alert them.



#### Fire Alarm – “A fire has started in my house!”

- You will pay for the equipment (smoke detectors and/or sprinkler heads) installation.
- The alarm will sound in your house to alert you to leave the house immediately to escape the fire.
- If you want to have an alarm message sent to a monitoring company so they can call the fire department, you must pay for additional equipment to be installed, and the monitoring company will charge you a fee for this monitoring service.
- A message may be sent to you and or your friends and family to alert them.



#### Medical Alarm – “I need medical help!”

- You will pay for the signaling device and equipment.
- You must keep the signaling device on your person or within reach in order to use it.
- There are two different and distinct things that can happen when you activate your medical alarm depending on what you have purchased.
  - A monitoring company can monitor your medical alarm and receive the signal when you activate it. You and the monitoring company must agree in advance what the monitoring company will do when they receive your signal; i.e., call your home to determine if an emergency really exists, call a neighbor or family member to check up on you, or immediately request that rescue personnel respond. The monitoring company will charge a fee for this service.





- An alarm message can be sent directly to a relative or friend, whoever you designate, who can respond in person or call you to verify the alarm and then call another to provide emergency assistance. No fee should be charged for monitoring.

### [911 telephone call – “I need help!” and I can describe what I need and where I am.](#)

- A 911 call can be made by dialing “9-1-1” on the telephone, for any type of emergency. A city or county employee will answer and dispatch the appropriate emergency assistance.
- You already pay a small charge on your monthly telephone bill for this service.

## **Do Your Homework**

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Poorly used, installed, or maintained systems can cause significant problems for you, public safety agencies and your alarm company. Therefore, it is important for consumers to do their homework **before** buying or installing an alarm system.

### [Do Not Buy Out of Fear!](#)

It is often our first reaction to purchase an alarm system after being burglarized. Unfortunately, this is when we are most vulnerable.

- Knowing what questions to ask is half the battle. Consider the following:
  - What environmental factors need to be taken into consideration?
  - What will your budget allow in terms of buying or leasing a system?
  - What will your monthly monitoring costs be?
  - Take your time and be sure you know what kind of system is right for you.



### [Check Out the Company](#)

- Before purchasing an alarm system, contact your local public safety agency and Better Business Bureau or Office of Consumer Affairs.
- Some public safety agencies track the false alarm rates of alarm companies.
- False alarms are an indicator of the quality of the alarm installation and user education.
- Consumer offices can usually tell you the nature of and how many complaints have been filed against an alarm company with whom you may be considering doing business.
- The consumer office should also be able to tell you if those filed complaints, if any, were satisfactorily resolved or not.
- You may then take the information you learn from the above sources and make a much more informed decision about the company you select to install and monitor your alarm system.



## [Inquire If Your State Requires Alarm Companies To Be Licensed](#)

- Some public safety agencies also require local licensing, which may be in addition to any licensing required on a state level.
- If the alarm company or its employees are not licensed as required, they may not have submitted to background and fingerprint checks or even be qualified to install an alarm system.
- To protect your rights, be sure all required licenses and permits have been obtained.



## **Professional Install or DIY**

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There are many types of alarm systems ranging from an all in one device, to a several component system. You need to research and choose the one that best fits your needs. Visit the FARA Alarm User Site at <http://alarmuser.org> for more information.

Improperly installed or operated alarm systems can lead to false alarms.

When you install an alarm system on your own, you assume all the responsibility to avoid false alarms.



Please keep in mind the following things when purchasing and installing a Do-It-Yourself system;

- Read and follow the directions about where to put and not to put the sensors as well as how to mount them to doors, windows, walls or ceilings.
- If you use double stick tape to mount a device: make sure to clean the spot where you will apply the tape and use the tape supplied by the manufacturer. If you have an option to use a screw to mount the device do so. If equipment slips or becomes unglued it will cause an alarm to be triggered.
- When you choose where to put your alarms sensors, keep in mind that pets, decorations, curtains and heating ducts will cause movement enough to trigger your alarm.
- Most public safety agencies do not allow direct dial or automated calls from alarm systems. Check with your local jurisdiction before you purchase or program an alarm system that 'direct dials'. There may be costly fines associated with a system that has that feature.
- Contact your public safety agency for registration/permit requirements as well as what phone number to call in the event of an alarm. If there are alarm regulations in effect, you will usually be subject to the same registration/permit requirements and fines that apply to a user with professionally installed system.
- An alarm system needs general upkeep, maintenance and repair. It is especially important to periodically replace the batteries in the alarm system. If you are having trouble with your alarm system, contact the manufacturer or consult a licensed alarm company.
- If your alarm calls a friend or relative in the event of an alarm, make sure they know when you have visitors or scheduled deliveries or repairs that could cause a false alarm.
- If your alarm is monitored by an alarm monitoring company, be sure to ask them to call the site where the alarm is located and then call your cell phone before they call for public safety response. Making these calls first will avoid many false alarms.
- Keep alarm monitoring company and public safety agency phone numbers in your cell phone so they are handy in case you need to report or cancel an alarm call.

Do-It-Yourself systems can be a viable and cost effective alternative to a professionally installed alarm system. But before you make the purchase, make sure you are ready to accept the full responsibility to avoid false alarms. If you are not ready, then explore having your alarm professionally installed. Taking steps to ensure proper design and installation, and maintaining your system, can result in a successful security solution in this fast paced, self-serve world.

## Local, MIY or Professionally Monitored

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### Professional Monitored

If your alarm system will be monitored, either by your installing company or by a third-party monitoring center, be sure to find out the length of the contract. Typically, monitoring contracts are between two to five years in length.

Here are the types of questions you need to consider before you obligate yourself to a long-term contract.

- What is your recourse if you are not satisfied with the services provided?
- Can you cancel the contract?
- Under what circumstances can you cancel the contract?
- What are your rights if your monitoring company is purchased or acquired by another alarm company?
- Does the company do its own monitoring or does it contract out to a third-party monitoring center?
- Most important, read and understand your entire contract before signing it.
- Here is what the monitoring companies do
  - Most alarm/monitoring companies will attempt to verify the validity of an alarm signal prior to requesting public safety dispatch by placing a call to the alarm site.
  - Some alarm companies have voluntarily elected to employ a more effective form of verification, called Enhanced Call Verification (ECV), whereby the monitoring companies first call the alarm site, and if unable to reach a responsible party, will then call a second telephone number (usually a cell phone) in an attempt to avoid an unnecessary dispatch request.
  - ECV has proven very effective in reducing the number of false alarms to which public safety responds and should be considered standard in any monitoring contract you sign.
  - If ECV is not a standard practice for the company you choose, you can request the use of ECV for your alarm account, in order to reduce your chances of a false alarm.



### Monitor It Yourself

- Alarm systems can be set up to text or email you when they are activated.
- If you have cameras installed a picture from when the alarm is activated may be sent.
- Some systems may send a live stream of video to let you see what is happening.
- When an alarm activation is sent to you it is up to you to decide what to do.
- If you decide to call public safety, make sure you have a number to call to reach the 911 center. Because if you are outside of your home jurisdiction and call 911 you may be connected to another jurisdiction when you call 911.
- If you decide to investigate the alarm yourself stay safe!



## Beware of Door to Door Sales

- If the “summer sales” phenomenon has not occurred in your community, it is most likely not far away.
- This business model has young men and women (usually college students) going door to door selling alarm systems during the spring and summer months.
- Some use ethical sales practices, but many do not.
- Various state, provincial and local officials have filed suit and/or entered into settlement agreements with numerous companies for deceptive sales practices.
- The salespeople use high pressure and deceptive sales tactics to gain entry into homes and then sign up unsuspecting citizens to long term alarm contracts, even if they already have a contract with another alarm company.
- Be very, very careful of any salesperson who comes to your home without a prior appointment claiming to be from your alarm company and asking you to sign anything.



### [Be on the lookout for door-to-door solicitors who:](#)

- Imply they are from your existing alarm company and are there to test, upgrade or replace your existing alarm system. Reputable alarm companies will not send technicians to your home unannounced.
- Claim that your alarm company has gone out of business, that they have taken over the accounts and that you need to buy new equipment and/or sign new contracts. Never take their word for it – immediately contact your alarm company for verification.
- Say that you need to take advantage of the offer TODAY. Reputable alarm companies will provide you with the time you need to carefully consider your purchase. US, State or Provincial laws provide you with a cooling off period of 3 days or more where you can cancel any contract when a company representative visits your home. You have a right to cancel your contract even if the alarm company has installed the equipment.
- State that your alarm system is vulnerable or can be disabled easily – they do not know what type of alarm system you have so cannot make this claim.
- Wear polo shirts with alarm manufacturer names on them, such as GE or Honeywell, claim to work for them and need to inspect your keypad or control panel because it may be slated for replacement. This is just a trick utilized to gain entry to your home.
- Greet you by name to seem friendly – they may have read your name off the mailbox or looked at property records to determine the owner’s name.

### [Steps you can take to avoid being scammed:](#)

- Do not let any door-to-door solicitor into your home. Some consumer protection agencies warn homeowners not to even open their doors to solicitors, but, rather, to speak to them through the closed door and send them on their way.
- If you are confronted by a salesperson outside, ask to see their license – this may be a license issued by the state to engage in the business of selling, installing or monitoring alarms, or it could be a Solicitor’s License that permits them to engage in door-to-door sales.
- Call your alarm company any time a salesperson claims to be a representative of your alarm company and is trying to get you to sign a contract or have work done on your alarm system.
- Do not be pressured into signing a contract. If you tell a salesperson you are not interested, but he or she persists in pressuring you, call the police.

## Use Our Comparison Chart

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Select two or three different alarm companies from which to receive written quotes. Comparison shop for things such as best price, features you want, most favorable monitoring terms and conditions and for alarm companies that take false alarms seriously and have false alarm reduction plans in effect. Don't be afraid to ask each potential alarm company how their specific alarm system and its installation will avoid potential false alarms.



We have developed a Comparison Shopping Guide chart (See Appendix B) to aid you in the selection of an alarm company and alarm system components. It also provides you with types of questions you should ask. Be a smart consumer!

- Comparison shop for things such as best price, features you want and most favorable monitoring terms and conditions.
- Look for alarm companies that take false alarms seriously and have false alarm reduction plans in effect.
- Talk with at least two different alarm companies and get written estimates.
- Ask who your contact will be for ongoing training, service and support.

You can be part of the solution and avoid becoming part of the false alarm problem by asking some simple questions about all the companies you are considering before you buy or lease an alarm system.

- Ask each alarm company how the system they propose avoids false alarms.
- Ask how you can operate the alarm system in order to avoid false alarms.
- Ask your local police department what the false alarm rate is for the company(s) you are considering.

Be sure you know what you are buying, how much it will cost, and the level of support you will receive after you are a customer. Being an informed consumer and cognizant of your responsibilities and those of your alarm company will help you decide what system and features are right for you. Doing your homework before signing on the dotted line is a consumer's best defense (*caveat emptor*).



## False Alarm Reduction Program for YOUR Home or Business

### Chapter 4

## Design To Avoid False Alarms

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## Proper Design

- The design of an alarm system is key to an alarm user being comfortable with using it.
- It must fit the environment in which it is being installed.
- Both the alarm seller and the installer must know about any environmental issues that may cause false alarms and must ensure that the system will not false due to these concerns.
- Pets, children, and domestic help, as well as the general weather conditions of the area, are all pieces to the puzzle that must be taken into account when designing an alarm system.

## Quality Equipment and Proper Installation

- The proper installation of quality equipment will also go a long way towards reducing the likelihood of false alarms.
- The quality of equipment has improved greatly over the years, and may no longer be a main cause of false alarms.
- However, it is a factor with older systems that are still in use.
- Quality equipment does not necessarily mean the most expensive either.
- It is also important that alarm equipment be installed properly and according to manufacturer's specifications.
- You could have the best equipment in the world, but it will cause false alarms if it is not installed properly.



## Use ANSI/SIA Control Panel Standard (CP-01) Panels

CP-01 is a standard that addresses the settings on control panels to avoid the most common cause of false alarms; user error.

Using the CP-01 standard compliant panel reduces or eliminates false alarms caused by the following;

1. Exit / Re-entrance
2. Failure to enter / exit in time
3. Building still occupied
4. Entering / exiting through the wrong door
5. Forgetting code
6. Users who are not familiar with the system



Contact your alarm company for more information and to verify that your panel is CP-01 compliant. If it is not, you may want to consider upgrading your panel

## Consider Audio and Video Verification

### What is audio and video verification?

When utilized in an electronic security application, it allows the monitoring center to either “hear” or “see” into the protected premise to determine if an intruder is present.



### Are there different types or methods of audio verification?

Yes, there are three major methods being utilized in the market today:

1. **Listen-in Audio:** When a security device has been activated, such as a door contact or motion detector, etc., the listen-in device is also turned on to allow the monitoring center to hear what is happening at the protected premises.
2. **Two-Way Audio:** A hands free communication session takes place between the alarm user and monitoring center to assist in determining the cause of an alarm activation in the protected premise. This method is most commonly used with the alarm user's keypad.
3. **Impact Activated Audio:** Sounds are transmitted to the monitoring center from the protected premise by an audio sensor, which is capable of hearing the sounds of an actual intrusion as it is taking place. This is different from the listen-in capability in that no other security device needs to be activated for this technology to function.

## [Can you explain how video verification works?](#)

Video is typically transmitted to the monitoring center when another security device in the protected premise has been activated. It is often used to determine who (if anyone) is at the protected premise when the premise is breached. It has also been effective in outdoor applications where audio verification and other technologies are not as effective.

## [How much coverage will I be able to get from the audio and video verification technologies?](#)

This will vary depending on the application. It is very important that you provide a clear understanding to your security provider exactly how much coverage you expect for your premise. A good security consultant will take the time to review your specific needs and suggest system designs best suited for you.

## [Why are we hearing more and more about audio and video verification?](#)

Legislators, law enforcement officials and false alarm reduction units are searching for answers to solve the false alarm problem. Verification can play a key role in reducing the number of unnecessary calls to public safety agencies. It is important that the consumer understand all the technologies available to them.

## [Will audio and video verification solve my false alarm problem?](#)

These technologies have proven effective in reducing the number of calls to public safety, but it may not provide the total solution. At least 80% of all false alarms are caused by the user. This problem can be drastically reduced with proper system design and a consciously applied training program between the customer and the security provider.



## [Are there any other benefits to audio and video verification technology?](#)

The biggest benefit to the customer with this technology is that it allows the monitoring center to provide additional information to public safety, which can lead to the apprehension of intruders.

## **Got Pets?**

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- Talk to your alarm company about installing pet friendly devices or changing your system design to accommodate pets.
- Often, upgrading your sensors can be less expensive than a fee or fine imposed by your municipality for a false alarm.
- It is important to know that depending on the size of your pet, some of these sensors may not function as intended. Be sure to discuss the height and weight of your pet before purchasing these devices.
- Check with your alarm company to determine if another option, such as cross zoning, will work for you.
- In this case, your monitoring center will not dispatch on motion alarms unless they also receive a separate entry alarm.



## **Pick the Right Kind of Panic Button**

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The convenience of summoning help at the push of a button is a feature which alarm users can appreciate. Most alarm systems can be activated through the use of a panic button. When an alarm is activated, the user can take comfort in the fact that public safety personnel have been notified.

While panic buttons provide peace-of-mind, they also generate a large number of false alarms. One unique feature of panic buttons is the ability to generate silent alarms. However, when the appropriate safeguards are not instituted, silent alarms create a dangerous situation. The alarm user, law enforcement personnel and the general public are all put in danger by false alarms.

### Styles of Panic Buttons

Below are three different styles of panic buttons and some ways to prevent false alarms.

- **Key Fobs:** Allows alarm users to arm or disarm their systems and often have a single-action panic button. Key fobs regularly find their way into the hands of children. Children regard the key fobs as playthings. Keep the fob in an area that is out of reach of children. Putting the fobs on a key chain, in a pocket or a purse can also result in an accidental activation.
- **Portable Pendants:** Usually worn around the neck or wrist and can be inadvertently activated when the pendant is bumped or pressed against an object. It is recommended that pendants be worn on the outside of clothing where the user can easily activate the device. When worn on the outside of clothing, it is easier to minimize accidental activation.
- **Fixed Buttons:** Provides for easy concealment of the panic alarm. Concealment allows for activation during situations where calling 9-1-1 is not possible. However, the concealed panic buttons are activated unintentionally by bumps. Contact your alarm company about recessed dual-action alarms. Dual-action alarms can help to prevent accidental activation.



FARA recommends that panic alarms should be audible and only activate when two recessed buttons are pressed at the same time or by depression of a single button after lifting the cover that normally protects it.

FARA recommends that a call be made to the alarm site, before public safety is contacted, for all panic alarms that sound an audible alarm at the site. Audible alarms have the advantage of alerting all occupants that the alarm has been activated. The disadvantage is that the sound may startle the criminal or cause them to take aggressive action.

Silent alarms avoid alerting the criminal, but also do not let the user know if they are activated accidentally. Because of the danger of alerting the criminal on site, a verification call should not be made on silent panic alarms.

Please understand that if law enforcement doesn't see signs of criminal or other activity, they might not forcibly enter to further verify a panic alarm and that there is someone inside who requires assistance.





# False Alarm Reduction Program for YOUR Home or Business

## Chapter 5

### Use Your System Responsibly

- Being an owner or operator of an alarm system, or an employee of a business that is equipped with an alarm, brings with it certain responsibilities.
- Alarm activations summon public safety to respond; therefore, alarms should be completely reliable and should only request police and fire dispatches in the event of an actual emergency.
- Did you know that 98% of all alarm activations turn out to be false alarms?
- User error leads to a high percentage of false alarms.
- It is up to you, the alarm user, to do your part to eliminate false alarms.
- Once alarm users are comfortable with their security system, it becomes a regular part of daily life. As such, alarm users forget how changes in their day-to-day living can adversely affect how the system works or the ability for them to be contacted in an emergency situation.

#### Ask for Help

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- If you need assistance on how to operate your alarm system, contact your alarm company or management company.
- They will be happy to show you how to use your system and will describe each zone and its location.

#### Check Local Laws

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- Get to know your local alarm ordinance and registration requirements.
- Ask your apartment or building manager or alarm company if you are required to register your alarm with your local jurisdiction and do so if required.
- If an alarm is triggered, your alarm monitoring company will need to contact you and the company will need your current phone numbers. Be sure to contact your alarm company and your jurisdiction with any changes to your account information and any changes to your contact list.



#### If You Give Them a Key – Give Them the Codes!

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- Always be certain that all persons with a key to the premises are trained to use the system and have an entry/exit code to turn the system on and off, as well as a passcode or password to give the monitoring company, which identifies them as authorized to be in the premises.
- Most alarm companies have systems that accommodate temporary arming codes and passcodes for persons other than the property owner(s). These codes can be added and deleted by you at any time to control temporary access as needed.
- If you're going out of town and have a house sitter, make sure they have permission to authorize repairs to your system if it fails.
- Make sure everyone who has access to your home has a valid code to turn on and off your alarm system **as well as** the code or password used to identify themselves to your alarm company as a valid alarm user.

## Update Emergency Contact Information

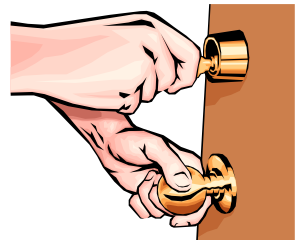
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- Be sure to contact your alarm company and your jurisdiction with any changes to your account information and any changes to your contact list at least once a year!
- Update call lists with police, fire and alarm companies on an annual basis, or as the information changes.
- Ask your alarm company to send you a copy of your current call list. Review your list and make any necessary changes. Most companies will accept changes via fax or email. Some even have the capability for you to make changes directly to your account on line.
- Advise your alarm company about who has keys to your home or business. Make sure those people are on your call list. Your local police department may require that a key holder must respond to an activated alarm, so your alarm company must have current and accurate phone numbers. Make sure everyone on the call list knows their passcode.
- Include all phone numbers (including cell, work, home, etc.) for each contact on your call list, and list them in order of priority.
- Please remember to review your call list with your alarm company at least once a year, and notify them of any changes to contacts and/or phone numbers when they happen.

## Always Secure Doors & Windows Before Turning the Security System On

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- Securely close and lock all exterior doors including deadbolts and other secondary locking devices.
- All windows must be closed and locked to ensure that all contacts are properly aligned.
- Make sure that items or decorations around doors and windows do not interfere with door or window contacts or the motion sensors.
- Make sure that items or decorations around doors and windows do not interfere with door or window contacts or the motion sensors.
- Secure any interior/exterior garage entry doors with a deadbolt device. Be sure to close your overhead door when exiting the garage.
- Before turning on the system bypass any contact that is not working properly, until it can be repaired.



## Take Care of Motion Sensors Before Turning the Security System On

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- Keep all pets, balloons, fans, plants, curtains, heaters and decorations away from all active motion sensors.
- Bypass any motion detectors, if an animal will be allowed to move freely through the premises.
- Before turning on the system bypass any motion sensor that is not working properly, until it can be repaired.



## Know How to Exit

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- When you have finished preparing your home or business prior to alarm activation, activate your alarm system and make your exit in the time allowed.
- Make sure you know which doors allow exit and entry delay. In some systems a garage or back door may activate an alarm when you exit.
- If you don't know your delay time, contact your alarm company. It should be at least 45 seconds.

## Know Your Identity Password

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- When an alarm activation occurs and the alarm company calls, the alarm operator will ask, “What is your Password?”
- Few customers will answer this question correctly on the first try because they so rarely have to use it.
- Your Identity Password is the word you gave your alarm company when you had the system installed, which identifies you to the alarm company as an authorized alarm user.
- It should be a word that can be easily recalled by any person normally on the premises to either verify or cancel an alarm.
- The Identity Password may be called a password, personal identification code (PIC) or personal identification number (PIN) by your alarm company.
- Your Identity Password is NOT your entry/exit Passcode.



## Know Your Entry/Exit Passcode

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- When your alarm system was installed, the installer asked you to select a secret entry/exit Passcode – the sequence of numbers (usually 4 digits) that you press into the keypad to arm or disarm your system.
- You probably selected a number that would be easy to remember for you and others who would be regularly using your system.
- However, the Passcode is not recorded anywhere and it is not on file with the alarm monitoring company.
- When the alarm monitoring company calls after an alarm activation occurs, your Passcode may be the first thing that you recall, simply because you use it so frequently.
- Remember, your entry/exit Passcode is not your Password.



## If You Forget Your Password or Passcode Contact Your Alarm Company

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- If you don't remember your Password, contact your alarm company immediately and establish a new one that you will always remember in an emergency.
- This can often be done over the phone or by faxing or emailing the information to the alarm company.
- When you need to change your Passcode, this requires a technician to access your alarm system to reprogram the number.
- The technician may be able to access the system electronically from his/her office through the phone lines or the internet.
- If that is not possible, then a service call will have to be scheduled for the technician to come to your premise.

## Cancel False Alarms

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- Know how to cancel a false alarm activation by contacting your alarm monitoring company.
- This includes knowing the password you initially established with your alarm monitoring company. The purpose of the password is to identify you to the alarm monitoring company. It is different from your entry/exit code.
- Enter your alarm monitoring company's phone number in your cell phone for quick access.
- Make sure that all users know how to cancel a false alarm.

## Educate Alarm Users

- Effective initial training of everyone who has access to the alarm location on the proper operation of the system could be the single most important factor in false alarm prevention. It is essential that all users of the alarm system be present when the training on an alarm system occurs.
- Ensure guests, renters, workers, contractors or hired help are properly trained and are given a code and password to your alarm system, OR do not leave them unaccompanied at the alarm site.
- The alarm system trainer should provide plenty of time for instruction in layman's terms and allow the users to play with the system while the trainer is there.
- The more comfortable the alarm users are with their system, the less likely they will be to cause false alarms.
- On-going training for alarm users on what causes false alarms and how to avoid them is a must.



### Home Alarm Training

- Make sure everyone, who has access to your home, such as child care givers, domestic help, extended family, etc., are familiar with your alarm system.
  - Teach them how to arm the system and make sure they know how much time they have to exit if they are leaving.
  - If entering the home, ensure they know how to disarm the system and how much time they have to do it before the system alerts your monitoring center



- Contact your alarm company and assign each person their own personal passcode/password. You can have it removed when it's no longer needed.
- Educate your guests/employees on your alarm monitoring company's procedures should they set off the alarm accidentally.
- Teach them how to cancel a false alarm to avoid the imposition of potential fees or fines.
- Keep your monitoring center's phone number in an easy to find place.



### Business Alarm Training

- Make sure all new employees are trained on the use of the alarm system.
- Hold monthly employee training sessions emphasizing the following:
  - Remind employees to properly secure the building windows and doors before arming the alarm system.
  - Review the false alarm cancellation procedure including alarm company phone number and password.
  - Discuss the proper use of hold up or panic buttons and their locations.
  - Provide thorough instruction on arming and disarming the alarm system.
  - Make sure opening and closing employees have the current alarm code and passwords and know how to use each. The alarm code arms and disarms the system. The password cancels a public safety dispatch and avoids a false alarm.
  - Post the alarm monitoring company phone number in an area that is highly visible for employees.



## Consider a Waiting Period

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Some jurisdictions require “waiting” or “soak” periods in their ordinances, which prohibit alarm companies from requesting dispatch for a short period of time after installation of an alarm system. This gives the alarm users a chance to get used to their systems and make mistakes, before it costs public safety and the user any money.

## Implement ECV – Enhanced Call Verification

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Check with your alarm monitoring company to see if they call the alarm location and another phone number before they dispatch public safety on a burglar alarm activation. This technique has been proven effective in avoiding false alarms.

ECV is an alarm monitoring procedure requiring that a minimum of two calls be made to two different alarm user telephone numbers prior to requesting public safety dispatch. Typically, one of the phone numbers is the alarm user’s cell phone.

- Reduces alarm dispatch requests by over 50%.
- Some alarm companies already use ECV. You should ask your alarm company if they practice ECV. If not, you can request that your alarm company implement ECV for you.
- Make sure the contact numbers on file with your alarm company are always up to date. Be proactive and add your alarm company’s phone number to your cell phone contact list.
- Do you know who will be at your location today? Scheduled workers? Maintenance? Cleaners/Cleaning Crews? House or Pet Sitters? Landscapers? To avoid false alarms, ensure that persons with access to your location have the proper temporary codes and passwords for your alarm system.

In the unlikely event that an alarm still occurs, you should expect a call from your alarm company. You can then make an informed decision as to whether to have them request police dispatch or not.

## Test Your Alarm System

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- Make sure you test your alarm system periodically. Monthly testing is preferred, but at the very least test quarterly. If you have VOIP technology, you need to test even more frequently.
- If you disconnect all your hardwired phone lines, install DSL, or move all your premises voice communication to an internet base, your security system may not be able to reliably communicate with the monitoring company – if at all! So be sure to test if you make any changes to your phone lines.
- Call your alarm company BEFORE you test your alarm system in order to put it in test mode. Failing to do so may result in costly false alarm fines from your town or local law enforcement.
- Testing your system ensures the system is in working order. Be sure to include doors, windows and motion sensors in the testing process.



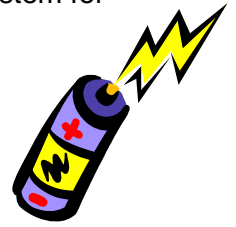
## Check Batteries

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Almost all security systems have a rechargeable battery that powers the system for a minimum of four hours in the event of a power outage. If you have a wireless system, you may have several batteries in the motion detectors, as well as a backup system battery.

## Control Panel Batteries

Change all control panel batteries at least every 3 years or more often if you experience frequent power outages. All security alarms have a large back-up battery in the control panel that runs the system for four to six hours during power outages. The life of a battery depends on how many power consuming devices are installed and how often the batteries are required to “kick-in” due to power failures. Be proactive and replace batteries before they die and cause false alarms.



## Wireless Component Batteries

Always replace per manufacturer or alarm company specifications.

## Report Troubles

If you are having trouble with your alarm system, contact your alarm company immediately.

## Annual Maintenance and Repair

- An alarm system needs general upkeep, annual maintenance and repair.
- Contact your alarm company today to schedule an appointment.
- Ask for information on annual or biennial service agreements.
- Both the alarm system and the physical site need regular maintenance. Doors and windows need to be checked. Also, alarm systems should be inspected annually by a licensed or certified alarm technician to ensure the system and all components of the system, especially the batteries, are operating properly.

## Use Duress, Hold-Up and Panic Alarms Appropriately

Duress, hold-up and panic alarms are designed to allow alarm users to activate the system under specific emergency situations when they are unable to dial 911. These types of alarms generally result in a heightened response, sometimes with lights and sirens, due to a raised likelihood of a criminal event in progress. Therefore, activating these types of alarms in non-emergency situations could result in stiff penalties and fines to the alarm user. It is very important that alarm users understand that activation of these types of alarms in non-emergency or improper situations may place law enforcement officers, alarm users and the general public at increased risk.

## What are these types of alarms and when do I use them?

A duress alarm is a silent alarm, which is generated when an alarm user enters a designated code into the alarm system keypad. This designated code is different from the regular arm and disarm codes. It alerts the monitoring company that the alarm user is being forced to turn the alarm system off against the user's will.



A Commercial hold-up, panic, or robbery alarm, is a silent alarm, which is generated when an alarm user manually activates a device (button, floor pedal, money clip, key fobs and pendants, etc.) that is intended to alert the monitoring company that a robbery is in progress.

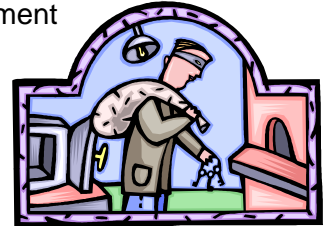
A Residential panic alarm is generally an audible alarm, which is generated by the manual activation of a device intended to alert the monitoring company that a life threatening or emergency situation is occurring, much like the hold-up alarm but not indicating a robbery in progress.

### When NOT to use your duress, hold-up or panic alarm:

- When you need fire or medical assistance
- To check to see how long it takes law enforcement officers to respond
- When someone has shoplifted merchandise
- To report a fight in the parking lot
- When an underage person attempts to buy alcohol
- To report that a vehicle has been stolen
- Any other circumstance in which you are not in a life-threatening or emergency situation

### When it is appropriate to use your duress, hold-up or panic alarm:

- In emergency situations when you are unable to dial 9-1-1 for law enforcement assistance
- During a robbery or hold-up in progress
- When you are physically threatened



The use of duress alarms is not recommended for the general public. Duress alarms should be reserved for those alarm users, who are at greater risk, because they have custody of large amounts of money or highly valuable goods or for those who can otherwise demonstrate an extreme need for a duress alarm. Effective use of duress alarms requires special training and frequent drills to prevent false activations.

**Call 9-1-1 for the appropriate police, fire or medical emergency response. Only use panic buttons if you are unable to dial 9-1-1.**

### Get Ready for Vacation

- Train each person who will enter the premises on how to use the system, including bypassing the motion detector, what to do if an alarm occurs, and how to cancel an alarm.
- Give each person who will enter the premises their own disarm code for the keypad and a passcode/password to give to the monitoring center if an accidental alarm occurs.
- Call your alarm company and:
  - Tell them what days you will be gone
  - Tell them if anyone is authorized to be in your home while you are away
  - Update your emergency contact information, including who has keys to your home
  - Give them a number to reach you, preferably a cell phone number, should your alarm system activate while you are away



### Notify BEFORE Remodeling

- Always, always, always contact your alarm company prior to starting any remodeling project. You need to work with your alarm company to make sure the remodeling process does not cause false alarms and that your system will continue to work properly after the work is completed.
- Discuss the following situations with your alarm company to determine the best course of action:



- Wiring concealed in your walls, floors or ceilings can be disrupted by remodeling projects.
- Consider adding your cell phone as a second contact before law enforcement dispatch is requested. If you know contractors are on scene doing work, a false alarm dispatch can be avoided.



- Erecting new walls may inhibit the area your motion detector was designed to see, preventing detection.
- New walls can shorten the area the detector is sensing, which may cause a false alarm due to increased sensitivity. New walls may also block radio signals that allow some systems to indicate an alarm.
- Tearing down old walls may cause a motion detector to pick up movement it would not normally see with the wall in place. This could include cars on the street, sunlight streaming through a window, or your pet walking through “his part of the house.”
- Work outside your home including the installation of new siding, roofs, windows and doors will cause a huge ruckus and produce vibration and dust. In some cases alarm wiring may be concealed behind exterior siding. So, even if you are not letting trade people into your home, you still need to be aware of the effects of outside work on your alarm system.
- Removing doors or windows that have alarm sensors can make your system inoperable. Ask your security company about bypassing these zones during construction and have them send a technician to reinstall sensors when the work is complete.
- Dust and dirt are a necessary evil in all remodeling projects. Particles will adhere to smoke and motion sensors and will affect their proper operation.
- If you will be away from your home or business during any portion of the remodeling project and decide to provide contractors with keys to your home, ensure that they know how to properly operate your system, understand the procedures to cancel a false alarm dispatch and are provided with temporary passwords.
- If a contractor causes a false alarm, you, the alarm user, will be responsible for the unnecessary public safety response.
- When the remodeling is completed, have your alarm company inspect and evaluate your alarm system to make sure that it will continue to operate properly.



## When You Rearrange - Contact Your Alarm Company

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Before you rearrange your furniture or put up the new spring curtains or drapes, you should first determine whether the design change would interfere with the operation of your security system equipment.

### When rearranging or moving your furniture or acquiring new items:

- Ensure that nothing is placed in the path of motion detectors, which could cause false alarms, especially when home heating and cooling systems are turned on!
- Do not move items such as plants or accessories in view of your motion detectors. Plants and other hanging home accessories can sway and cause your motion detectors to activate.
- Ensure that newly placed items or decorations around doors and windows, as well as new window treatments, do not interfere with either the door and window contacts or the motion detectors.





- Pets can wreak havoc with an alarm system. If your alarm system was designed and installed prior to acquiring a pet, call your alarm company immediately so that a technician can review your system and ensure that your new pet will not cause false alarms.
- Moving any furniture, painting or remodeling in your home will surely either uncover or create an accumulation of dust and debris. In order to work properly, the detector in your alarm system must remain dust and bug free. Make sure to include checking the motion detectors for dust and spider webs when making any changes to your living environment.
- Remember, when making design or decoration changes in your home, it is also a great time to schedule a routine maintenance check-up of your alarm system equipment and to get advice from your alarm company about your proposed design changes.

## **Selling a Home Should Not be Alarming!**

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Some false alarms are caused by real estate agents while they are showing properties.

### What Sellers Should Do

- Discuss with your real estate agent the use of the burglar alarm system while your home is on the market.
- Contact your monitoring company to advise that the property is on the market and that real estate agents will be in and out throughout the day. Set up special instructions so they call the house, your cell phone, and your work phone before they request dispatch on all burglar alarm activations. Ensure that the alarm company has up to date home, cell and work phone numbers for you.
- Provide complete training to agents on how to properly arm and disarm the alarm system. Remember, you, the property owner or the alarm user, will be responsible for penalties associated with false alarms.
- Obtain a separate arm/disarm code and password for real estate agents who are allowed to enter the home during the sale period. Agents can use their codes to turn off the alarm system, cancel response and identify themselves to the alarm company as a valid alarm user.
- Consider attaching a non-removable tag to the key in your lock-box that provides the arm/disarm code, as well as the appropriate password. You can also include simple instructions on how to operate the system and what to do if an agent accidentally causes a false alarm.



## **Include Your Alarm System in Your Disaster Plan**

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### Effects of Disasters on Alarm Systems

- If you are required to evacuate due to a disaster, do you have a plan in place to avoid potential false alarms from your alarm system? Taking a few simple steps before a disaster occurs, will help to avoid potential problems and the uncertainty that comes when you are required to make quick decisions in the face of a disaster.
- If you install a generator to prepare for power outages, discuss with your alarm company how to connect the alarm system, as well as the procedures to follow before a disaster occurs.
- Ensure that your contact list and information is always kept current. You should contact your alarm company at least once per year to update. If you relocate in an emergency, contact your alarm company with phone numbers of where you can be reached and provide them with the phone number of a contact person outside the immediate area, if available.



## When You Get Back

- When you are able to safely return to your home or business, you may have to deal with a multitude of issues. One of those will be what to do with your alarm system. If your area has experienced power outages, when the power restores, it may cause a false alarm.
- Before reconnecting or activating your alarm system, contact your alarm company.
- Depending on the disaster, it may be necessary to replace the alarm system battery.
- Schedule an inspection of your alarm system.
- Check sensors for water damage, lightning strikes, etc.

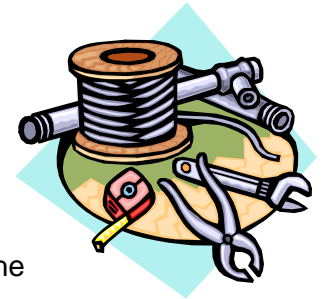
## Using a System That is Already Installed

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You are ready to move into a new home or business and it is already wired for a security system. There may or may not be security equipment already in place. Whether you are going to utilize the system or not, the following is valuable information you should have.

### Wiring Only With No Equipment Attached

- A newly constructed home may be wired for a security system, but the equipment is not always installed.
- The company that pre-wired the home for security may not be the same company that will install the security system components.
- You may have choices as to what equipment you can use in some areas of the home based on what will work best for the environment you are creating.
- If the contractor is only providing pre-wiring, you may have to hire the security company of your choice to install equipment.
- When the contractor is working exclusively with a particular security company, they will provide you with the security company information. At your convenience, you will be able to schedule a time to meet with an alarm company representative, discuss the best equipment for your environment and then have it installed.
- If you are moving into a previously owned home, the prior owners may have removed the system components but left the wiring. We strongly encourage you to ensure that all existing wiring is thoroughly tested by the security company you select to install new system components. Sometimes, when equipment is removed, the integrity of the wiring is compromised and may lead to false alarms in the future.



### Security Components Are Already Installed

Is the security system currently monitored? Ask the previous owner if the system is currently monitored. If it is and you do not intend on securing a monitoring agreement, ensure the previous owners have cancelled their service before your phone system is turned on. If you plan on securing a contract for monitoring, contact the alarm company for proper training and activation of the system. If this is not done, the monitoring company will not be able to verify your right to be in the home, and they will have to request a police dispatch each time you accidentally set off the system. That would be a serious misuse of police time and resources and could result in the imposition of fines against you for false alarms or for using an alarm system without being properly registered.



How do you find the right alarm company information? The previous owner should have provided you with security company information. If not, you will need to contact the security company that installed the system

for power-down instructions. To find out who installed the system, check a keypad near one of your doors or the control panel, which is usually installed in a closet, and look for a security company name. Obtain the security company phone number through the yellow pages or call directory assistance for a toll free listing.

If the previous owner did not cancel service before moving out, you may have to present proof of ownership before the security company will assist you. The security company needs to be sure that they are dealing with a person, who has the legal right to shut the system down, and not a burglar.

## Get Ready For Holidays

Don't let your holiday be ruined by false alarms! There are simple steps you can take to avoid what could be costly mistakes, while at the same time creating a lovely holiday atmosphere in your home or business.

### Motion Detectors and Holiday Decorations

- Always ensure that hanging or moving decorations will not activate motion detectors, especially when heating systems come on.
- If you don't know the location of your motion detectors or the area they cover, contact your alarm company for assistance. They should be able to tell you what your motion sensors "see" and you will then be better able to avoid potential false alarms.
- Once your decorations have been placed, inspect to make sure that they do not interfere with any window or door contacts.
- Firmly secure outdoor lights around doors and windows so that they will not activate glass break detectors in the event of winds or storms.



- Check doors and windows for cracks or a loose fit in the frame, as inclement weather and wind gusts during the winter season could cause false alarms.
- If your doors and windows are loose, coordinate their repair with your alarm company to avoid unnecessary false alarms.



### Family, Friends, Temporary Users and Holiday Travel

- Holidays provide an opportunity for family and friends to visit, children are home from college, and law enforcement reports indicate that false alarms do increase during this time.
- Ensure that everyone with a key to your home or business knows how to properly operate your alarm system.
- Retrain your children home from college and remind them of the passcode and password.
- Instruct everyone with access to your home or business on the appropriate procedures for canceling law enforcement response should a false alarm occur.
- Advise your alarm company if you will be out of town and provide them with phone numbers to contact you in the event of an alarm activation.
- If you have house-sitters, ensure they know how to operate the alarm system, cancel a dispatch, and have been provided with temporary passwords. Inform your alarm company of those temporary passwords and contact phone numbers for the house-sitters.





# False Alarm Reduction Program for YOUR Home or Business

## Chapter 6

### What to Do After a False Alarm

When an alarm is activated, most systems will send a signal to a monitoring station. If the alarm is a mistake, it is important for the user to communicate with the monitoring station to make sure that no police dispatch request is made.

#### To Call or Not to Call?



Unfortunately, the alarm system often uses the same phone line to send in the alarm signal that the user would use to call the monitoring station. This is why many alarm companies will instruct users to wait for them to call after the alarm. Some companies want users to call them as soon as the line clears. Tell the alarm users to learn what their company's procedure is so they will be ready if they have an alarm.

#### Stay Put

Users should not leave the alarm site until they have spoken with their monitoring station and assured them there is no emergency.

#### Be Prepared

When you make contact with the monitoring station, you will need to verify that the user is an authorized user. All alarm users should know how to identify themselves to the alarm company.

#### It May Not Be Too Late When The Alarm Sounds

If the user enters their disarm code fast enough, some systems will stop the alarm signal before it is sent to the monitoring station. Other systems may change the type of signal that is sent so that the monitoring station knows there is no emergency. In any case, turning off the alarm as fast as possible after a mistake is a good idea.

#### Investigate

Users should follow-up after each alarm to determine what caused it. Was it a simple user error or is it a problem with the system that might cause another false alarm? Users should not set the alarm system after a false alarm until the fault has been identified and rectified.

#### Take Corrective Action

Users should talk with their alarm company and take action to do their best to prevent another alarm. Users should be retrained and/or the system should be changed to address the problem.

## Update Records

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Users should make sure that the alarm company has the best phone numbers to call to reach someone in the event of an alarm.

## Implement Enhanced Call Verification

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Users should make sure that their alarm company makes a second call to an authorized person (preferably a cell phone) before making a dispatch request.

## Consider Cross Zoning

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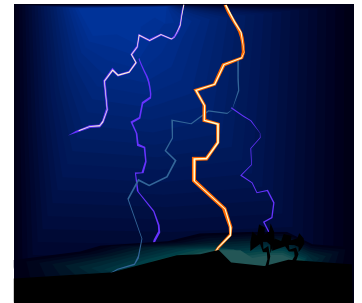
This is an alarm monitoring technique that requires more than one zone in your burglar alarm system to fault or trip before public safety is notified.

- For example, a perimeter and an interior motion alarm would both have to trip within a specified period of time in order to summon public safety. In this situation, if an interior motion trips but the perimeter does not, the alarm company will not request a public safety dispatch.
- The reasoning behind cross zoning is that an actual burglar at the alarm site will trip more than one zone, whereas a loose pet, decoration, balloon or insect may not.
- This technique is most helpful when there is an unidentified problem with the alarm system or when you are waiting for service or repairs but still desire alarm system protection.
- Call your alarm company to discuss if this option is right for you.

## How to Deal with Storms

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- Power surges and lightning strikes **should not** cause false alarms!
- False alarms caused by lightning strikes **are controllable** through the proper grounding of alarm systems and the use of power AND phone line surge suppressors.
- Power outages or interruption of power **should not** cause false alarms!



### What to Do

Contact your alarm dealer and follow these simple steps:

- Use of surge suppressors greatly reduces false alarms by redirecting and dissipating electrical current to the ground.
- Repair loose fitting doors and windows.
- Ensure that all alarm contacts are firmly in place.
- Use wide-gap door and window contacts.
- Use surge protectors/suppressors on both the alarm system and the phone line sending the alarm signal to the monitoring center.
- Ensure that the battery back-up protection is in good working order, is fully charged and will hold that charge for a minimum of four hours.
- Ensure that your alarm system is properly grounded.



## False Alarm Reduction Program for YOUR Home or Business

### Chapter 7

### Conclusion

Implementing a successful false alarm reduction program will not be easy. However, the rewards are remarkable and certainly make the pain worth it in the end.

Remember, FARA is available to help you all along the way. If you get frustrated, just contact us and we will help any way we can.

**FARA has created numerous false alarm bulletins designed for alarm users, which outline various causes of false alarms and how to avoid them. These bulletins are available on-line at [www.faraonline.org](http://www.faraonline.org).**

#### For More Information Contact:

For more information on this topic or other matters related to alarm management, please contact FARA.

#### **False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA)**

10024 Vanderbilt Circle, Unit 4

Rockville, MD 20850

301-519-9237

Fax 301-519-9508

Email: [info@faraonline.org](mailto:info@faraonline.org)

Web site: <http://www.faraonline.org>



## False Alarm Reduction Program for YOUR Home or Business

### Appendix A

### Glossary of Terms

Some common terms are defined here to help you understand alarms and alarm system activation processes. For a much more comprehensive glossary of terms, visit the FARA web site at [www.faraonline.org](http://www.faraonline.org). From the Home page, select Consumer Tips, which contains a huge amount of educational information designed to help you better understand alarms and make the right decision for you.

- **Cancellation:** Your alarm company and/or monitoring company calls your public safety agency to notify that there is not an emergency at the alarm site requiring public agency presence. (This is a call back to the law enforcement agency after an initial request for dispatch.) Many public safety agencies do not issue false alarm fines for a cancelled police dispatch.
- **Dual Technology Glass Break Detectors:** Uses two sensors that combine two different technologies to sense glass breaking. These are generally believed to be more reliable and less prone to false alarms.
- **Dual Technology Motion Sensors:** Uses two different technologies to detect motion. The most common devices require heat and motion to set off the alarm. These are generally believed to be more reliable and less prone to false alarms.
- **Enhanced Call Verification:** An attempt, by the alarm monitoring company representative, to contact the alarm site before requesting public safety dispatch, and if no contact is made with a responsible party, a call is made to another telephone number (usually an alarm user's cell phone) in an attempt to avoid an unnecessary dispatch.
- **False Alarm:** An alarm dispatch request to a law enforcement agency when the responding law enforcement officer finds no evidence of a criminal offense or attempted criminal offense.
- **False Alarm Rates:** Your local public safety agency may have the software capability to track the number of false alarms from customers of a particular alarm company. This rating would indicate how well one alarm company does against other local alarm companies in the area of false alarms.
- **Leasing an Alarm System:** Rental of alarm equipment for a period of time. At the end of the contract, the alarm company may remove equipment if the contract is cancelled.
- **Monitoring:** The operator receives your alarm signal and contacts your local public safety agency to request a dispatch to your alarm site. This location is usually referred to as the "Central Station" and may be located in another state.
- **Permits or Registration:** Many public safety agencies require the alarm user or the alarm company to obtain a permit or registration to operate an alarm system. Some are renewable while others do not expire until the alarm user changes. A fee may be charged.
- **Purchasing an Alarm System:** The customer pays for the alarm system and owns all components.
- **Verification:** An attempt, by the alarm and/or monitoring company representative, to contact the alarm site telephonically or by other electronic means before requesting public safety dispatch, in an attempt to avoid an unnecessary dispatch.
- **Video/Audio Verification:** Some alarm systems allow the monitoring company to "see" (video) and/or "hear" (audio) into the protected site once an alarm activation occurs.
- **Zones:** Pinpointing the specific location from which an alarm signal is transmitted.



# False Alarm Reduction Program for YOUR Home or Business

## Appendix B

### Comparison Shopping Guide

Question	Company		
	1	2	3
<b><i>Knowledge About the Alarm Installation Company</i></b>			
Are the alarm installation company and its employees licensed by your state and/or local public safety agency, if required by law?			
Have you checked on the alarm company's complaint record, if any, with the local Better Business Bureau or Consumer Affairs Office?			
Will the alarm company provide references?			
How long has the alarm company been in business?			
Will the installing company provide monitoring? (If not, proceed to the next section.)			
Does the alarm company attempt verification on alarm signals prior to requesting public safety dispatch?			
Does the alarm company employ the use of Enhanced Call Verification?			
Will the alarm company attempt to cancel the call with the public safety agency if it is determined to be a false alarm?			
<b><i>Knowledge About the Monitoring Company</i></b>			
The monitoring company and its employees licensed by your state and/or local public safety agency, if required by law?			
Have you checked on the monitoring company's complaint record, if any, with the local Better Business Bureau and/or Consumer Affairs Office?			
Will the monitoring company provide references?			
How long has the monitoring company been in business?			
Where is the monitoring station located?			
What is the phone number for the monitoring station?			



Question	Company		
	1	2	3
Is there a local representative for the monitoring company?			
Name and phone number of contact.			
Does the monitoring company attempt verification on alarm signals prior to requesting public safety dispatch?			
Does the monitoring company employ the use of Enhanced Call Verification?			
Will the monitoring company attempt to cancel the call with the public safety agency if it is determined to be a false alarm?			
<b><i>Your Local Law Enforcement</i></b>			
Did the alarm salesperson guarantee public safety response time?			
What is the alarm company's false alarm rate with your local public safety agency, if available?			
Will you have a trial testing period during which you can practice using your system without worrying about public safety being dispatched?			
Were you advised of the requirements for alarm user permits or registrations, if any?			
Will the alarm company assist you in obtaining the proper permits and/or registrations?			
Do you know the fines, fees, and penalties for false alarms, if any?			
<b><i>Alarm System Contract</i></b>			
What is the length of the contract?			
Do you know the terms if you should cancel the contract early?			
Do you know the warranty terms and length?			
Is there a service plan after the warranty expires?			
Do you have any recourse if you are not satisfied with the services provided?			
Can you cancel your contract if you are not satisfied with the services provided?			
Are all promises made by the sales representative located in writing within the contract?			
<b><i>Alarm System Costs</i></b>			
Do you know the full cost of the alarm system? (get itemization)			
Would you be purchasing or leasing the alarm system?			

Question	Company		
	1	2	3
What is the cost of an annual service contract?			
If there is no maintenance agreement, do you know the charge for service calls, labor, parts, mileage?			
Is there an extra charge for service outside normal business hours?			
What is the response time for service calls?			
Does the monitoring company charge for calls to your local public safety agency?			
How much is the monthly monitoring fee?			
Will the alarm company pay the false alarm fines caused by faulty installation, equipment or technician error?			
<b>System Components</b>			
How many window and/or door contacts are in the proposed system?			
How many motion detectors are recommended and are they dual technology motion sensors?			
Is the system zone specific or are all zones compiled into one?			
Are there pets, plants, heating, cooling in the environment, which may affect the installation and operation of motion detectors?			
How many sirens are recommended?			
Does the system have dual technology glass break detectors?			
Is closed circuit TV an option?			
Are there video and/or audio verification capabilities?			