



False Alarm Prevention Tips

What is a false alarm?

Gwinnett County, Code of Ordinances, Chapter 34, Article III defines a false alarm as: *"an alarm dispatch request resulting in the responding officer finding no evidence of a criminal offense or attempted criminal offense after having completed a timely investigation of the alarm site."*

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 company 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 divert public safety responses from 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

Other causes of false alarms:

- Unsecured magnets
- Warping top of doors
- Closed-but not latched-windows
- Tears or patched window foils
- Spiders near the motion detector
- Ceiling fans

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.
- 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.
- You can typically arrange to have your alarm monitoring station call you or another designated person first, before the police are called whenever your alarm is activated. Dispatches canceled by alarm monitoring companies prior to police arrival are not counted as false alarms.

At home:

DO NOT call 911 to cancel alarm activations; you must call your monitoring station.

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.
- Moving objects - Items that move, such as balloons, can cause motion sensors to go off.
- Drafts that move plants and curtains may also trigger sensors.

At your business:

DO NOT call 911 to cancel alarm activations; you must call your monitoring station.

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, or unaware employees
- Alarm equipment, such as motion sensors or overhead door magnets, being hit by forklifts

Contact your alarm company:

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

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

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

- Do you want them to attempt to call more than one person on your contact list before requesting emergency dispatch?
- Do you only want the police notified if exterior and interior zones are both activated?
- Put your instructions in writing.

With people:

Enhance your alarm system's potential:

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

False alarms:

- Divert emergency resources away from true emergencies.
- Are a nuisance to you and your neighbors.
- Make your security system less reliable.
- Cost 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.