

False Alarm Prevention: The Cost and Solution



Security systems are great tools to help keep you and your family safe, but can be costly when a system is triggered without an emergency.

FALSE ALARM VOLUME

Police Responses to Security System Alarms



95% of all police responses to security system alarms across America were prompted by false alarms¹.

■ Legitimate Emergencies
■ False Alarms

Case Study: Security Alarm Calls in Seattle



The Seattle Police Department reported that they responded to over **24,000** home security alarm calls in 2002. Only **325** were valid emergencies, making fewer than **2%** of calls legitimate.

■ Legitimate Emergencies
■ Total Alarm Calls

THE COST OF FALSE ALARMS

In 2002, false alarms cost **\$1,800,000,000** nationwide¹.



In Seattle, wasted resources on false alarms increased the adjusted **cost per arrested burglar to \$31,444**.

These costs can decrease if you can spot the common reasons for false alarms and learn how to prevent false alarms from happening.



*Data according to a 2004 study by Temple University in Philadelphia.

TOP 6 CAUSES OF FALSE ALARMS

False alarms happen for a variety of reasons, but most are caused by natural human mistakes. In fact, the False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA) reports that **more than 80%** of false alarms are caused by **user errors** that could easily be prevented².



#1 Improper Arming & Disarming

User mistakes like entering the wrong passcode and letting too much time pass before entering the code can prompt false alarms.



#2 Not Properly Training Authorized Users

People who are unfamiliar with your system, such as cleaning crews, repairmen, pet sitters, house sitters, babysitters, etc., often cause false alarms. Typical mistakes include incorrectly entering the passcode and not being aware of sensor locations.



#3 Power Problems

Weak batteries and power outages can set off your alarm. It is important to have your system running on a battery backup so you don't have to worry about a false alarm caused by power problems.



#4 Pets

Animals wandering around the house while you're away can be detected by motion sensors, and set off the alarm.



#5 Failing to Secure Doors & Windows Properly

Not fully closing doors and windows before setting the alarm can prompt the system to go off. Also, faulty or loose contacts on your windows or doors can trigger false alarms. In fact, any external elements that get in through loose cracks on doors or windows, like rain or wind, can set off alarms.



#6 Objects Moving Near Motion Sensors

Balloons, plants, and other moving objects near motion sensors could trigger the sensors and set off the alarm.

5 EASY WAYS TO PREVENT FALSE ALARMS

Many cities are starting to issue fines to homeowners who cause unwarranted alarm dispatches. On average, these false alarms can cost homeowners **\$50 - \$250** per incident³. Minimizing false alarms will help reduce costs for everyone and keep police available for real emergencies.

Here are five easy ways you can prevent false alarms in your home.



1. Place Sensors in Proper Places

Turn sensors away from air/heat vents, fans, and windows so they don't pick up any breezes or drafts that could prompt a false alarm. Additionally, make sure you keep all moving objects away from the sensors when your alarm is set.



2. Properly Train All Users

Properly train everyone, whether it's your kids, a babysitter, a relative, or yourself, to arm and disarm your system properly. The most effective way to train them is to explain how the system works, demonstrate it yourself, and then have them arm and disarm the system multiple times under your supervision.



3. Equipment Checkups

Make sure you schedule regular inspections of your security system equipment a few times each year to ensure it is still running properly. Alarm monitoring companies can even set up annual tests to make sure signals are transmitting properly. If you have glass-break detectors, make sure they are adjusted properly so they aren't set off by loud noises, like thunder. Also, check the battery backup –low batteries are the second most common cause of false alarms.



4. Secure Your Doors and Windows

Have a professional technician check your system at least once a year to ensure you don't have any broken sensor connections or loose-fitting doors or windows. Also, make sure you close and lock all your doors and windows before you set the alarm.



5. Pet Friendly Sensors

There are motion sensors that are immune to movement caused by pets up to 80 pounds. If you have household pets that roam the house while you're away, these sensors are worth the investment.

WHAT TO DO WHEN ACCIDENTS HAPPEN

If you do accidentally set off your alarm, **don't panic**. There are simple things you can do to prevent local authorities from having to respond to a false alarm at your home.

1. Reset Your System:

When your alarm is going off, enter your security code into the alarm control panel to disarm the system and stop the alarm as quickly as possible.



2. Communicate With Your Security Provider:

Make sure you are prepared to talk with a representative from your alarm company. Give your password or ID number. Do not leave home until you have talked with them.



3. Do NOT Call 911:

Never notify your local emergency services about a false alarm. If you have a false alarm, only contact the security system provider.



4. Set Up Phone Notifications:

When you set up notifications with your service provider, have them call two phones before alerting authorities. This way, you are more likely to speak with them before they unnecessarily contact the police, an ambulance, or the fire department.



5. Review Your System:

Accidents happen, but take measures to prevent the same mistake from happening twice. Make the necessary changes to ensure whatever triggered your false alarm the first time won't happen a second time.



HELP OTHERS PREVENT FALSE ALARMS

Share this reference guide for preventing false alarms with your family, friends, and neighbors.

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Sources:
1. <http://isc.temple.edu/economics/wp/papers/Pubs/FalsePolicy.pdf>
2. <http://faraonline.org/files/2012/05/Police-Officer-Bulletin.pdf>
3. http://www.lapdonline.org/faqs/content_basic_view/9162