

False Alarms

"False Alarm Activations are a major public safety concern."

The Prince George's County Police Department responded to 90,609 alarms in 2000; 98% of these alarm calls were false. False alarm activations require an enormous resource commitment by the police annually.

False alarm activations waste important tax dollars and divert police officers from emergency situations. An average of 1200 calls for service are responded to everyday in Prince George's County. The Prince George's County Police Department wants to work with alarm users and alarm companies to reduce false alarm activations.

Alarm User Regulations

The Prince George's County Council adopted an ordinance in 1997 that requires homes and businesses with alarms to obtain a permit. The following legislation applies to all alarm users:

- All residences and commercial alarm users must register their alarm systems. Only **commercial** alarm users must pay a \$50.00 registration fee. This registration is valid for two (2) years. Residents need only register their alarm system, **no** fee is required.
- False alarm fees assessed for each activation are as follows and will be billed through the False Alarm Reduction Unit.

Chargeable Activations	False Alarm Fee
1st, 2nd, 3rd	No Fee Charged
4th, 5th or 6th	\$50 .00
7th, 8th or 9th	\$100.00
10th, 11th or 12th	\$150.00
13th or greater	\$200.00

Appeal Guidelines

Prince George's County Burglar and Holdup Legislation, Sections 9-130 to 141, defines a "False Alarm" as any request for immediate police department assistance that is not in response to actual or threatened criminal activity or activation of an alarm system which results in an emergency response by the police to an alarm site for which the responding police officer finds **no** evidence of a criminal offense or attempted criminal offense at the alarm site.

Appeals will not be granted for false alarms that are the result of:

- Faulty, defective or malfunctioning equipment supplied by the alarm business.
- Improperly installing or maintaining by the alarm business.
- Improper monitoring by the alarm business.
- An occurrence where no evidence of criminal activity is present.
- Mistakes made by private contractors, maids, cleaning crews.
- Alarm activations which occur while alarm technicians are repairing or servicing the alarm system.
- Items within the home or business which move and cause motion detectors to activate, i.e. curtains, signs, balloons.
- Glass break detectors that activate due to noises/sound other than actual glass breakage.
- Doors and/or windows that become loose and cause a break in the contacts that activates the alarm.
- Caretakers who watch homes or businesses when owners are away.
- Pets, rodents, wildlife.
- Alarms caused by apartment management employees.

Alarm User Guidelines

- Use a licensed contractor trained in alarm system installation.
- Be sure the family and authorized users are trained in operating the alarm system. This training, along with instructional materials, should be provided by the licensed contractor installing your equipment.
- Implement and use a regular system maintenance schedule.
- Develop a verification process with your alarm service company.
- Have your system checked by a trained alarm technician when false alarms are generated.

Your Alarm System

The alarm system you choose should:

- Be Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM) approved.
- Have a backup power or battery system that prevents activations in a power outage.
- Possess an automatic entry and exit delay system.
- Allow users to test the system internally for malfunctions.
- Have a surge protector to prevent power outages due to harsh weather conditions.

For more information call the Prince George's County False Alarm Unit at (301) 883-5465.