

Battery Backup and False Alarms

Q What is a backup battery?

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 sensors, as well as a backup battery.

Q How can backup batteries cause false alarms?

If you have false alarms after a storm, it may not be the storm that caused the alarm. If your batteries are not fully charged, a false alarm may be generated when your alarm system powers up after a power failure caused by a storm. Even a short power failure of a second or less may be long enough to cause a false alarm.

Q How can I reduce the chance that my battery will cause a false alarm?

Like all batteries, your backup has a useful life of about 3 to 5 years, but that life may be shortened if you have had several power outages. Your battery backup should be checked annually, or after any storm related false alarm, by an alarm technician and replaced when needed.

Vacation and False Alarms

Most security alarm users don't give a second thought about the alarm system when they are leaving for vacation. They automatically arm it as they leave and never stop to consider that it could cause numerous false alarms while they are gone, because they failed to take a few minutes to update vital information and train all temporary users!

Security System Checklist:

- 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 pass code/password to give to the monitoring center if an accidental alarm occurs.
- Call your alarm company and:
 1. Tell them what days you will be gone
 2. Tell them whether or not anyone is authorized to be in your home while you are away.
 3. Update your emergency contact information, including who has keys to your home.
 4. Give them a number to reach you, should your alarm activate while you are away.

How can you prevent false alarms?

1. Before activating your alarm systems....
 - Lock all protected doors and window.
 - Keep pets, balloons, fans, heaters, plants, curtains, seasonal decorations, etc. away from motion sensor area.
2. Educate alarm system users....
 - All users, key hours or any person with legal access to your property must be thoroughly trained in how to operate your system, including knowledge of correct arming codes, pass codes, telephone numbers and procedures for cancelling accidental alarm activations.
3. Notify your security company if...
 - You think your system isn't working properly.
 - You plan any remodeling, including replacing doors or windows, hanging drywall, sanding floors, installing attic flooring or basement ceiling, changing phone systems, installing DSL, VOIP, FIOS or intercoms, siding, ceiling fans or skylights, fumigating, installing wiring for cable or other electronics, installing anything near the system control panel or keypads.
 - You hire domestic help, get a new pet, plan to sell your home, or are testing your system.
4. Contact your jurisdiction's Alarm Coordinator if...
 - You have a phone service or name change, or if situations change, such as a disabled person now residing at the residence, etc.
5. Have your security company check and service your systems annually. Routine maintenance can help prevent many false alarms.
6. Your central monitoring station **should not** request a law enforcement dispatch for power outages, low battery signals or loss of telephone connections.
7. Request that your monitoring company use Enhanced Call Verification (ECV) when your alarm activates, which means that if they receive no answer at the alarm site, they call a responsible party's or authorized user's cell phone prior to requesting a law enforcement dispatch.
8. Dirty or wet phone lines, telephone repairmen and service interruptions do not require law enforcement response!
9. Upgrade old alarm systems to current equipment conforming to Security Industry Association (SIA) false alarm prevention standards.

Louisiana Life Safety & Security Association

Residential False Alarm Prevention



- False Alarm Cost System Users \$\$\$
- False Alarms Waste Valuable Law Enforcement Resources.
- False Alarms can delay response when you really need it!

LLSSA
208 W Gloria Switch Road, #112
Lafayette, LA 70507
V. 337-886-7282
F. 337-886-7284
Web Site: www.llssa.org
Email: llssa@llssa.org

Residential False Alarm

- Did you know that the three major causes of false alarms are:
 - (1) User errors.
 - (2) Installation or service errors.
 - (3) Equipment failures?
- Did you know that more than 80% of false alarms are related to preventable user errors?
- Did you know that 20% of alarm users cause 80% of all false alarms?
- Do you think alarmed locations are entitled to unlimited law enforcement response?
- Do you think you are at greater risk when officers, accustomed to responding to chronic false alarms, respond to a real emergency at your location?

The reality is that patrol resources are limited and should never be wasted. Thousands of patrol hours are spent investigating alarm reports that turn out to be “false alarms.”

Alarm companies and alarm users must be responsible for the use and maintenance of alarm systems to help assure prompt law enforcement response when an emergency really does exist.

What is a False Alarms?

A false alarm is an event that triggers an alarm system when no actual criminal act is being committed or attempted.

Common Cause of False Alarms

1. Inadequate training of people allowed access to your security systems (children, neighbors, cleaning personnel, real estate agents, guests, relatives, babysitters, service and delivery personnel, etc.)
2. Weak System batteries.
3. Open, unlocked or loose fitting doors and windows.
4. Drafts from heaters and air conditioning systems that move plants, curtains, balloons etc.
5. Wandering pets.

False Alarms....

- Take officers and fire fighters away from real emergencies. This embarrassing situation endangers responding authorities and the whole community by needlessly diverting public safety resources.
- Desensitizes communities to actual incidents of crime and fire and can lead to neighbors ignoring your alarm when it goes off.
- Make your security system less reliable and credible.
- May make you reluctant to arm your system, exposing your home and property to undetected theft or fire.
- Cost citizens time, personal security and money, as many jurisdictions assess costly fines for excessive false alarms.



Installing & Activating an Alarm System

- Check with your local jurisdiction to see if you are required to register your alarm system.
- When purchasing an alarm system, you must remember that you are a vital part of the alarm function. You must completely understand how the systems works, what it does and does not do, and what you must do to keep it in proper operating condition.
- Ensure all users of your system are provided adequate and thorough instruction on using and testing the system. Ask your alarm company to provide you with written instructions, as well as a give you a physical demonstration.
- Ensure outside audible alarms are set to sound for no more than 10 minutes (or whatever time limit is defined in your ordinance) before resetting.



Check List

- Are you and others who use the system fully educated on its proper operations?
- Does everyone with a key to your home know how to operate your security systems?
- Do you take care to eliminate possible causes of false alarm?
- Have you rehearsed alarm cancellation procedures with all who use your system to cancel accidental alarm activations?
- Do you communicate with your security company regularly, advising of vacation days, problem areas or maintenance needs?
- Do you notify your local Alarm Coordinator when phone numbers or situations change?
- Do you have your security system instruction book and alarm company names and telephone numbers readily available in order to call and cancel accidental alarm activations?

Steps to Avoid False Alarms by Pets

1. Talk to your alarm company about installing pet friendly devices or changing your system design to accommodate pets. Often times upgrading your sensors can be less expensive than a fine imposed by your municipality for a false alarm.
2. Check with your alarm company to determine if another option would include cross zoning—your monitoring center will not dispatch on motion alarms unless they also receive an entry alarm. For example, a motion alarm received with a door or window alarm.
3. Another option is to try second call verification. Provide your monitoring center with an off site number where you can be reached before dispatching the police.



Information provided by FARA - False Alarm Reduction Association. www.faraonline.org. Electronic Security Association. www.alarm.org. Additional information on Louisiana's False Alarm Ordinances can be found on www.lssa.org—False Alarm info section.