

**ESCAMBIA COUNTY FIRE-RESCUE***Standard Operating Guidelines***4100.060****False Fire Alarm Reporting**

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Revised:

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, Fire Chief

**PURPOSE**

To identify false alarms as defined by Escambia County Ordinance 2007-72 and to establish a procedure for enforcement of the ordinance so that unnecessary responses by fire department apparatus and personnel to alarm activations will be minimized.

**OBJECTIVE**

To provide personnel with guidelines that help identify a false alarm and provide the necessary procedures for documenting and reporting the false alarm activation.

**SCOPE**

All personnel

**DEFINITION**

False Fire Alarm = A signal for a fire alarm system that elicits a response by a fire department when no actual or threatened fire related emergency exists. The definition includes signals activated by negligence, accident, mechanical failure, and electrical failure; signals activated intentionally in non-emergency situations; and signals for which the actual cause of activation is unknown. It is a rebuttable presumption that a fire alarm is false if personnel responding from a fire department do not discover any evidence of fire or other emergency after following normal fire department operating procedures in investigating the incident. An alarm is not false if the alarm user proves that (1) an individual activated the alarm based upon a reasonable belief that a fire-related emergency existed; (2) the alarm system was activated by lightning or an electrical surge that caused physical damage to the system, as evidenced by the testimony of a licensed alarm system contractor who conducted an on-site inspection and personally observed the damage to the system; (3) the alarm was activated by vandals or (4) any other generation of a false alarm which is beyond the reasonable control of the system user. The burden shall be upon the system user to show that the generation of the false alarm was beyond his control.

**PROCEDURE**

Upon arrival the incident commander or apparatus officer shall meet with the occupant or owner of the building, if possible, to determine if the alarm is false. Locate the fire alarm control panel (FACP). If the fire alarm system is still in alarm, look for indicators on the panel to determine the location of the activated automatic or manual fire alarm device. If no indications are present on the FACP perform a thorough walk-through and walk-around of the building looking for potential causes of the fire alarm system activation. After determining that the activation is false, have the building occupant or owner reset the fire alarm system. At no time should Escambia County Fire Rescue personnel reset a fire alarm system after the system has activated. The occupant or owner should contact their fire alarm system service provider and have the fire alarm system thoroughly inspected to determine a cause for the false alarm activation. If the system is now no longer functional or

cannot be repaired within a 4 hour time period, the owner or representative shall begin a fire watch. This fire watch shall remain in place until the fire alarm system has been returned to fully operational status.

### **DOCUMENTATION**

A False alarm report should be completed prior to leaving the scene of the false fire alarm activation. The document should be completed in full with assistance provided by the occupant or owner as required. Please include the incident number on the form. The form should be signed by the property owner or representative. If a property owner or representative is not available to sign the form, the form should have a note stating "owner or representative did not respond to the false alarm activation". The white copy of the form shall be given to the property owner or representative. The yellow copy shall be turned in to fire administration (within 5 business days) and the pink copy retained by the responding fire company.

When completing the incident report in FIREHOUSE, please document as much information as possible concerning the cause of the false alarm activation or lack of cause. Document conditions found upon arrival at the scene including whether or not the building was evacuated. Document the condition of the FACP including the location of activation. Document whether or not the owner or owner's representative responded to the fire alarm activation. Please provide information from dispatch such as whether or not there was a specific device such as a heat or smoke detector activation or a water flow alarm. The fact that this was a false alarm activation needs to be documented within the narrative of the report. Please ensure that the correct NFIRS code is applied. Please use codes in the 700, 710 and 730 groups.

This standard operating guideline applies to commercial occupancies only and does not apply to residential occupancies of four units or less.

If there are any questions or doubt concerning whether or not a false alarm report should be completed, complete the form and have it reviewed by Escambia County Fire Prevention.