

Tips For Avoiding False Alarms

- First and foremost, be sure that your alarm company is licensed in Palm Beach County and the State of Florida. To verify county registration you can log onto the tax collectors website at www.pbc.gov/tax/ to check for occupational licensing information.
- Know what kind of system you are buying and be sure that your alarm company instructs you thoroughly on how to operate it. It is important to know how to deactivate an alarm, cancel false alarms promptly, and identify maintenance problems.
- Understand how the police are called:
 1. When your alarm activates, the alarm will “seize” your telephone line and dial the alarm company’s monitoring station. During this time your telephone will be inoperable.
 2. The monitoring company will then call your premise to verify if the alarm is false or legitimate. If the alarm was accidental, it is imperative that you stay off of your landline telephone until you receive the call from your monitoring company.
 3. Once the monitoring company verifies that the alarm was false, they must notify the Sheriff’s Office immediately to cancel the alarm.
 4. If the monitoring company cannot verify the validity of the alarm, they will notify the Sheriff’s Office for police dispatch.
- If you accidentally activate your alarm
 1. Stay off the phone and wait for the alarm company to call your premise.
 2. Have your password available.
 3. Do not leave your premise until you are sure the police have been cancelled. Remember, only the monitoring company, not the alarm user, can make cancellations.
- If someone is trying to break into your house or you need help
 1. DO NOT USE THE PANIC ALARM unless you cannot get to a telephone. 911 is a much quicker way to notify the police and unlike any alarm system it is the only way to be connected directly to us.
- Only those who know how to operate your alarm system should be given a key to your premise. Teach all family members, employees and service personnel on proper use of the alarm system and be sure they understand the cancellation process as well. Service personnel such as pest control, housekeeping and contractors are responsible for a large number of false alarms. If they are permitted access to your premise when you are not there, they should also be thoroughly educated and instructed on how your system works
- Have all loose fitting doors and windows with alarm sensors tightened. A loose fit may break the sensor contact even without opening the door or window.
- Keep pets, balloons, fans, curtains, seasonal decorations or any other object capable of moving away from alarm sensors.
- Have your alarm company inspect and perform routine maintenance on your system. Notify them immediately if you think that your system is not functioning properly.



Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office Alarm Unit

P.O. Box 24681
West Palm Beach FL 33416
Phone (561) 688-3691
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Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office

Alarm User Awareness Guide



*Future Solutions
For Our Community*

General Information

- A False Alarm means an alarm dispatch request where the responding deputy finds no evidence of a criminal offense or attempted criminal offense. False alarms include alarms caused by error and/or technical or mechanical failure.
- Any business or residence that operates a burglar alarm system is required to obtain a permit from the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office. Permit fees are \$25 for the initial registration and a \$25 renewal fee each year.
- If a business has one or more alarm systems, protecting two or more separate structures having different addresses, a separate alarm permit will be required for each structure.
- If the owner or property manager of an apartment complex provides alarm systems in each residential unit, the apartment complex shall obtain an alarm permit for each apartment. All units, whether occupied or not, shall be required to have a permit.
- All users of an alarm system must have one representative (key holder), other than him/herself, available to respond to an alarm activation to open the premise and have the capacity to deactivate the system. Changes in emergency phone numbers must be kept current.
- All alarm systems must have a back up power supply.

Fines and Fees

False Alarms within a permit year for the same alarm permit shall be subject to the following fines:

1. The first and second false alarm shall not be assessed a fine.
2. The third and fourth false alarm shall each be assessed a \$50 fine.
3. A fifth false alarm shall be assessed a \$75 fine.
4. The sixth through ninth false alarm shall each be assessed a \$100 fine.
5. The tenth and all subsequent false alarms shall each be assessed a \$500 fine.

This information is not intended to explain the ordinance in its entirety. To read and/or download the Alarm Ordinance go to www.pbso.org click on "How Do I" click on "get an Alarm Permit" click on "general information/fines & fees" click on the following link: [Palm Beach County Alarm Ordinance 2008-038](#). The ordinance applies only to the unincorporated areas of Palm Beach County and county pockets, as well as any incorporated city area patrolled by the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office.

To download an Alarm Permit Registration form under "get an Alarm Permit" click on the following link. [Burglar Alarm Permit Form](#) (Adobe PDF).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why am I required to obtain a permit to operate a burglar alarm?

A. The alarm ordinance was put in place solely for the purpose of reducing false alarms. Due to the vast number of false alarms that occur because of improper use or defect, the Sheriff's Office commits thousands of hours of manpower resources to answer these calls. This results in slower response times to true crimes in progress, proactive patrol, and investigative time. The alarm registration process has proven to be effective in reducing false alarm calls. Experience also indicates that a majority of alarm users would not take responsibility for their alarm system or keep vital information updated without a permit and renewal process.

Q. What are the registration fees for an alarm permit and how can I make a payment?

A. The permit application cost is \$25. A \$25.00 renewal fee is due one year after the original application date. After receiving the \$25.00 renewal fee, and providing that any other fines have been paid, all false alarms are cleared from the premise record and the premise record will go back to zero.

Currently, we cannot accept credit cards for payments. Fees may be paid with a check or money order made out to the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office

Payments can be mailed to:

Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office
Attention: Accounting
PO Box 24681
West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4681

Q. Does the Sheriff's Office profit from the charging of alarm fees and fines?

A. Revenue generated from false alarm fines and registration fees is meant only to cover the operation costs generated by false alarms. Currently, the recovered revenue does not cover the expenses associated with false alarm response

Q. What are the permitting requirements for a fire alarm?

A. For fire alarm requirements, contact Palm Beach County Fire Rescue at (561) 616-7034

Q. If my alarm is activated falsely, but it wasn't my fault, am I still responsible?

A. Regardless of the reasons for false alarm activation, the permit holder is held responsible for any fines due. This is why it is important to keep everyone who has access to your premise updated on your alarms usage. If you feel that your alarm was falsely activated due to mechanical malfunction, you must contact your alarm company. The Sheriff's Office cannot provide technical assistance or advice.

Q. Can I transfer my alarm permit number from one location to another if I move?

A. Yes, but you must call your alarm company and the Sheriff's Office Alarm Unit to notify us of your new address.

Q. If I switch alarm companies, do I need to obtain a new permit?

A. No, however you must call the Sheriff's Office Alarm unit with the new alarm company information.