

*“Keep Orlando a safe city by reducing crime and maintaining livable neighborhoods.”*

**ORLANDO POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

**1110.5, FALSE ALARMS**

EFFECTIVE:	12/7/2018
RESCINDS:	1110.4
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CHIEF OF POLICE	ORLANDO ROLÓN

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PURPOSE:

Orlando City Code, Chapter 41, False Alarms, Sections 41.01 through 41.13, regulates the number of false alarms to any premises, allows for the collection of service fees for excessive false alarms and other violations of the Ordinance, requires all active alarms in the City of Orlando be registered with the Orlando Police Department, and establishes administrative procedures.

PROCEDURES:

**1. DEFINITIONS**

False Alarm: The activation of an alarm system, signal, or message, which elicits notification to and/or response by the Orlando Police Department when there is no evidence of a crime or other activity that warrants a call for immediate police response. This may include an alarm discovered by a police officer before notification of an alarm from a monitor or from a local alarm that is not monitored.

Alarm Company: A person, partnership or corporation in the business of selling, providing, maintaining, servicing, repairing, altering, replacing, moving or installing an alarm system at an alarm site.

Alarm Coordinator: The person within the Orlando Police Department designated to administer, control and maintain records; review false alarm reduction efforts; and administer the provisions of this chapter.

Alarm Registration: Authorization granted by the enforcement official or Alarm Coordinator to an alarm user to operate an alarm system. The registration shall serve as notification by an alarm user that an alarm system has been installed and is or will be in use at an alarm site.

Alarm Site: A single fixed premises or location, or a multi-tenant location, served by an alarm system or systems. Each unit, if served by a separate alarm system in a multi-unit building or complex, shall be considered a separate alarm site.

Alarm System: Any mechanical, electrical or radio-controlled device or system designed to emit, transmit or relay a signal or message and, when activated, is intended to summon, or would reasonably be expected to summon, police, fire or emergency medical services of the City of Orlando including, but not limited to, local alarms. Alarm system does not include:

- a. An alarm installed on a vehicle unless the vehicle is permanently located at a site; or
- b. An alarm designed to alert only the inhabitants of a premises and does not constitute a local alarm.

Alarm User: A person, partnership, corporation or any other entity that has contracted for monitoring, repair, installation or maintenance service from an alarm installation or monitoring company for an alarm system, or who owns or operates an alarm system that is not monitored, maintained or repaired under contract.

Automatic Voice Dialer: Any electrical, electronic, mechanical or other device capable of being programmed to send a prerecorded voice or data message, when activated, over a telephone line, radio or other communication system to the Orlando Police or Fire Department requesting dispatch.

Cancellation: The process by which police response is terminated after an alarm dispatch request has been received and the alarm company notifies the Orlando Police Department that there is not an existing situation at the alarm site requiring police response. If cancellation occurs prior to police arriving at the alarm site or within 10 minutes of the initial alarm dispatch, this is not a false alarm. Cancellation shall not apply to an alarm dispatch involving domestic violence or to any fire or emergency medical alarm systems.

## **2. AUTHORITY**

Section 41.12, Fines, allows for the collection of service fees for excessive false alarms and other violations of Chapter 41 of the City Code, False Alarms.

## **3. ENFORCEMENT**

All alarm systems in the City of Orlando will be registered with the Orlando Police Department. Alarm users may register online or download the forms to be mailed to the False Alarm Coordinator. Alarm systems that are not registered will be fined \$50.00 for each activation.

No service fee shall be charged for the first three residential false alarms or the first two commercial false alarms occurring within a 12-month period. The fourth, fifth and sixth residential false alarms and the third and fourth commercial alarms within a 12-month period shall result in a service fee of \$50.00 per false alarm, except as excluded in Section 41.11, Exemptions. Residential false alarms in excess of six or commercial false alarms in excess of four in a 12-month period shall result in a service fee of \$100.00 per false alarm, except as excluded in Section 41.11, Exemptions.

After the first false alarm is received from any premises, a warning letter will be sent to the property owner advising of the False Alarm Ordinance and outlining methods of avoiding future false alarms.

After the second false alarm from any premises, a warning letter will be sent to the property owner with additional reference to the False Alarm Ordinance and penalties that may occur. The property owner may also be asked to contact their alarm company to have their system checked and/or repaired. Alarm company work orders or other proof of the repairs must be submitted to the False Alarm Coordinator with 30 days of the alarm activation.

After the third false alarm is received from a residence, a warning letter will be sent to the property owner with additional reference to the ordinance and penalties. The False Alarm Coordinator's telephone number will be provided for property owners to contact to discuss ways to avoid any future false alarms and possible penalties.

After the fourth residential or third commercial false alarm is received, a false alarm invoice will be sent to the property owner.

In the event that false alarm invoices are not paid, the Orlando Police Department may revert the matter to the City's Office of Legal Affairs for appropriate legal action. The City shall collect outstanding fees and fines pursuant to Section 1.08 of the City Code.

In lieu of assessing the service fees provided for in Sections 41.12, the Orlando Police Department may issue code enforcement citations, pursuant to the provision of Article II, Chapter 5, of the City Code.

Uniform Code Citations (UCC) should only be used in false alarm cases where the False Alarm Coordinator has determined that the premises to be cited has had at least six false alarms in a 12-month period in violation of Section 41.12, and that the owner/agent of the property has failed to make payment, arrange for the payment or otherwise been exempted under Chapter 41, of the Orlando City Code.

When the False Alarm Coordinator determines that a premises meets the criteria described above, the False Alarm Coordinator will advise the officer who responded to the false alarm to complete a UCC.

The Orlando Police Department through its designee may waive the false alarm service fees due to mitigating circumstances or if the property owner can show proof of repair to the alarm system.

#### **4. FALSE ALARM COORDINATOR'S PROCEDURES**

The False Alarm Coordinator will be responsible for the following:

- a. Retrieve information from CAD reference false alarms.
- b. Collect and review all Orlando Police Department False Alarm Notice forms initiated by patrol. Send warning letters to property owners, when necessary.
- c. Attach a copy of the False Alarm Ordinance with all false alarm warning letters.
- d. Initiate and mail false alarm warning letters and invoices to property owners.
- e. Initiate Reminder Letters for past-due accounts.
- f. Work with alarm companies to educate the public on the proper use of alarms and ways to reduce false alarms.
- g. Keep current membership in the Alarm Association of Florida.
- h. Certify and keep current Crime Prevention and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Practitioner designations and conduct security surveys as necessary.
- i. Provide, upon request by alarm companies, a list of false alarm offenders. Visit sites of problem accounts to assist and mediate with alarm company representatives.
- j. Develop and distribute printed materials regarding false alarms (e.g., brochures, door hangers, etc.).
- k. Work with Neighborhood Watch groups to educate the public on the ordinance and recommend procedures to reduce false alarms.

#### **5. OFFICERS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

Officers will be responsible for the following:

- a. Fill out a False Alarm Notice each time they respond to an alarm and make every effort to determine the cause of the false alarm. All spaces on the form will be completed and additional information documented where necessary. These forms are available in the Quartermaster Unit.
- b. If the alarm is determined to be false, the officer will circle the "L" on the top left corner of the False Alarm Notice, and fill in the incident number on the top right corner of the form. The white copy will be left at the scene in an area with the highest likelihood of the resident/manager finding it upon return to the building. These areas may include, but are not limited to, underneath a door or newspaper access point. The False Alarm Notice may also be given to any on-site residents or employees, with the person's name written on the bottom of the form. The yellow copy will be placed in the False Alarm Coordinator's "in" basket in the patrol bay at the end of each shift. In the event of an alarm at a standalone ATM, both copies of the False Alarm Notice will be placed in the Alarm Coordinator's "in" basket at the end of each shift. If the ATM is attached to the bank, the appropriate copy of the False Alarm Notice will be left at the bank.

- c. If the officer determines that the alarm may have been caused by a reason that is exempted in the ordinance (e.g., power outage and/or telephone outage), he/she will circle the "G" on the top left corner of the form, fill in the reasons for doing so at the bottom of the False Alarm Notice in the area marked additional comments, document the reason for the false alarm in the narrative of the call in CAD, and leave both copies of the form in the False Alarm Coordinator's "in" basket in the patrol bay at the end of each shift. No incident number is needed. (Exception: During periods of severe lightning, tornados, hurricanes, hail storms, or in cases of known power outages or telephone disruption as may occur during severe weather, the officers will clear all alarms with a "G" disposition, and no forms will be filled out. This will be for the duration of the severe weather only.)
- d. If the officer is canceled by the alarm company either before arrival on the scene or within ten minutes of initiation of the alarm call, the call will be cleared with a "BB" disposition. No form will be completed.
- e. If the cancellation is received after ten minutes of initiation of the alarm call or after the officer has left the scene, the call will be cleared with an "L" disposition. The False Alarm Notice will be completed and left at the scene of the property.
- f. If the officer is dispatched to an address and upon arrival cannot find the location given, he/she will go to the Service channel and request the operator call the alarm company for address verification. If the alarm company gives an address that is non-existent or not in OPD jurisdiction, the officer will notify the Service operator that the location is a bad address, and clear the call "I." The officer will not clear the call before attempting address verification or before notifying the Service operator of the bad address.

## **6. COMMUNICATIONS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

Communications will be responsible for the following:

- a. When calling inside on an alarm, ascertain the names of any persons on the premises who are supposed to be there but have not "coded in" with the alarm company.
- b. Document in the "remarks" field of the alarm call all information obtained on callback. The remarks field will include the call taker's employee number and the time the information was obtained.
- c. Notify the False Alarm Coordinator any time there is difficulty in obtaining the information needed from any person on the premises or from any alarm company. Note the names of the alarm company and the representative contacted.
- d. If an officer responds to a dispatched alarm address and cannot locate the alarm site, he/she will ask the Service operator to call the alarm company for address verification. If the officer advises the address is non-existent or not in OPD jurisdiction, the Service operator will print the call, mark the hard copy "bad address," and give it to the Communications Supervisor. The Communications Supervisor will place the hard copy in the Alarm Coordinator's mailbox for follow-up.

## **7. FISCAL MANAGEMENT SECTION RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Fiscal Management Section will be responsible for the following:

- a. Receive all invoices with payment from property owners and enter the information into the Alarm Management System.
- b. Deliver the bank deposit slip to General Revenue.

ATTACHMENT A

	<b>CITY OF ORLANDO</b>	
POLICE DEPARTMENT		
<b>FALSE ALARM NOTICE</b>		
L O D O W G A _____ - _____		
(Circle all that apply). (Year) (Incident #)		
DATE: ____/____/____ TIME: _____		
ADDRESS: _____		
BUSINESS/RESIDENCE NAME: _____		
ALARM TYPE (Circle One): 29R 29C 29H 29B		
ALARM CAUSE (Circle One): Unknown User Error System Malfunction		
OFFICER REQUESTING RESPONDER INFO UPDATE (Circle One): YES NO		
(If yes, please explain)		
_____		
_____		
Perimeter checked? YES NO If no, explain _____		
Interior checked? YES NO If no, explain _____		
Building checked? YES NO If no, explain _____		
Contact made? YES NO If no, explain _____		
Additional comments:		
_____		
_____		
OFFICER NAME: _____ OFFICER ID# _____		
If you have any questions in reference to this notice, please contact the False Alarm Coordinator at 321.235.5330, or write to: Orlando Police Department, Attention: False Alarm Coordinator, PO Box 913, Orlando, FL 32802-0913.		
OPD P&P 1110.4 A Rev. 4/28/14 White - Location Yellow - False Alarm Coordinator		

ATTACHMENT A (Continued)

ALARM DISPOSITIONS Quick Reference	
Dispo.	Notes
L	Used when clearing any alarm determined to be false. This includes alarms caused by the user, an alarm company technician installing or servicing an alarm, malfunctioning systems, or for any reason other than a police, fire, or medical emergency. This disposition is not used in conjunction with a "G."
G	Used when clearing any alarm determined to be caused by a situation that is exempt by Ordinance ( <u>severe</u> weather [i.e., hurricanes, tornadoes, lightning storms], power outage, phone disruption), or when an off-duty officer takes the call in his/her off-duty capacity. It may also be used for extenuating circumstances, such as elderly/ill persons, trespassers, etc. This disposition requires a notice be completed, with the reason for the disposition explained on the bottom of the form and in the narrative of the call.
BB	Used when an alarm company cancels the alarm call, either before arrival of the officer on scene or within ten minutes of initiation of the alarm. We do not accept cancellations from any source other than the alarm company. <b>Do NOT code these calls "BB, G."</b>
L, OW	Used when the responding officers find an open window. An officer may determine the alarm to be false, but indicate the window may have been a contributing factor. Do not code these calls "G, OW."
L, OD	Used when the responding officers find an open door. An officer may determine the alarm to be false, but indicate the open door may have been a contributing factor. Do not code these calls "G, OD."
JB	Used by all backup units (including CSIs) when they advise Radio they are 10-8 and back in service. This excludes K9 units who use a different disposition based on their response. Do not use "G" when returning to service from backing another unit; this causes the call to be counted twice in the statistical reports.
J	Used when the alarm is determined to be fire or medical, and the call is turned over to OFD. Also used if the call is found to be in the County and turned over to OCSO.
Finally, the call signal should NEVER be changed from an alarm (to any other type of call for service) unless obviously coded wrong (e.g., a 29R is entered but should have been a 131). By utilizing the proper dispositions, the alarms will be assessed, credited or recorded correctly.	
<b>False Alarm Coordinator 321.235.5330</b>	