

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

ORLANDO POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1110.7, FALSE ALARMS

EFFECTIVE DATE:	2/14/2024
RESCINDS:	P&P 1110.6
DISTRIBUTION GROUP:	ALL EMPLOYEES
REVIEW RESPONSIBILITY:	COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION MANAGER
ACCREDITATION STANDARDS:	N/A
RELATED LAWS:	N/A
RELATED POLICIES:	Orlando City Code, Chapter 41
CHIEF OF POLICE:	ERIC D. SMITH

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5. FORMS AND APPENDICES

1. 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.

2. POLICY

This policy provides Orlando Police Department personnel with specific guidelines for.

3. DEFINITIONS

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 a 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 designated 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. An 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.

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.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 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.

4.2 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 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 Alarm Coordinator within 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 Alarm Ordinance and penalties. The 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 Alarm Coordinator will remit reminder letters and contact the property owners. If the invoice remains unpaid, the Orlando Police Department may transfer the invoice to a Collections Agency or 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 Section 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 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 Alarm Coordinator determines that a premises meets the criteria described above, the 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.

4.3 ALARM COORDINATOR'S PROCEDURES

The Alarm Coordinator will be responsible for the following:

- a. Retrieve all alarm incidents from CAD via the CAD Interface to upload into the Alarm Management System.
- b. Collect and review all Orlando Police Department False Alarm Notice forms initiated by patrol.
- c. Provide access to online Citizen Portal for False Alarm Ordinance information and alarm registration management.
- d. Coordinate registration and renewal procedures for all active alarms in the City of Orlando.
- e. Initiate and process false alarm warning letters and invoices to property owners.
- f. Notify property owners of expired registrations and assist with the renewal process.
- g. Communicate with property owners and alarm companies reference repair issues, requests for waivers, or appeals.

- h. Receive invoice payments from property owners and update accounts in the Alarm Management System.
- i. Document payments on the False Alarm Payment spreadsheet and prepare deposit for bank transport.
- j. Deliver the bank deposit for courier pick-up at the Orlando Police Headquarters.
- k. Initiate Reminder Letters and collection calls for past-due accounts.
- l. Work with alarm companies to educate the public on the proper use of alarms and ways to reduce false alarms.
- m. Keep current membership in the Alarm Association of Florida.
- n. Certify and keep current Crime Prevention and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Practitioner designations and conduct security surveys as necessary.
- o. Provide, upon request by alarm companies, a list of false alarm offenders.
- p. Visit sites of problem accounts to assist and mediate with alarm company representatives.
- q. Develop and distribute printed materials regarding false alarms (e.g., brochures, door hangers, etc.)
- r. Work with Neighborhood Watch groups to educate the public on the City Ordinance and recommend procedures to reduce false alarms.

4.4 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 office 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 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 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, hailstorms, 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.

- g. If the officer determines that the alarm location needs immediate follow-up from the Alarm Coordinator due to a lack of property owner response, no emergency contact information, or other issues, the officer will document the information in the narrative of the CAD incident.
- h. If an officer becomes aware that a previous alarm incident that was cleared as a false alarm is an actual burglary, the officer will email the Alarm Coordinator and provide the incident numbers and circumstances.

4.5 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. Desk Operators will update the narrative in CAD at any time there is difficulty in obtaining the information needed from any person on the premises or from any alarm company, such as no business name, contact number, or unit number. 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 update the narrative in CAD advising the location provided is a "bad address".
- e. If an operator becomes aware that a previous alarm incident that was cleared as a false alarm is an actual burglary, the operator will email the Alarm Coordinator and provide the incident numbers and circumstances.

4.6 FISCAL MANAGEMENT SECTION RESPONSIBILITIES

The Fiscal Management Section will be responsible for the following:

- a. Receive payments from the property owners and notify the Alarm Coordinator via email.
- b. Create a DEI spreadsheet and enter payments and deposits, make corrections to revenue category and cost center, as needed, and upload into DEI for Workday.
- c. Create a Journal Entry for payments received by City Hall to move funds to the appropriate cost center.
- d. Deliver bank deposits via courier.
- e. Record bank deposits from bank statement into DEI for processing.

5. FORMS AND APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT A-False Alarm Notice