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OPERATIONS MANUAL
STANDARD INSTRUCTION 01 FIRE SUPPRESSION
SECTION 10 RINGING ALARMS

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TITLE O P E R A T I O N S M A N U A L	STANDARD INSTRUCTION 01		DEPARTMENT F I R E - R E S C U E
SUBJECT FIRE SUPPRESSION: RINGING ALARMS	SECTION 10	PAGE 1 of 6	EFFECTIVE DATE AUGUST 26, 2016

I. PURPOSE

The San Diego Municipal Code contains a Fire and Harmful Gas Emergency Alarms Ordinance. Due to the quantity of incidents and unit hours devoted to this type of response, San Diego Fire-Rescue Department (SDFD) is establishing operations policies that are in compliance with the Municipal Code.

II. SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all SDFD personnel.

III. AUTHORITY

The fire chief authorizes the information within this policy.

IV. DEFINITIONS

As defined by the False Alarm Ordinance.

A. **Alarm User:** A person who possesses or controls an operating fire/harmful gas alarm system, or who occupies, controls, or possesses the building or structure protected by a fire/harmful gas alarm system.

B. **Emergency Situation:** Any circumstance in which there is reason to believe that (1) there is an uncontrolled fire actively burning in or near a building or other structure, (2) there is a concentration of harmful gas in or near a building or other structure, or (3) there is an identifiable risk of harm to a person or property within or near a building or other structure.

C. **False Alarm:** A triggering of a fire/harmful gas alarm system that results in a response by SDFD personnel when an emergency situation does not exist. False alarms include activations caused by mechanical failure, malfunction, accidental tripping, malicious tripping, misuse, or negligent maintenance by a fire/harmful gas alarm business, a fire/harmful gas alarm agent, or the alarm user.

False alarms do not include activations caused by weather conditions, telephone line problems, water surges, water hammers, or any other factor over which the fire/harmful gas alarm business, fire/harmful gas alarm agent, or alarm user do not have direct or indirect control.

D. **False Alarm Ordinance:** As defined by the San Diego Municipal Code, Chapter 5, Division 99: Fire and Harmful Gas Emergency Alarms (see §§55.9901 – 55.9923).

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- E. **Fire Alarm System**: A fire/harmful gas alarm system that is designed to monitor buildings or other structures for emergency situations connected to uncontrolled fires which evokes a SDFD response when the alarm system is triggered.
- F. **Fire/Harmful Gas Alarm System**: Any mechanical or electrical monitoring device capable of giving, signaling, or transmitting a fire or harmful gas emergency alarm that, when triggered, emits a sound or transmits a signal or message that is intended to evoke a response by SDFD. Fire/harmful gas alarm systems include fire alarm systems and harmful gas alarm systems, as well as any other mechanical or electrical monitoring device capable of giving, signaling, or transmitting a fire or harmful gas emergency alarm meant to detect an emergency situation.
- G. **Fire Watch**: A person who is a site-specific guard for the purpose of detecting an emergency situation.
- H. **Responsible Party**: Any person who may be in authority, a home owner, business owner, landlord or tenant.
- I. **Ringling Alarms**: The audible and/or visual signal that is triggered in response to an emergency condition, usually a fire or harmful gas. This alarm may also automatically notify the Emergency Command and Data Center (ECDC), evoking an SDFD response (“Ringling Alarm”) to the alarm location.

V. **POLICY**

A. **Alarm Assignments**

1. If the ECDC receives a notification of a ringing alarm, units will be dispatched according to the response matrix:
 - a. SDFD will dispatch one engine company to all reported non high-rise alarms.
 - b. SDFD will dispatch one engine and one truck company to high-rise ringing alarms.
 - c. When two units are dispatched, officers shall consider reducing the code of the second unit when practical.

B. **False Alarm Notification from ECDC**

1. In the event that the ECDC receives notification of a false alarm, notification will be made to the responding units.
2. The responding unit(s) will cancel their response and go available.
3. The following information is to be documented in computer aided dispatch (CAD) notes by the ECDC dispatcher on false alarm notifications:
 - a. The name or identifying information of the caller
 - b. The status of the alarm
 - c. Cause of the false alarm
 - d. Any action taken

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- e. Any additional information to support the disposition and/or the legal position of SDFD
 4. Ringing alarm incidents will be routinely canceled upon notification and verification by ECDC.
 - a. However, some incidents may need further investigation.
 - b. The responding company may be required to continue to the incident for investigation.
 - c. The officer will have the discretion of reducing the code of the responding unit(s).
 5. Fire captains shall document “No Arrival” in the FireRMS report.
- C. Fire Alarm System Response Procedures
 1. If the mobile data computer (MDC) indicates that a unit is “at scene”, an investigation shall be done.
 2. In situations in which a unit arrives at scene at the same time ECDC states there is a false alarm, the officer should make a note regarding this information in accordance to the reporting guidelines in this Standard Instruction and may go available based on conditions.
 3. It is the responsibility of the officer in charge to investigate all ringing alarms for any active emergency situation.
 4. An investigation shall attempt to determine the cause of the alarm.
 5. If an alarm system is activated by smoke from burned or unattended food, it should be classified as a false alarm. Even though the alarm system is operating as it is designed, the cause of the smoke is controllable and therefore it is to be considered a false alarm.
 6. To help differentiate the smoke from burnt food from an “Emergency Situation” it has been determined, with the City Attorney’s guidance, if an extinguishing agent is applied to the burnt food it should be considered an “Emergency Situation” as defined by the Fire Alarm Ordinance.
 7. An inspection of the alarm system shall be done to ensure the readiness of the system.
 8. If there is any question or uncertainty of an alarm system’s readiness, SDFD personnel shall advise any responsible party of the need for repair by an alarm service or certified technician.
 9. Verified false alarms, in which no emergency situation exists, the company officer shall obtain:
 - a. Responsible party contact information
 - b. Correct address for the incident
 - c. Reason or cause for the alarm
 - d. Actions taken by responsible party and/or SDFD personnel
 - e. Any additional information to support the disposition and/or the legal position of SDFD
 10. When it has been determined that the fire alarm system is unreliable:

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- a. The officer in charge shall notify the responsible party that the system is out of service.
- b. The officer in charge shall require the responsible party to provide a fire watch within 24 hours. A fire watch shall be instituted immediately in the following structures:
 - 1) High life safety hazard structures (hotels, dorms, apartments, etc.)
 - 2) Life risk occupancies (day care, open businesses, etc.)
 - 3) Hospitals and care facilities
 - 4) Schools
 - 5) High-rise buildings
 - 6) R-1 occupancies
- c. The officer in charge shall document in either the mobile data computer (MDC) comments or FireRMS:
 - 1) Fire watch order was given
 - 2) Name and title of the responsible party that the fire watch order was issued to

D. Documentation Procedures

1. Radio notification may be made to ECDC and may include:
 - a. "False alarm" or alarm status
 - b. Cause of the alarm
 - c. Actions taken
 - d. Any additional information to support the disposition and/or the legal position of the Fire-Rescue Department
 - e. The unit's status or availability
2. Documentation in the MDC False Alarm Report Log shall include:
 - a. Any correction to the address, to include the apartment, suite or unit number
 - b. Name and contact information of the responsible party
 - c. Cause of the alarm
 - d. Actions taken
 - e. Any additional information to support the disposition and/or the legal position of the Fire-Rescue Department
3. If an incident is closed prior to completion of the documentation in the MDC, notify ECDC by radio with the required information.
4. Alarm activation door hangers shall be left at the business or residence when no contact was made with a resident or responsible party (see image below).
5. All documentation may be subject to subpoena and legal scrutiny, therefore, utmost care shall be used during the recording of such information.

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6. The alarm permit clerk will verify permit status and track excessive false alarms. Accuracy and verification of the address is vital to accomplish this process.
7. The alarm permit clerk may send False Alarm Addendum Requests (FD-11) to officers requesting additional information on the incident.
8. Reports shall be filed in accordance to Operations Manual Policy Standard Instruction 01 Fire Suppression, Section 14 Incident Reporting Procedures.

Alarm Activation Door Hanger



**ATTENTION
REQUIRED**



**SAN DIEGO
FIRE-RESCUE
DEPARTMENT**

*PLEASE BE NOTIFIED THAT AN ALARM
ACTIVATION OCCURED AT THIS ADDRESS.
AS A RESULT THE SAN DIEGO
FIRE-RESCUE DEPARTMENT RESPONDED
TO INVESTIGATE.*

*SAN DIEGO MUNICIPAL CODE
55.5101-55.5123
(FIRE AND HARMFUL GAS ALARMS)*



**ALARM ACTIVATION
NOTIFICATION**

Front

ALARM NOTICE

An alarm was activated at this location and it was determined that no emergency situation was detected. It is the alarm user's responsibility to determine the cause of the alarm. You may want to contact your alarm company for assistance so you can avoid future false alarms.

If you have not applied for or do not have a valid fire/harmful gas permit; all false alarms are subject to full cost recovery and penalties.

Applications for permits may be obtained online at: <https://pdpermits.sandiego.gov/> or by calling the contact number provided.

Current fire/harmful gas permit holders may be subject to fines on the third (3rd) and subsequent false alarm(s) in a calendar year.

Comments: _____

For Inquiries
contact (619) 531-2250
 or email FireAlarmsClerk@sandiego.gov

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