
THE INFORMANT

Information from Redding Police Department's False Alarm Reduction Coordinator

What's the Difference Between 365 Days and a Year?

Understanding the Distinction

If you've gotten a letter telling you that your alarm system has had one or more false alarms, you may think that once December rolls around you'll be in the clear. This is a common belief, and unfortunately, it's wrong.

The day your system registers its first false alarm, the clock begins to tick. Consider it an anniversary date. If you have your first false alarm on June 1, 2002, it will be on your account until June 2, 2003.

If you have had any other false alarms, they line up behind the first.

When the anniversary date rolls around, that initial incident drops off your account and we no longer count it against you.

At that point, what was #2 becomes #1. And the date of the second incident is now the new anniversary date.

If you continue having false alarms (4+ in 365 days), you could be billed, and you'll have to go ***past the anniversary date of your last false alarm*** without any other incidents before you're back to zero.



The Fees Explained

When You'll Pay What

Now your alarm company is telling you that you could end up getting billed by the city. You're already paying monthly monitoring fees, so what gives?

Once you get your alarm, you get three "freebies." That means that your system can register three false alarms before anyone gets too concerned.

When you reach false alarm #4, it's like you just took a credit card out of your wallet for something that had a price tag on it of \$65. The following week, you hit #5, and bought another item at \$65. This will continue for each alarm you have, and you'll end up with a bill from the Finance Department that will add up each \$65 incident. Just like a credit card company.

If your account accumulates 9 false signals, then starting on incident #10, you'll start paying \$130 *per incident*. The idea behind it being that you're

still requiring a police response on more than your fair share of occasions.

If the false alarm problem still persists, you would run the risk of having your alarm permit revoked. That would defeat the whole purpose of having an alarm, as **police would no longer respond** when your alarm goes off. Is that why you had it installed?

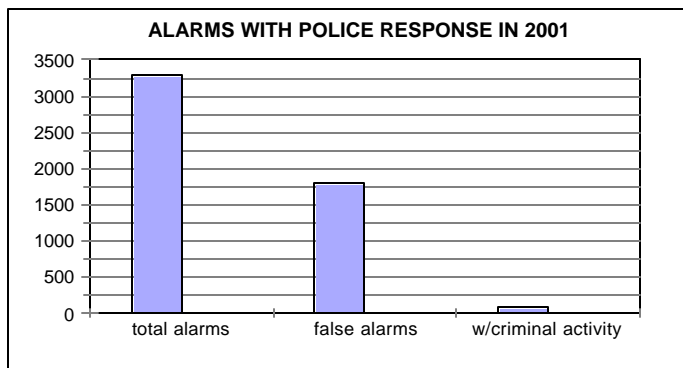


Reality in Redding

How Alarms Add Up Locally

When it comes to false alarms, most people want to know **“what’s the big deal?”** The graph below illustrates the big deal. Last year, the Redding Police Department received over 73,669 calls for service. At least **3,290** of those calls were regarding alarm systems being set off.

Only 89 were determined to have been related to any sort of actual criminal activity!



THAT MEANS 1,807 ALARMS WERE FALSE!

So help us put tax-payer dollars to productive use. Make sure your alarm system is in proper working order, and be certain that everyone who

has access to your alarm knows how to cancel false signals.

On a full shift, there might be about a dozen or so badge-bearing individuals serving Redding’s population of nearly 80,000 people, dealing with an average of about 270 separate incidents every day.

If we get fewer false alarm calls, that means our officers will be able to respond to other calls for service with better response times, keeping our community safer.

Speaking the Same Language

Inside the Cop-Talk

You get a call at 2:00 am telling you your alarm is going off. You stumble out of bed and manage to drag yourself across town to your business, at which time you find the place dark and deserted. When you later receive a letter reprimanding you for another false alarm, you want rightfully to know why you’re being bothered when “the cops didn’t even show up.”

The truth is, if you get a letter, we were there.

You may not see lights and hear sirens, but almost without exception, if a letter arrives to your door, we had at least one officer at your address making sure things were ok.

And if we show up and can’t find something **obviously** wrong (such as an open door, a broken window, a person dressed in black with a loot bag standing inside, etc), the incident will be closed out as a false alarm.

So what exactly **IS** a false alarm? According to the Alarm Ordinance, **“The phrase ‘false alarm’ means the activation of an alarm system which results in a response by the police department where an emergency does not exist.”** And our definition of “emergency”? It’s **“the commission or attempted commission of a robbery or burglary, or other imminent felony...”**

There may be an occasion where you show up on Monday morning, after the alarm went off over the weekend, and you find that somebody has trampled all over the flowers outside your window. Or maybe there's some scratches on your back door.

You may feel that it's up to the police to notice the trampled flowers. And although they might see it, they won't know if you trampled it earlier that afternoon when you pulled the weeds around the daisies, or if it was caused by a prowler.

The next time you get called out in the middle of the night, don't hesitate to take a flashlight with you and check for things like pried doors, damaged screens, or trampled plants. If you find anything like that, ***that's evidence that your alarm probably did it's job.***

If the cops are there with you, bring it to their attention so they can clear the call correctly (which would mean that it wouldn't register as a false alarm). If the police have already left when you find such evidence, call the Alarm Coordinator during the next business day at 225-4291, and we'll get it sorted out.

Protect Your Property

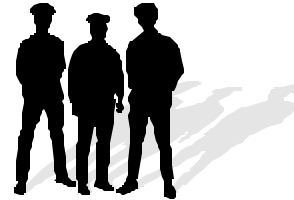
Crime Preventing Tips You Can Put to Use

You've already got an alarm, and that's a big help. But there are other things you can do to safeguard your family and your investments.

- Keep your landscaping neatly maintained. Don't give burglars a place to hide.
- Install motion-detecting lights around your house/business. Would you want a spotlight on you if you were committing a felony?
- Close your garage door, even if you're home. Many residential burglaries occur while people are home, and the stuff in your garage is often easy to carry off.
- Don't hide an extra key outside. If you can figure out where to put it, the bad guys can figure out where you hid it.

- Keep in mind decorative windows around doors are easily broken, and allow access to reach in and unlock the door.
- When you move in, or someone moves out (or is fired from your business), don't just get all the keys. Duplicates are easy and quickly made. Get your locks changed.

For more information, check out RPD's website at www.ci.redding.ca.us.



The Bottom Line

It's What This Whole Thing Is About

The truth is that every alarm is going to be set off from time to time, and we understand that. If everyone does their part and takes reasonable steps to maintain equipment and educate system users, then the number of false alarms will drop.

That's what we're after, and we know you don't want to end up with yet another bill to pay.

If you get a letter from the Police Department, and you feel there has been an error, please call us. Don't wait for the bill. If there's a problem, let's work it out as soon as possible. We'd rather resolve the false alarms than send out bills anyway.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER!

Questions? Call Officer York at 225-4291.