

Fire/Medical Alarms

CHAPTER 8.15

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Revised:

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Purpose:

To provide a uniform guide for responding to, mitigating and reporting fire and medical alarms.

Scope:

The number of monitored alarm systems has increased exponentially. These alarms have a significant impact on operations and through this standard we seek to provide a common understanding to our response and mitigation of these systems.

Every automatic alarm Alachua County Fire Rescue responds to creates a unique set of challenges for emergency responders. Decisions as to actions will remain with the emergency responder and will not be directed through this standard. Risk factors such as potential loss of life and / or loss of property must be weighed against the potential danger to responders, citizens and the preservation of property.

All fire alarm responses will follow this SOG. False Alarm Reduction fees will however apply only to the unincorporated Alachua County.

Definitions:

Medical Alarms.

- 1) Automatic alarms activate when a pre-set trigger point is reached. Common points are fall sensors, timed alarms, dysrhythmia or other medical dependent sensor alarms.
- 2) Manual alarms such as pendant or other alarms usually affixed to a person which require direct action to activate.
- 3) Medical Alarms are not part of the False Alarm Reduction Ordinance and do not require an "F" code for close out.

Fire Smoke or other gas alarms.

- 1) Automatic Alarms are monitored alarms which look for a sensory input for activation. Examples of automatic alarms include smoke, heat, water flow, carbon monoxide and other gas detecting alarms that activate once a preset limit has been reached.
- 2) Manual Alarms include pull stations and call boxes.

False Alarms.

- 1) A false alarm is an activation of a monitored alarm system without an associated emergency.
- 2) A false alarm is not:
 - a) A fire alarm activation due to physical damage to the alarm system such as a lightning strike, other meteorological event or physical damage to the structure.

- b) A fire alarm activation on a property initiated by a permitted fire alarm pull station or other manual alarm system where two or more deterrent systems were in place at the point of activation.

Alarm Operator:

An Alarm Operator means any owner, tenant or other person or entity that uses or is in control of an alarm system.

Alarm System:

Is defined as a monitored system that reports emergencies to first responders via a central station. Stand alone or isolated alarms which are designed to alert inhabitants of the site are not included in alarm systems even when these alarms are interconnected. An alarm must be monitored to be covered in the False Alarm Reduction Ordinance.

Deterrent Systems:

A deterrent system is defined as a physical device designed to prevent malicious or accidental alarm activations. Approved deterrent systems for Alachua County Fire Rescue include: lift-off covers, alarmed covers, breakable covers, and video and/or photo recording devices with signage.

Response to reported alarms:

Alarms which require a human intervention for activation have a significantly increased chance of impact to life and property. The following is a guideline for response to alarms.

- The closest suppression unit will respond “hot” to the emergency scene. All other units will respond “cold” until the first unit arrives and provides an updated response status for incoming units. Responding company officers have the ability to increase the response code of units responding or adding additional units based upon their experience with the premise and information provided by Combined Communications Center (CCC).
- At least one apparatus will arrive and make contact with the alarm operator on all alarms for verification. This includes alarms where the CCC has made voice contact with the owner/key holder and proper pass code has been given.
- Proper alarm verification code must be determined by the on scene unit commander and relayed to CCC.
- After responding to a confirmed false alarm where a key holder did not arrive on scene within 30 minutes, the company officer shall leave written notice at the alarm site that there was a false alarm. The notice shall include the identity of the responder and the date/time of response.
- Alarm systems which are non-functional or are not being repaired should be reported via e-mail to the Alachua County Fire Marshal’s Office.
- It is the expectation of the False Alarm Ordinance Unit that contract stations will close fire alarms out with the appropriate “F” code.

The False Alarm Reduction Unit (FARU) is a cooperative effort between multiple agencies that exists to reduce the number of repeated alarm malfunctions. This program seeks to reduce the number of false alarms through fees associated with multiple alarms each year. To provide information to the FARU, fire suppression units for Alachua County Fire Rescue and its contract

departments utilize an "F" code when closing out responses to fire alarms. Below is a list of the approved "F" codes:

F1 No permit on file

F2 No key holder response.

F3 Contractor Test.

F4 Malicious Activation

F4R Malicious activation with 2 deterrents.

F5 System or detector malfunction

F6 Accidental / unintentional activation

F7 Smoke or other particulates were sensed by the alarm

F8 Citation issued

F9 Smoke detector only

Examples and descriptions of each alarm.

F1 "No permit on file"

Fire Suppression units will not use this classification. This classification will only be used by the FARU.

F2 "No key holder response"

Operators of alarm systems are required to maintain the names, addresses and phone numbers of at least two persons who have access to the premises, the ability to reset the alarm and the ability to respond to the alarm within 30 minutes of being notified. First due companies should remain on scene for 30 minutes to verify this code with the exceptions where other emergency calls require their response.

Each call can only have one "F" Code designation. If a unit has waited the 30 minutes for a key holder or the alarm operator has refused to respond, the unit on scene should close the call out as an F2. Crews should have CCC document in CAD the reasons the call was coded as an F2 as this code will add additional fees to the response.

F3 "Contractor Test"

This code should be utilized when a contractor on site failed to properly put the system on test. If this code is utilized, the company officer should report to CCC the contractor's business name and contact as any resulting fees will likely be billed to the contractor and not the property owner.

F4 "Malicious Activation"

An alarm where someone activated the alarm on purpose without an emergency being present.

F4R "Malicious activation with two or more deterrents"

For company officers to utilize this code two deterrent systems must be in place at the alarm activation point. For example, an alarm cover with an audio signal that activates when the cover is opened is considered two deterrent systems. Both deterrent systems needs to be in working order for this F-code to apply.

F5 "System or detector malfunction"

Alarm automatically activated without cause.

F6 "Accidental / Unintentional malfunction"

Activation due to carelessness or inattention.

F7 "Smoke or other particulates"

In these alarms, the system activated for a reason. Smoke, dust, or particulate matter in the air are all reasons the alarm may activate. This is not an alarm malfunction.

F8 "Citation issued"

Fire Suppression units will not use this classification. This classification will only be used by the FARU.

F9 "Smoke detector only"

These are stand-alone systems which are not monitored by an alarm company.

[Alachua County False Alarm Ordinance \(2018\)](#)