



Policy 816

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ALARM REPORTING AND DOCUMENTAION	
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By Order of the Police Commissioner

POLICY

It is the policy of the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) that all members promptly respond to, investigate, and correctly code any alarm-related call for service.

1. **Alarmed Structures.** This Policy applies only to alarm systems installed in fixed structures such as private dwellings, commercial businesses, banks, and other similar locations.
2. **Vehicle Alarms.** Are not included in this Policy. Members may refer to Article 19, Section 7-2 of the Baltimore City Code for enforcement actions pertaining to vehicle alarms.

DEFINITIONS

False Alarm – Any alarm signal that results in a police response but no evidence is found, after reasonable investigation, of any criminal activity, property damage or medical emergency that would justify a police response. False alarms are coded “ZY.”

NOTE: An alarm in which the officer is dispatched but is canceled by an alarm company or a verifiable home owner prior to the officer’s arrival is not a false alarm and therefore should not be coded a “ZY.”

GENERAL

1. Alarm-related calls for service will be coded in the following manner:
 - 1.1. **“ZY”** – False alarm. See above for the definition of a false alarm.
 - 1.2. **“ZC”** – This code will be used in all instances where the officer is canceled prior to arrival by an alarm company and/or verifiable home owner. Officers should not respond and remain 10-8 in these circumstances. In the unusual event where the officer deems it prudent to respond after being canceled the incident will still be coded “ZC” unless there is a reportable incident requiring an “X Ray.”
 - 1.3. **“X Ray”** – A written report is necessary as there is evidence of criminal activity, property damage at the scene, or a medical emergency.
 - 1.4. **“DN”** – Used when the alarm is activated and after the officer’s response he/she has deemed based on their investigation, that none of the previous categories apply.

REQUIRED ACTION**Member**

1. For all active alarm related calls for service, respond with due caution and regard for officer safety. All alarm calls should be treated as potential police hazards until proven safe.

NOTE: A member of the Department may only code an alarm after arrival at the scene, unless notified by the Communications Unit that the call for service has been canceled. If the alarm company contacts the Communications Unit to cancel the call but the member is already at the scene, the member will code the call "ZY". In all instances where the officer is canceled prior to arrival by an alarm company and/or verifiable home owner, the officer will code the call "ZC." The officer should not respond and should remain 10-8. In the unusual event where the officer deems it prudent to respond after being canceled the incident will still be coded "ZC" unless there is a reportable incident requiring an "X Ray."

2. Conduct a thorough investigation in order to determine the cause of the alarm.
3. Based on the investigation assign the oral code of "ZY", "ZC", "X Ray" or "DN" and complete a written report if "X Ray" is used.
 - 3.1. Complete the appropriate Form 008, "Crime/Incident Report" whenever:
 - 3.1.1. There is evidence of criminal activity, property damage at the scene, or a medical emergency.
 - 3.1.2. Ordered to do so by appropriate authority; or
 - 3.1.3. Written documentation is in the best interests of the member or the Department.
4. Complete a **FALSE ALARM NOTIFICATION SHEET** for all False Alarms. (see Annex A)
 - 4.1. Leave a **FALSE ALARM NOTIFICATION SHEET** in an inconspicuous place like a mailbox or mail slot.
 - 4.2. Note on the run sheet that a **FALSE ALARM NOTIFICATION SHEET** was left at the residence.

APPENDIX

- A. FALSE ALARM NOTIFICATION SHEET

RESCISSION

Remove from files and recycle/destroy Policy 816, *Alarm Reporting and Documentation*, dated 5 March 2015.

COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

This policy is effective on the date listed herein. Commanders are responsible for informing their subordinates of this policy and ensuring compliance.

APPENDIX A

FALSE ALARM NOTIFICATION SHEET

FALSE ALARM NOTIFICATION

Greetings,

On _____ at _____ am/pm a Baltimore Police Officer responded to this address for an alarm activation call. Our investigation at this time has shown this was a false alarm.

We understand that false alarms do happen however they can significantly burden police resources. The BPD will respond to one false alarm activation in a 365-day period without cost. On the second and subsequent responses, the user will be assessed false alarm occurrence fees.

Responding Officer's Name: _____ Sequence #: _____
District: _____ District Phone# _____

Tips for Reducing Alarms:

- Make sure everyone is familiar with the alarm system.
- Secure doors and windows before turning on the system.
- Be aware of changes in the environment such as new animals, design changes, seasonal decorations and plants.
- Notify the monitoring facility of any and all changes (house guest, name changes, new employees and terminations of employees).
- Routinely inspect and maintain alarm equipment. Check all contacts and routinely dust motion detectors where spiders often live.
- Be aware that cleaning and repair crews working on your alarm system may cause false alarms and you, as the alarm user, will be responsible for any false alarm charges.
- Check for drafts that may move curtains for plants or hanging objects.

For additional information regarding the False Alarm Reduction Program, please contact:

False Alarm Reduction Program
417 E. Fayette Street, Room 100
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
410 396-3575
alarmregistration@baltimorecity.gov