

Chapter 3 - ALARM SYSTEMS

ARTICLE I. - IN GENERAL

Secs. 3-1—3-18. - Reserved.

ARTICLE II. - POLICE ALARM SYSTEMS

***Cross reference**—Police, ch. 15.

***State law reference**—Local regulation of alarm company operators authorized, Code of Virginia, § 15.2-911.

Sec. 3-19. - Purpose.

The purpose of this article is to minimize unnecessary use of the county's law enforcement resources by reducing the number of false alarms and regulating the installation and maintenance of alarm systems.

(Code 1980, § 16-9; Code 1995, § 3-1)

Sec. 3-20. - Definitions.

The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this article, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:

Alarm system.

- (1) The term "alarm system" means any device or system that transmits a signal that indicates a hazard or occurrence requiring an emergency response.
- (2) The term "alarm system" shall not include a personal, direct telephonic call requesting emergency services.

Alarm user or user means the occupant of the premises protected by an alarm system.

Answering service means a telephone answering service that receives emergency signals from alarm systems and informs the county public safety communications center.

Automatic dialing device means a device interconnected to a telephone line and programmed to indicate a need for emergency response.

Chief means the chief of police or his designee.

False alarm.

- (1) The term "false alarm" means any alarm signal to the county public safety communications center which is not in response to actual or threatened criminal activity. False alarms include:
 - a. Negligently activated signals;
 - b. Signals due to faulty, malfunctioning or improperly installed or maintained equipment; and
 - c. Signals purposely activated to summon police personnel in nonemergency situations.
- (2) The term "false alarm" shall not include a signal activated by unusually severe weather conditions, utility conditions or other causes which the chief determines were beyond the user's control.

Indirect alarm transmittal means any alarm system which causes a third party or answering service to notify the county public safety communications center of an alarm activation.

Installer means any person who installs, services, monitors, sells or leases any alarm system.

Interconnect means to connect an alarm system to a voice-grade telephone line, either directly or through a mechanical device that utilizes a standard telephone, to transmit an emergency message upon the activation of the alarm system.

Negligently activated signals means signals transmitted due to carelessness or negligence in installation, maintenance or operation of an alarm system.

Nonemergency situations means situations where an immediate response to criminal activity by police personnel is not necessary.

(Code 1980, § 16-10; Code 1995, § 3-2)

Cross reference—Definitions and rules of construction, § 1-2.

Sec. 3-21. - User data form.

Upon installing an alarm system, all users shall submit a county data form to the county public safety communications center with the following information:

- (1) Name and location of the alarmed premises;
- (2) Type of alarmed premises (residential or commercial);
- (3) Normal operating hours, if commercial;
- (4) Individuals designated by the user to respond when notified;
- (5) Manufacturer, model and type of alarm system;
- (6) Name, address and telephone number of the service company;
- (7) Zone of alarm, if applicable; and
- (8) Other applicable information.

(Code 1980, § 16-12; Code 1995, § 3-4)

Sec. 3-22. - Training of persons using system; maintenance of system.

It shall be the responsibility of alarm system users to provide training to employees, tenants or other persons about activation of the alarm system in emergency situations and about proper operation of the alarm system, including setting, activating and resetting the alarm. All instructions about alarm systems and procedures shall be in writing and shall be available for inspection by the chief. The user shall also be responsible for maintaining the alarm system in proper working order.

(Code 1980, § 16-13; Code 1995, § 3-5)

Sec. 3-23. - Automatic dialing devices.

It shall be unlawful for any person to install, sell, lease, use or cause or allow to be installed, sold, leased or used within the county automatic dialing devices or systems which are set or programmed to directly contact the county public safety communications center without the prior approval of the chief.

(Code 1980, § 16-11; Code 1995, § 3-6)

Sec. 3-24. - Deliberate false alarms.

It shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly activate or cause to be activated an alarm system in a nonemergency situation without just cause. This shall not prohibit periodic testing of direct transmittal systems when the county public safety communications center has been notified in advance.

(Code 1980, § 16-14; Code 1995, § 3-7)

Sec. 3-25. - Service fee for false alarms.

(a) *Amount.* Alarm system users shall pay a service fee for false alarms within 30 days of billing. The service fee shall be assessed for each false alarm during a 180-day period as follows:

- (1) First false alarm: No charge.
- (2) Second false alarm: \$15.00.
- (3) Third false alarm: \$25.00.
- (4) Fourth false alarm: \$35.00.
- (5) Fifth false alarm: \$50.00.
- (6) Sixth false alarm: \$75.00.

(b) *Exceptions.* Service fees shall not be charged for false alarms from alarm systems in premises owned, leased, occupied or under the control of the United States, the state, political subdivisions of the state, or any of their officers, agents or employees while they are acting or are employed in their official capacity. However, all other requirements of this article shall apply to such systems.

(c) *Billing.* At the end of each month, the chief shall notify the director of finance of service fee assessments for false alarms. The chief shall provide the name of the alarm system user, the address of the false alarm, and the amount due for the false alarm. The director of finance shall bill the user and notify the chief when any account is more than 30 days in arrears.

(Code 1980, §§ 16-15—16-17; Code 1995, § 3-8)

Sec. 3-26. - Termination and reinstatement of police response.

(a) The chief shall notify an alarm user whose account is more than 30 days in arrears that the division of police shall not respond to further alarm transmittals until the amount in arrears and a reinstatement fee is paid to the county.

(b) After seven false alarms have been transmitted during a 180-day period, the chief shall notify the alarm user that the division of police will not respond to alarm transmittals from the premises until service is reinstated. Police response shall not be reinstated until a licensed alarm company has inspected the alarm system and certifies that the system has been repaired and is operating correctly. The cost of inspection, repair and certification shall be paid by the alarm user.

(c) If the false alarm occurred because of negligence rather than mechanical failure, the user, its employees and all others having access to the alarm system shall complete a training program satisfactory to the chief.

(d) In all cases where police response has been terminated, the alarm user shall pay a \$100.00 fee for reinstatement of service.

(Code 1980, §§ 16-15, 16-17; Code 1995, § 3-9)

Secs. 3-27—3-55. - Reserved.**ARTICLE III. - FIRE ALARM SYSTEMS**

*Cross reference—False fire alarms, § 11-7.

***State law reference**—Local regulation of alarm company operators authorized, Code of Virginia, § 15.2-911.

Sec. 3-56. - Purpose.

The purpose of this article is to minimize unnecessary use of the county's emergency services by reducing the number of false alarms and regulating the installation and maintenance of alarm systems.

(Code 1980, § 10-23; Code 1995, § 3-21)

Sec. 3-57. - Definitions.

The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this article, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:

Alarm system.

- (1) The term "alarm system" means any device or system that transmits a signal that indicates a hazard or occurrence requiring an emergency response.
- (2) The term "alarm system" shall not include a personal, direct telephonic call requesting emergency services.

Alarm user or user means the occupant of the premises protected by an alarm system.

Answering service means a telephone answering service that receives emergency signals from alarm systems and informs the county public safety communications center.

Automatic dialing device means a device interconnected to a telephone line and programmed to indicate a need for emergency response.

Chief means the fire chief or his designee.

False alarm.

- (1) The term "false alarm" means any alarm signal to the county public safety communications center which is not in response to an actual or possible emergency. False alarms include:
 - a. Negligently activated signals;
 - b. Signals due to faulty, malfunctioning or improperly installed or maintained equipment; and
 - c. Signals purposely activated to summon fire personnel in nonemergency situations.
- (2) The term "false alarms" shall not include signals activated by unusually severe weather conditions, utility conditions or other causes which the chief determines were beyond the user's control.

Indirect alarm transmittal means any alarm system which causes a third party or answering service to notify the county public safety communications center of an alarm activation.

Installer means any person who installs, services, monitors, sells or leases any alarm system.

Interconnect means to connect an alarm system to a voice-grade telephone line, either directly or through a mechanical device that utilizes a standard telephone, to transmit an emergency message upon the activation of the alarm system.

Negligently activated signals means signals transmitted due to carelessness or negligence in installation, maintenance or operation of an alarm system.

Nonemergency situations means situations where an immediate response by fire personnel is not necessary to protect life or property.

(Code 1980, § 10-24; Code 1995, § 3-22)

Cross reference—Definitions and rules of construction, § 1-2.

Sec. 3-58. - User data form.

Upon installing an alarm system, all users shall submit a county data form to the county public safety communications center with the following information:

- (1) Name and location of the alarmed premises;
- (2) Type of alarmed premises (residential or commercial);
- (3) Normal operating hours, if commercial;
- (4) Individuals designated by the user to respond when notified;
- (5) Manufacturer, model and type of alarm system;
- (6) Name, address and telephone number of the service company;
- (7) Zone of alarm, if applicable; and
- (8) Other applicable information.

This requirement shall not be applicable to single-unit heat and smoke detectors four or less in number.

(Code 1980, § 10-26; Code 1995, § 3-24)

Sec. 3-59. - Training of persons using system; maintenance of system.

It shall be the responsibility of alarm system users to provide training to employees, tenants or other persons about activation of the alarm system in emergency situations and about proper operation of the alarm system, including setting, activating and resetting the alarm. All instructions about alarm systems and procedures shall be in writing and shall be available for inspection by the chief. The user shall also be responsible for maintaining the alarm system in proper working order.

(Code 1980, § 10-27; Code 1995, § 3-25)

Sec. 3-60. - Automatic dialing devices.

It shall be unlawful for any person to install, sell, lease, use or cause or allow to be installed, sold, leased or used within the county automatic dialing devices or systems which are set or programmed to directly contact the county public safety communications center without the prior approval of the chief of police.

(Code 1980, § 10-25; Code 1995, § 3-26)

Sec. 3-61. - Deliberate false alarms.

It shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly activate or cause to be activated an alarm system in a nonemergency situation without just cause. This shall not prohibit periodic testing of direct transmittal systems when the county public safety communications center has been notified in advance.

(Code 1980, § 10-28; Code 1995, § 3-27)

State law reference—False alarms, Code of Virginia, § 18.2-212(A).

Sec. 3-62. - Service fee for false alarms.

(a) Amount. Alarm system users shall pay a service fee for false alarms within 30 days of billing. The service fee shall be assessed for each false alarm during a 180-day period as follows:

- (1)** First false alarm: No charge.
- (2)** Second false alarm: \$15.00.
- (3)** Third false alarm: \$25.00.
- (4)** Fourth false alarm: \$35.00.
- (5)** Fifth false alarm: \$50.00.
- (6)** Sixth and subsequent false alarms: \$75.00.

(b) Exceptions. Service fees shall not be charged for false alarms from alarm systems in premises owned, leased, occupied or under the control of the United States, the state, political subdivisions of the state, or any of their officers, agents or employees while they are acting or are employed in their official capacity. However, all other requirements of this article shall apply to such systems.

(c) Billing; interest on unpaid charges. At the end of each month, the chief shall notify the director of finance of service fee assessments for false alarms. The chief shall provide the name of the alarm system user, the address of the false alarm, and the amount due for the false alarm. The director of finance shall bill the user and notify the chief when any account is more than 30 days in arrears. Any account more than 30 days in arrears shall be subject to interest at the legal rate provided by the Code of Virginia, commencing when the account is more than 30 days in arrears.

(Code 1980, §§ 10-29—10-31; Code 1995, § 3-28)