

FINES AND PENALTIES

In an attempt to curtail the associated issues that false alarms pose, Lower Macungie Township has changed their false alarm ordinance. In short, this new ordinance carries a per occurrence fine of \$150 (simple residential) and \$300 (commercial / complex residential) for allowing more than 1 false alarm in a 6 month period. The fine is in addition to any costs associated by the district judge for citation processing. Lower Macungie Township receives a copy of all fire reports and the penalty is issued by the Township, not the fire department. Contact Lower Macungie Township for all details concerning this ordinance.

EXCEPTION - Due to the danger that CO poses, no penalty will be levied for false CO activations. It is expected that if a CO detector malfunctions, it will be replaced by the home owner / business immediately to prevent further false activations.

For more information about the Lower Macungie Fire Department, please call 610-965-7797 or visit our website at:
www.firestation30.org

Fire Prevention & Safety Is Everyone's Responsibility!

Lower Macungie Fire Department

P.O. Box 3002
Wescosville, PA. 18106
Non-Emergency (610)398-0996
info@firestation30.org

Emergency Calls: 911
www.firestation30.org



Lower Macungie Fire Department
UNDERSTANDING FIRE ALARM
SYSTEMS AND HOW THEY WORK

Every year approximately 30% of over the 500 emergency fire dispatches that occur Township wide are false alarms. This large volume of unnecessary calls is not only taxing to the members of the volunteer fire departments, but it also puts them at risk during the response. These concerns are in addition to the unnecessary financial cost associated with these types of responses. This pamphlet is intended to educate as to what fire alarms are and how they work.

OVERVIEW

Fire alarms are very important life safety devices and can be found just about everywhere. One type or another is required in everything from homes to commercial buildings. They are designed to be an early warning device that a fire and or smoke is present. In addition, modern day installations are also “hard wired”. This means that the detector is plugged in to a continuous power source and they all work together as a network, so if one activates they all will sound.

THE TYPES OF WARNING DEVICES
CONSIST OF:

- 1) **Smoke Detectors:** these are the most common device. They detect smoke, which is a product of something that is burning. They can also activate due to steam, dust and lack of maintenance.
- 2) **Heat Detectors:** these types of detectors are often found where a light smoke condition may be normal and smoke detectors are not a reasonable option; such as in a kitchen or garage areas. These detectors activate when the temperature at the detector reaches a predetermined point.
- 3) **Carbon Monoxide (CO) Detectors:** these detectors activate when CO levels are detected. CO is an odorless, tasteless and colorless gas that can be FATAL.
- 4) **Water Flow Detectors:** these detectors are found in buildings that have sprinkler systems. They activate when a change in either air or water pressure is detected.

Understand that your home/business may have one or more types of the above detectors. In addition it is also possible to have detectors that monitor a combination of things, like smoke and CO. It is important that you know specifically the type and location of the detectors that are in your home / business and have an understanding of what they activate for.

PREVENTING FALSE ALARMS

Fire alarms are very important safety devices and as such, it is important to have an understanding of how they work and what you need to do to keep them working properly. Following the manufacturers recommendation for service and replacement will help keep false alarm responses to a minimum. There are a variety of reasons why a detector falsely activates and although this list is not all inclusive, over the years these have been the main reasons:

- 1) **Changing batteries** without notifying the alarm company.
- 2) **Testing of the system / detectors** without notifying the alarm company.
- 3) **Burnt food.**
- 4) **Mistaking a low battery alarm for an activation.**
- 5) **Repair work;** detectors do not know the difference between dust, dirt and steam. Notify your alarm company if you are having work done at your home/business.
- 6) **Lack of maintenance:** much like an automobile, alarm systems need to be serviced regularly, typically on an annual basis. Follow the manufacturer’s recommendation for service and / or detector replacement.
- 7) **Lack of understanding:** knowing how the system works and why a detector activates are important. Read the instructions that came with your detector / alarm system so you know the difference between an activation due to a smoke, fire and or CO condition and a detector or system trouble indication; such as a low battery warning beep.

FIRE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

Upon dispatch the fire department is obligated to respond. Although no smoke or fire may be present, It is important to leave the alarm activated so that we can determine which detector went off. Once on scene, we will do a visual inspection and try to determine the problem. Typically, we look to see which detector is acting differently from the others and traditionally the sensing light will stay solid on the activated detector where with the other detectors that will not be the case. Once we find the detector that had the malfunction we can advise you and you are expected to have the system serviced and / or the detector replaced.

In the case of carbon monoxide (CO) detector activations, we ask that you leave the house / business immediately. CO is colorless, odorless and tasteless and exposure to CO can be FATAL.

In addition, provided every one can evacuate, we ask that you leave all windows down and all doors closed. The fire department will respond with special metering equipment and test the air quality for CO. If the doors and windows to the home / business are open and fresh air is allowed to enter, then our meters will not pick up any potential CO and we will be unable to tell if a CO problem exists.

REMINDER - only keep windows and doors shut if EVERYONE has been evacuated and do not do anything that will put you in harm’s way.