

January 28, 2023

Bulletin 2023-001-FI

Silencing of Fire Alarm

Treat Every Alarm as an Emergency

In every instance, if an alarm sounds, all building staff and occupants should react as through it is a real emergency. Refer to your building's Fire Safety Plan for emergency procedures which should be readily available to all occupants. Fire alarm systems provide the important function of warning occupants of a possible fire in the building. While false alarms may occur, it is essential that the alarm be heeded and the absence of an emergency be verified. Vancouver Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) recommends that silencing or resetting alarms be done only after the fire department has arrived and evaluated the situation.



Silencing or Acknowledging Alarms

An alarm silencing or acknowledging ("ACK") provision is present in most fire alarm systems. Activating this will disable the audible devices and they will NOT automatically re-initiate in a genuine fire situation. They may only be re-initiated manually in most newer alarm systems. Premature silencing or acknowledging of alarm systems has resulted in fire deaths. Because of this you are reminded that a civil liability could exist in any emergency where premature silencing or acknowledging results in injury.

Resetting Alarm Systems

Resetting an alarm system will return it to a normal status. In the event of a continued fire situation, it will again detect and sound the alarm. In the event of a false alarm problem, resetting the alarm will both silence the audible signal and return the panel to normal status. Valuable alarm panel information may be lost if it is not recorded prior to resetting; this can include the location of the problem. A faulty device responsible for a false alarm cannot be located if the system has been reset. Continued operation of a faulty fire alarm system may result in false alarm fees charged to the building owner or occupier of the premises.

VFRS asks that you not reset the alarm system until after fire personnel have arrived. This will enable them to work with you and determine the location of the problem. When a system has been reset before arrival of VFRS, it could also mean that firefighters will have to check the entire building, rather than a single zone, to ensure the absence of fire. This will result in their being out of service, unable to respond to other emergencies.

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**** We Save Lives and Build Safer Communities through Fire Prevention Inspections, Education and Partnerships ****