



Safety Technology International, Inc.

7 Reasons to Reduce False Fire Alarms

False fire alarms continue to be a problem for the fire service, businesses, and the public. Most buildings often indicate false fire alarms are among their biggest fire safety challenges.

U.S. fire departments responded to 2,238,000 false fire alarms in 2012 (National Fire Protection Association, 2013). In 2009, fire departments responded to 16 false alarms for every 10 fires.

Those numbers are unacceptable. False fire alarms cause disruptions and put lives in danger when a real alarm is ignored.

Here are seven important reasons to reduce false fire alarms:

Reason 7. **Cry Wolf Syndrome** – To cry wolf is to sound an alarm frequently when nothing wrong is occurring. If a false fire alarm is regularly sounding, people become unconcerned and do not heed the threat against their safety. This could cause them to not evacuate a building that is on fire and put them in grave danger when a real alarm sounds.

Reason 6. **Lost Revenue** – If a false alarm is activated, a building must be evacuated. This causes loss of productivity from employees/staff/students, or possible shortfall in retail sales from customers that can never be regained. The building owner may also incur a charge from a municipality for the expense of the fire department responding to a false alarm when they were needed somewhere else.

Reason 5. **Disruption** – False alarms cause unnecessary disruption to business effectiveness, efficiency, profitability, and services. When a building is cleared, the potential of students/patients/employees/staff/customers losing focus, or wandering off, is increased.

Reason 4. **Inconveniencing the Fire Department** – The fire department is detrimental to public safety. If they are responding to a false alarm, they are unavailable to help in a real fire, emergency, or rescue situation. This may come at the expense of a lost life, lost reaction time, endangerment to the responders, or prevent department resources from arriving on a scene where they are legitimately needed. It also places a considerable drain on the fire authority's resources, and disrupts other activities such as training and community fire safety work.

Reason 3. **Unnecessary Risk and/or Panic** – A false call puts the lives of brave

emergency responders at further risk, and creates the possibility of fatalities resulting from traffic accidents while rigs rush to attend false alarms. It also causes panic on the road or in a building, which can lead to unnecessary injuries or health issues.

Reason 2. **Causes Complacency** – Some departments report they still respond to one or two false fire alarms a day. False calls tie up valuable resources and in some cases, cause a sense of complacency that will eventually cost lives. If people become desensitized to fire alarms—because so many are being called unjustly—they may not react, putting their lives, and the lives of others, in danger. This reduces the confidence of the general public, which is dangerous.

The Number 1 Reason. **Communities Depend On You** – Become a better community member because it is the conscious thing to do. Display respect towards society and authorities by not pulling false fire alarms, reporting any suspicious activity, and leading by example. Children, teenagers, and even adults, are always watching, learning, and imitating others' actions. If you set a high standard hopefully they will imitate, and will teach someone, who passes it on to another, and so on. Always think about your safety and the safety of the people around you, just as you hope other individuals are equally as considerate.

One way to accomplish reducing false fire alarms—and sometimes completely eliminate them—is with STI's protective polycarbonate covers. Their unique cover fits over manual pull stations and has helped stop false fire alarms around the world for over 35 years, without restricting legitimate alarms. When the cover is lifted to gain access to the actual alarm, a piercing warning horn sounds. Immediate attention is drawn to the area and the prankster will either run or be caught before a false alarm is pulled.

Praise for the Stopper II® protective cover:

“I have recommended the installation of STI Stopper II covers over manual pull stations to prevent false fire alarms in remote areas of schools in our area as well as in restaurants. An even bigger problem has been in school gyms where we recommended installing them to protect devices from flying basketballs. The STI Stopper IIs have proved to be very effective!”

Steve P. Edwards
Former Fire Chief
Orleans Fire/Rescue Department

“I recommended the use of the STI Stopper II in both an elementary school and in a local

community center. In both cases it was kids activating manual pull stations as a prank. Stopper II solved the problem in both places.

“Stopper II is great because it does two things. First it protects the manual pull station from accidental damage and so forth. Second, the pre-alarm prevents kids and [anyone] else from pulling false fire alarms and getting away with it.”

Aaron Markham
Fire Chief
Sunnyside Fire Department