

# MANAGING FALSE FIRE ALARMS

Preventing false fire alarms  
is your responsibility.



False fire alarms cause unnecessary emergency responses and impact DFES' emergency services resource capability.

**False fire alarms are generally attributed to three main causes:**

- 01** ➤ Inadequate maintenance/poor house keeping
- 02** ➤ Alarm activations due to inappropriate activities and behaviour
- 03** ➤ Poor system design and/or installation

It is important to identify the real causes of the false alarms before implementing any "quick fix" solution.

**Below are some of the most typical reasons for activations and some strategies which may help in addressing them.**

## ➤ Inadequate maintenance/poor house keeping

### **Is the maintenance of the fire alarm system adequate?**

- Understand your fire alarm system.
- Ensure your fire alarm system is tested and maintained to the relevant Standards by your fire alarm contractor.
- Put into test mode or isolate before working on the fire alarm system.
- Engage an expert to inspect and identify issues causing recurrent false fire alarms and propose solutions e.g. fire service contractor, architect, builder or fire engineer.
- Where required, engage a fire engineer for approval of changes to the fire alarm system. A building surveyor may also be required if the changes affect the building's Occupancy Certificate.
- Your contractor must submit a C8 form to DFES for approval prior to any fire alarm system changes.
- Ensure detectors are cleaned regularly by your fire alarm contractor.
- Ensure the building is well maintained and is not impacted by weather (leaks may trigger false alarms).

For more information visit [dfes.wa.gov.au](https://dfes.wa.gov.au)



**DFES**  
Department of Fire &  
Emergency Services

## ➤ Alarm activations due to inappropriate activities and behaviours

### Is there a management plan in place to reduce false fire alarms?

- Maintain a detailed log of false fire alarm activations to identify causes i.e. occupant behaviour vs system related.

### Induction of tradespeople.

- Ensure workers and contractors notify you when they are on site. Fire alarm zones should be isolated during works so dust, fumes, spraying or steam cleaning don't set off alarms.
- Have a good on-site works management plan.
- Cover smoke detectors during building renovations/maintenance e.g. painting or dusting (never use duct tape to cover detectors).
- Allow the air to clear after work is completed before de-isolating fire alarm zones.

### Are smoke detectors too close to bathrooms, kitchen cooking areas or steam outlets?

- Ensure correct type of detectors are installed in kitchen and bathroom areas (smoke vs heat).
- Consider relocating stove and toast utilities i.e. not directly under a smoke detector.
- Is ventilation in the bathroom adequate? Does it allow air to circulate and reduce steam build-up?
- Consider fitting self-closing door mechanisms on bathroom doors.

- Ensure bathroom light switches automatically turn on extraction fans.

- Upgrade exhaust fans.

### Can false alarms caused by malicious or accidental behaviour be managed?

- Install sounder covers over Manual Call Points (MCPs). For more information speak to your fire alarm contractor.
- Install anti-tamper devices on hydrants.

### Can behaviours which cause false alarms be managed?

- Display posters with instructions to prevent false alarms to alert occupants that steam, cooking fumes, fly sprays and deodorants can set off the fire alarm.
- Enforce no smoking rules and inform occupants smoking can set off smoke alarms.
- Ensure the premises is signed with NO VAPING as well as NO SMOKING.
- Ensure staff are aware of the location of smoke detectors and don't place urns or hot food under them.
- Check toaster settings prior to use and do not walk away while the toaster is in use.
- Encourage occupants to use roll-on instead of aerosol deodorants (e.g. in student accommodation).

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## ➤ Poor system design and/or installation

### Is the buildings fire alarm system compatible with the building and the environment?

- Has the floor plan or use of the building changed since the fire alarm system was originally installed?
- Alter the building design or layout where inadequate ventilation management exists.
- Relocate mirrors from beneath detectors to reduce activations due to hair sprays and aerosols.

- Ensure the fire alarm system is upgraded to optimum standards, like many other parts of a building, the fire alarm system needs to be replaced and upgraded over time.
- Modifying the fire alarm system is the least favoured solution, however may be the only solution in some cases. Consult with your fire alarm contractor, fire engineer and/or building surveyor for this option. On their advice a building permit may also be required for the works.