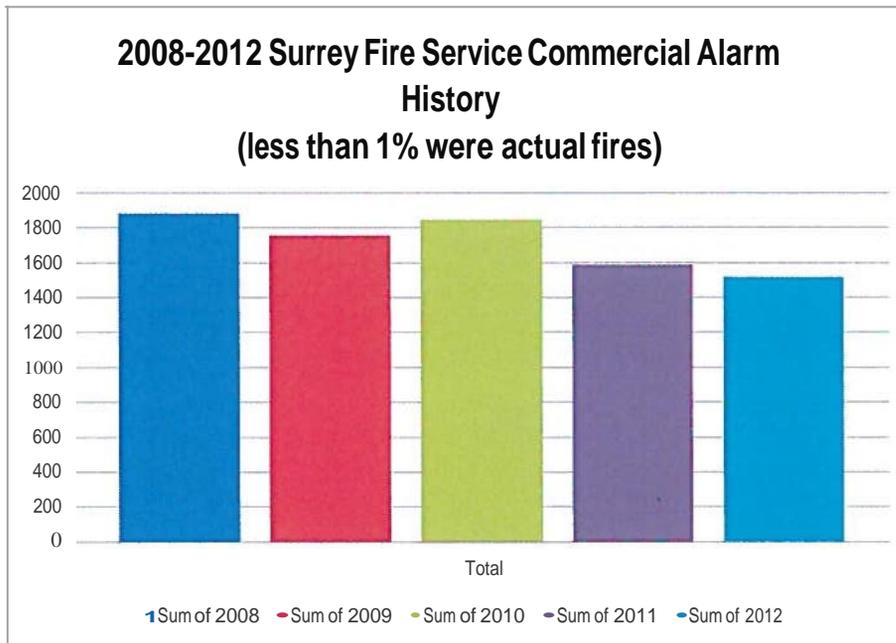


An Important Message from the Surrey Fire Service.

During the past 5 years the Surrey Fire Service has responded to over 8500 activations of commercial fire alarm systems. Less than 1% were actual fires. Unnecessary responses divert resources away from real emergencies, and building occupants may begin to become complacent towards a fire alarm which could potentially have serious consequences. False Fire Alarms can also result in missed business opportunities and lower productivity.



**False Fire Alarms Are Preventable!**

Attached please find an information sheet on False Fire Alarms. Please read the information and take the necessary steps to help prevent future false fire alarms. Simple routine maintenance and a proactive attitude towards false alarms can go a long ways towards alleviating the problem.

It is important to know that **working smoke alarms** have been demonstrated to **save lives, reduce** fire related **injury**, reduce the spread of fires, and reduce the **damage** caused by fire. If you are having problems with continuing false alarms please contact our Fire Prevention Branch and we will try to assist you in resolving the issue.

The Surrey Fire Service is dedicated to making Surrey a safer place to be, engaging businesses to do their part in reducing False Fire Alarms is one step in helping us create a safer city.

Thank you for your cooperation in reducing False Fire Alarms

Assistant Chief Steve Robinson

604-543-6707

# Nuisance Fire Alarms

## Common reasons for false fire alarms

**Dust** - Dust can build up on smoke detectors either on the outside cover or the sensor and can increase the probability of false alarms. Use the brush attachment on your vacuum to clean the smoke alarms regularly.

**Steam**- Steam can also cause the detector to activate, ensure that your smoke alarms/detectors are placed at least 3 meters away from sources of steam. (bathrooms, laundry rooms etc.). Ionization type smoke alarms are more susceptible to humidity related alarms

**Cooking**- Ensure your smoke alarm/detector is at least 6 meters away from cooking appliances.

**Insects**- Insects can get inside your smoke alarm/detectors and cause false alarms. Good housekeeping helps keep insects at bay by reducing available food supplies. If you have ongoing insect problems contact a pest control company.

**Inadvertent Pull Station Activation** - Sometimes fire alarm pull stations are mistakenly pulled as people may think the device is for other uses. Other times the pull stations are pulled maliciously. Guards can be purchased that may it more difficult to accidentally activate the pull station and warning labels may also be used.

**Age of detector** - Smoke alarms/detectors generally have a life span of 10 years, replace outdated smoke alarms/detectors as required by the manufacturers recommendations but at least every 10 years.

**Construction/Renovations**- When doing construction or renovations around smoke alarms/detectors ensure the detectors are covered to prevent triggering a false alarm and to prevent dust from accumulating inside the detector. If covers are used ENSURE THE COVERS ARE REMOVED AFTER THE WORK IS COMPLETED.

## Why can smoke alarms go into alarm when no smoke is present?

Any of these situations can cause unwanted alarms:

- **Cover or Sensor Chamber is Covered by Dust or Dirt:** Alarms may look clean, but dust can accumulate inside the cover, especially in newly built homes. Gently vacuum smoke alarms regularly using the soft brush attachment. Be sure electricians install the provided dust cover to keep alarm clean during construction.
- **Insects Covered or Clogged the Sensor Chamber:** Clean the smoke alarm with the soft brush attachment on your vacuum.
- **Alarm was Triggered from Another Part of the Home:** In a system of interconnected AC or AC/DC alarms, the unit triggering the alarm is in another part of the home - smoke may be present, but you can't see it.
- **Power Interruptions to AC/DC Smoke Alarms:** Smoke alarms may alarm briefly when power is interrupted, then restored. Power interruptions are common in areas where utility companies switch grids in the early hours of the morning.
- **A Loose Electrical Connection on AC or AC/DC Smoke Alarms:** In AC or AC/DC smoke alarms, a loose hot wire connection can intermittently disconnect power to the smoke alarm. The effect is the same as a power failure. When power is restored, the units may alarm briefly. Note: A loose or disconnected neutral wire may cause the alarm to chirp or go into alarm. For residential applications, connecting stranded 18 AWG wire from the smoke alarm to solid 14 AWG wire can be difficult. Be sure wire is making a reliable connection. Use a qualified electrician.
- **When the Furnace is Turned on for First Use:**
  - o Oil and residue is present on and in furnaces and ductwork from the factory to protect the metal surfaces. This can cause smoke to be emitted for a period of time and possibly set off smoke alarms.
  - o Dirt, drywall dust and construction debris is often present in ductwork. First use of the furnace can cause fine particles to be blown through the house possibly causing nuisance alarms. This is why the homeowner may be in the house for several months without incident and why nuisance alarms tend to increase during the Fall.
- **Humidity:** Ionization smoke alarms are more susceptible to nuisance alarms when placed near a bathroom or other potentially high humidity area.
- **Near Cold Air Returns:** Smoke alarms placed near a cold air return are more susceptible to nuisance alarms because dusty air can be blown through the alarm sensing chamber.
- **Smoke Alarm May Need to be Relocated:** If possible, install smoke alarms at least 20 feet from appliances like furnaces and ovens, which produce combustion particles. Alarms should be at least 10 feet from high humidity areas like showers and laundry rooms, and at least 3 feet from heat/AC vents and fluorescent lights whenever possible. In areas where a 20-foot (6 meter) distance is not possible - in modular, mobile, or smaller homes, for example - it is recommended the Smoke Alarm be placed as far from these fuel-burning sources as possible. The placement recommendations are intended to keep these Alarms at a reasonable distance from a fuel-burning source, and thus reduce "unwanted" alarms. Unwanted alarms can occur if a Smoke Alarm is placed directly next to a fuel-burning source. Ventilate these areas as much as possible.