

**PHOENIX REGIONAL  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

**EMERGENCY ACCESS KEY USAGE AND FIRE ALARMS**

**M.P. 202.19A**

**11/19-N**

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**PURPOSE:**

This procedure is intended to provide guidelines for usage of the high-security emergency access key and determination of a course of action when dealing with activated fire alarms.

**POLICY:**

If an emergency access device is present, fire companies should utilize that device to access the premises during emergency situations. Emergency access devices include: key boxes, preemption or opticom detectors, key switches, and fire department pad-locks.

When responding to fire alarm indications, fire companies should size up the situation; if a key box is present, fire companies should utilize the key box to access the property.

**DEFINITIONS:**

Emergency Access Keys are defined as those keys that allow access to buildings or equipment as required by the Fire Code.

False alarm is defined as any activation of an alarm system because of human, mechanical, lack of maintenance, negligent or electrical error.

**PROCEDURE:**

1. The first arriving unit shall do a size up to determine if a visible emergency exists (water, smoke, or flames visible).
  - a. Look for a red bell on the outside of the building. If the bell is ringing, water is very likely to be flowing out of the fire sprinkler system.
2. Formally establish command when appropriate (see M.P. 201.01 Command Procedures).
3. If a visible emergency situation exists, take appropriate actions for the type of occupancy involved.
4. If no visible emergency exists, request that the Alarm Room verify with the alarm company that a responsible party has been contacted and is responding.
5. Check the premise for a key box. If key box is present and has functional key inside, access the building.
  - a. If a key box is not present or functional keys to access the building are not provided, fire companies should determine if forcible entry is necessary based on size up. These decisions are made on a case-by-case basis and are founded on protecting property. The Fire Department will not be held liable for damages as a result of not forcing entry or forcing entry if a key box or functional keys are not provided.
  - b. Proceed to the Fire Alarm Control Panel to determine the status of the alarm system and indicate possible reasons for the fire alarm activation (alarm, trouble, or zone). Also, this will assist with identifying the location(s) of the alarm system device(s) that may be causing the alarm.

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6. While a systematic investigation of the premises is taking place to determine the device(s) that activated the system, the Fire Alarm Control Panel can be silenced if a switch exists to do so, but under no circumstance should the panel reset button be pushed at this time.
  - a. If water, smoke, or flames are found during the investigation take appropriate action for the occupancy involved.
7. If after the investigation has been completed and a determination of what caused the system to activate cannot be found, allow the alarm system to remain in silence mode until the emergency contact person responsible for the occupancy resets the system.
8. If it has been determined that a pull station was inadvertently activated and there are no other devices activated, firefighters may reset the pull station if possible and the alarm system.
9. If the emergency contact person is not responding or has extended ETA, firefighters may reset the system and go back in service. We cannot have fire companies unavailable on calls where no indication of an emergency exists.
  - a. The company officer should relay the alarm conditions to the building occupants if present.
10. False alarms should be recorded in the FIR system so that appropriate billing and follow up can occur. The company officer should complete all appropriate fields in the FIR and submit it within the same shift. False alarms should be categorized in one of the following four incident types:
  - a. Alarm system sounded due to malfunction
  - b. Smoke detector activation due to malfunction
  - c. Sprinkler activation due to malfunction
  - d. Extinguishing system activation due to malfunction
11. If at any time fire companies require assistance or if there was a fire protection system activation, contact C99 via the Alarm Room. An example of a fire protection system activation is a fire sprinkler flowing water in the building.

**OPERATIONAL INFORMATION:**

Selecting one of the incident types for false alarm reporting will automatically generate a report to the Phoenix Police Department Code Enforcement Unit (PDCEU). The Police Department handles all warning letters, billing and collections as outlined in the City of Phoenix Code. Standard residential smoke detectors that are not monitored by a third-party company are not subject to any fee but should still be reported with the above incident types for tracking and customer service follow-up.

Fire Prevention (FP) provides a follow-up inspection in occupancies that have had ten false alarms reported in any 365-day period. The notification to FP that an occupancy has had ten alarms is automatically generated when the appropriate incident type is recorded in the FIR system. Fire Prevention can provide in-person follow-up with the occupancy owner earlier if requested by the company officer by contacting Fire Prevention at (602) 262-6771.

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Smoke detector activation is typically indicated by a L.E.D. located on the smoke detector that remains constantly illuminated. In some cases, the L.E.D. flashes rapidly when the smoke detector is activated. Compare all smoke detector devices to assist in determining if the detector is activated or not.

Heat (thermal) detectors have no visible means of determining if they are activated.

Pull stations will typically have the activation lever pulled down or out to indicate activation. Some pull station devices that have glass rods will have the broken rod lying on the floor beneath the pull station.