

January 17, 2009

**Middletown Township Fire Department – National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS)
Reference: Reporting Category 700 False Alarms and False Calls January 17, 2009**

In response to questions regarding what constitutes a “false alarm” please allow me to explain how these incidents are reported.

The National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) formatting is prescribed by the United States Fire Administration (USFA). The NFIRS reporting format is consistent with the National Fire Protection Association Standard 901, "Uniform Coding for Fire Protection" 2001 version. The current version of NFIRS, version 5.0, was released in January 1999. NFIRS 5.0 expands the collection of data beyond fires to include the full range of fire department activity on a national scale.

The basic module (NFIRS-1) is where the Incident Type data is gathered and is classified as follows;

Table C

C-INCIDENT TYPE-

Incident Type Enter a three-digit code and a description from the following pages that best describes the incident type. The codes are organized into series, as follows:

Series Heading

- 100 Fire
- 200 Overpressure, Ruptures, Explosion, Overheat (no ensuing fire)
- 300 Rescue & Emergency Medical Service
- 400 Hazardous Conditions (No Fire)
- 500 Service Calls
- 600 Good Intent Calls
- 700 False Alarms & False Calls
- 800 Severe Weather & Natural Disasters
- 900 Other Type of Incidents



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So as you can see the coding of System Malfunctions and Unintentional activations under Incident Category 700 False Alarms and False Calls is consistent and correct in accordance with the USFA NFIRS 5.0 format. This format is also the one utilized by the New Jersey Division of Fire Safety.

The disparity that is often discussed is that of the International Fire Code/New Jersey as adopted at N.J.A.C. 5:70-3 (IFC/NJ) wherein a distinct difference is made in the definitions with regards to "False Alarms" and "Nuisance Alarms". The 2006 IFC/NJ provides the following;

2006 IFC/NJ Section 202 - "False Alarm – The willful and knowing initiation or transmission of a signal, message or other notification of an event of fire when no such danger exists."

2006 IFC/NJ Section 902 -"Nuisance Alarm – An alarm caused by mechanical failure, malfunction, improper installation, or lack of proper maintenance, or an alarm activated by a cause that cannot be determined"

While NFIRS 5.0 categorizes these generally as Category 700 "False Alarms and False Calls" the same system also provides subcategories to further define the incident delineating nuisance alarms from intentional and or malicious alarms. It is widely accepted and common practice to use the term "false alarm" to identify an incident as an "alarm activation of an unknown or undesirable cause."

Its important that the reporting companies correctly code the NFIRS report and avoid using the "Other Categories" (the ones that end with zero (0), i.e. 700, 710, 730 & 740.) as this will help us better define alarm system issues.

I hope this explains the issue.

Sincerely,

John Drucker
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