



# Ocean City Fire Department Office of the Fire Marshal

## Preventable Fire Alarm Reduction Program

Property Representatives:

The Town of Ocean City recently updated our existing false alarm legislation, which has existed in Article IV of the Fire Prevention Code for quite some time. As you may know, buildings with fire alarm systems were subjected to a limited number of fire alarm activations within a calendar year that were caused by malfunctioning fire alarm systems.

The new updated false alarm requirements change the definitions of fire alarm activations to “preventable” fire alarm activation and “non-preventable” fire alarm activation. Non-preventable fire alarm activations are those alarms that could not be prevented. This includes instances where there was actually a smoke condition or emergency situation, or some other issue that was beyond the control of the property owner. Preventable fire alarm activations include system malfunctions, improperly maintained alarm equipment, and activations that are caused by cleaning, maintenance, or construction crews.

What you need to know is that the fee schedule for preventable fire alarm activations has not changed from the previous false fire alarm fee schedule. However, activations in the past that were not subject to fines, such as workers setting off the fire alarm, are now subject to a limited number within a calendar year.

Additionally, this legislation will try to correct the underlying problems with repeated fire alarm activations. Something new with this legislation is the “Fire Alarm Activation Report.” This form may be sent via certified mail or hand delivered to the responsible property representative by the Office of the Fire Marshal when the cause of the fire alarm activation could not be determined. The fire alarm activation report

will also be available on the Town of Ocean City's website. It is the property owner's responsibility to complete this form and return it to the Fire Marshal's Office within fifteen (15) days from the receipt of such notice.

If it has be determined that the fire alarm activation was caused by conditions outside of the control of the property owner, the cause will be reclassified as non-preventable, and not subject to any fines. However, if the fire alarm activation report is not received within the 15 days, the alarm will be deemed preventable, and subject to the limited number of activations as noted in the code.

### **Smoke Alarm Requirements**

The Town of Ocean City updated smoke alarm requirements in Article III of the Fire Prevention Code. Those buildings with smoke alarms located throughout the common areas of the building may now be able to utilize an alarm verification feature of the fire alarm system, or in some instances, may be able to remove smoke alarms from some common areas. These options generally only apply to buildings equipped with a fire sprinkler system. For more information on whether your building qualifies to eliminate smoke alarms or whether an alarm verification feature can be used, contact the Fire Marshal's Office at 410-289-8780 or visit our website at [http://oceancitymd.gov/fire\\_department/firemarshal](http://oceancitymd.gov/fire_department/firemarshal)