



In my opinion...

DEAN SAYS:

Oh, no! I Caused a False Alarm!

It started off innocently enough. It was one of those very hot and humid summer days in the heart of Connecticut. Our small state is cleverly nestled so that it takes on all the heat New York state and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts do not wish to retain. As a result, we often sweeter in Connecticut.

I had just arrived home from a flurry of Saturday morning errands. With a flick of the wrist I pushed the button to activate the garage door opener. I quickly drove into the garage and stopped. As I hopped out of "Goober-the-Van," I was hit by a wave of heat from the garage.

"It must be a hundred degrees in here," I yelled to no one in particular. "I've got to get some air moving."

I strode purposely to the garage windows. With a flourish I threw the windows open wide. In the distance I heard a pulsating siren. "What in the world is that?"

Then it hit me. I made a dash for the door to the house. Fumbling with my keys I unlocked the door and pushed it open. The sound of the siren increased to a loud roar. Quickly, I punched in my

access code on the key pad inside the door. The siren stopped. The phone rang. I answered and gave the alarm company my subscriber personal identification number.

"Are you sure everything's all right?" the alarm operator asked.

"Yes," I replied with disgust in my voice. "I just came home and opened the garage windows without thinking about the fact that the alarm was on."

"Okay," she chuckled. "It happens all the time. Take care now."

Abject humiliation. Ranting, raving, fist-pounding, abject humiliation. How could "Dean Wilson," of all people, cause a false alarm.

Why I've been telling people for years that false alarms are absolutely, 100 per cent avoidable. They result from ignorance and carelessness. They come from improperly designed, improperly installed, improperly maintained, improperly tested systems where users have been improperly trained in the use of the systems.

How could I possibly forget that the garage windows were equipped with tamper switches. How could I forget the alarm system was "set." After all, I set it before I left on my errands.

The sad truth is that in little more than six months of operation this was the third false alarm on my system. One occurred when my wife, distracted by an irritating story on the radio, opened the door to get the morning newspaper without turning off the perimeter protection.

I doubt if she will ever do that again.

The second false alarm resulted from a programming error that sent an unidentified signal to the alarm company when the system was set using a different option than I had been regularly using. Had I not experimented with the key pad, I might never have discovered the minor programming error. I do applaud the alarm company that upon receipt of a signal they could not identify, they attempted to verify, and then dispatched the police.

Fortunately, I was only a few miles from home when the alarm company paged me with the "bad news." Also fortunately, the police were particularly kind about the false alarm. It seems they didn't know where my street was, so the alarm gave them an opportunity to find out. Of course, in the process they cruised up and down a few nearby streets with lights on and siren blaring. This had attracted quite a crowd by the time I arrived.

"Another false alarm?" someone in the crowd asked. "What do you mean another," I thought. "This is my first real false alarm—meaning one on which the police were dispatched."

This, of course, started a rather convoluted investigation into whether there had been another false alarm of which I was unaware. I painstakingly checked entry by entry in the memory log my system maintains. I quizzed the alarm company in great detail. Finally, I concluded that the member of the crowd was just making a general commentary on the times, not referring to a specific incident at my house.

Needless to say I have a new compassion for users of systems and for alarm companies. If "Dean Wilson" as an extraordinarily-well-educated user can initiate a false alarm, then anyone could fall prey to this horrendous act.

Don't get me wrong, contrary to what a few of my friends and many of my enemies think, I do not have an inflated view of myself. And even if I did, it would only take a hot day in the garage to cut me right down to size.

Oh well, at least the police now know where I live. □

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