



“THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A FALSE ALARM WHEN IT COMES TO FIRE. EVERY ALARM, EVERY DRILL MUST BE TREATED AS THE REAL THING,” ADVISES PAT SENG, NORMANDE LAKE OFFICE PARK’S GENERAL MANAGER WITH CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD/NORTHMARQ.

He adds, “We understand that tenants may become apathetic or see it as a nuisance if alarms sound when there is no real danger, which is why we go to great lengths to minimize potential distractions.”

As examples of alarm triggers, Seng lists broken or freezing pipes, construction and repair contractors, or IT and electrical wiring activity. Along with these, he observes that the most common culprit for an alarm unintentionally sounding is lack of communication between the management office, contractors and tenants. “We make every effort to avoid alarm alerts, but we don’t always have the information we need. If we are unaware of a vendor that may be working on wires in a ceiling panel, we cannot predict the potential impact of this activity on our alarm system,” he continues. “To reduce injury and annoyance, tenants are required to notify us whenever a vendor is on site. All vendor visits must be scheduled and a certificate of insurance be filed with our office.”

When an alarm does sound, the fire department is immediately notified and professional help is on the way. Additionally, Normandale Lake Office Park’s building engineers rush to the tower’s designated alarm panel. “Each building has an independent alarm system,” explains Cushman & Wakefield/NorthMarq’s Patrick Corcoran, lead engineer at the park. “Once the building engineer reaches the panel, we identify what the situation is and where it is located. We inform everybody else on the building team and then, we go to the source and physically identify it again.”

Seng interjects, “Because each building has a separate alarm system and each floor has its own indication, it is typically less dangerous if people in neighboring buildings and floors stay put. This reduces traffic in stairwells and lets us tend to the area in need.”

Tenants should be aware that ventilation will cease, so as not to fuel a potential fire. Sprinklers are located on all floors. “These buildings are engineered to notify, contain, and 94% of the time, contain or extinguish a fire. Our procedures are in place to allow the preventative and emergency systems to work quickly and properly,” notes Seng.

Corcoran also reminds tenants that “the affected floor and the one above and below that floor must follow emergency evacuation procedures - even if you do not feel that you are in a life-threatening situation.”



“Everyone needs to treat this as a serious situation. You do not need to call us if the alarms are already sounding. The alarm is your notification,” emphasizes Cushman & Wakefield/NorthMarq’s Assistant Property Manager, Renee Hoy. “Our front desk is not typically aware of the exact alarm location during an emergency and is not in position to advise tenants of the direction to take. It takes a few minutes to assess an alarm situation. If the alarm is not on your floor, make a personal choice if you are comfortable.”

“Once you have safely exited the tower and are with your emergency wardens in the designated meeting place, we can communicate with you. You will recognize us by our yellow hats,” she adds. “If further evacuation is necessary, we will inform tenants through additional alarms and over the P.A. system. Similarly, when we know the danger has passed, we will give an ‘all clear’ over the P.A. system.”

“We understand that alarms seem to happen when we least want them to,” acknowledges Corcoran. “Still, we must treat every alarm as if it is a very real danger. Even if we know that it’s a drill, everyone in the building must follow the emergency procedures. This is the time to familiarize ourselves with the exits, tenant emergency wardens and the office team’s safety zone.”

The good news, says Seng, is “we get outstanding service from our local fire department and other emergency crews. Their quick response time allows us to minimize the amount of downtime in our office and in our tenant’s offices, and most importantly, protect the lives of our tenants. Please participate in the emergency drills. They are held for your safety.”