

# Fire Department Signal Codes

## **BOX ALARM / MULTIPLE COMPANY ALARMS:**

### **BOX ALARM (STRUCTURE FIRE)**

Any fire in a building or structure. Included are vehicle fires inside of garages or carports, fuse box/electrical fires, etc... and callers that believe that a house or structure may be on fire but cannot confirm it.

### **BOX ALARM (EXPLOSION/GAS)**

Any reported explosion with possible fire and/or building damage. Included are any natural gas line breaks that are on fire or any compressed gas container (LPG, Butane, Propane) that is involved in fire.

### **BOX ALARM (SMOKE IN BUILDING)**

Any report of visible smoke inside a building or structure. If the caller advises that they can only smell smoke (but not see any smoke), then classify the alarm as INVESTIGATE SMOKE ODOR (INSIDE BUILDING).

### **BOX ALARM (CHIMNEY FIRE)**

Any reported chimney, flue or wood stove fire inside of a structure or threatening a structure.

### **BOX ALARM (STRUCTURE THREATENED)**

Any fire (except a grass fire) outside of a structure that is threatening a structure. Included are vehicle fires, dumpster fires, and BBQ propane tank fires next to a building or any other hostile fire threatening a nearby building.

### **BOX ALARM (STOVE/OVEN FIRE)**

Any fire involving the contents of a cooking vessel or a fire contained inside of an oven. Also included are any reports of people locked outside of a house with food on the stove inside of a house.

### **BOX ALARM (MULT. FIRE ALARMS)**

Any alarm activation where two or more separate systems have been activated (example: pull-station and water flow alarms received). Single system fire alarms should use the ALARM (FIRE) signal.

### **BOX ALARM (PARKING GARAGE)**

Any vehicle fire occurring inside of a parking garage.

### **BOX ALARM (HIGH-RISE ALARM)**

Any fire in a building more than five stories tall.

### **BOX ALARM (PRIOR FIRE-STRUCTURE)**

Any reported prior/previous fires inside a structure. Shift Commander or Chief Officer may, based on dispatch information, reduce all incoming units to code 1 except for the first in engine company to confirm that there is no fire extension. Included are requests by the public for smoke removal due to a prior fire.

## **WORKING FIRE**

Will be called for by fire units arriving on-scene of a box alarm; indicates a confirmed structure fire that will require hose lines to extinguish. Refer to the box card for specific instructions that may include EMS unit assignments for fire standbys, station move-ups, and notification of off-duty personnel and senior staff.

### **2<sup>ND</sup> BOX ALARM**

### **3<sup>RD</sup> BOX ALARM**

### **4<sup>TH</sup> BOX ALARM**

### **5<sup>TH</sup> BOX ALARM**

Additional alarms are called in order to bring additional resources. Refer to the box alarm card for specific instructions.

## **STILL ALARM / SINGLE COMPANY ALARMS:**

### **ALARM (FIRE)**

Any alarm activation where one separate system has been activated. Examples of separate systems include: smoke detector, heat detector, general fire alarm, water flow alarm, or pull-station alarm). If more than one separate system has been activated (i.e. the alarm company advises that it has received both a pull-station alarm and a water flow alarm), designate the alarm as a BOX ALARM (MULT. FIRE ALARMS). In most cases, when multiple systems are activated, particularly when both automatic (non-human intervention) devices such as smoke detectors and manual (human intervention) devices such as pull stations are activated simultaneously, this will generally indicate that an actual fire exists. Exception: if multiple alarms are received from a touch panel such as "panic alarm", "fire alarm" and/or "medical alarm", then the call should be classified as an ALARM (FIRE) and a single unit will respond.

If a alarm activation is received initially as a single system and, while units are still responding to the incident, the alarm company calls and advises that a second device has activated, contact the responding fire units, advise them of the additional information, and inquire if they would like to upgrade the alarm to a box alarm.

Once a unit has been dispatched to a fire alarm activation, the unit is required to respond to the scene to ensure that there is no fire and to write a report. If an alarm company calls back to cancel a fire alarm, notify the responding unit on the air to "*REDUCE TO CODE-1 AND CONTINUE FOR CONFIRMATION*". Alarm companies have been known to call the wrong address or have gotten "all clear" messages from young children who are attempting to hide a mistake.

### **ELECTRICAL SHORT**

Any request by the public to investigate a prior electrical problem that does not involve smoke or fire. Included are overheated motors or wiring, defective/worn electrical insulation, and shorted electrical equipment. Any electrical equipment that is actively sparking or shorting inside a structure should be dispatched as a BOX ALARM (STRUCTURE FIRE). Outside electrical equipment (that is not attached to or threatening a building or structure) should be dispatched as FIRE (EQUIPMENT) or FIRE (TRANSFORMER), as appropriate.

**FIRE (BOAT)**

Any fire on a boat, barge, hovercraft, or other watercraft that is currently in the water. For boats attached to a trailer on land, use FIRE (EQUIPMENT). For boats that are in a marina or moored to a dock where the dock or marina are threatened by the fire, use the signal BOX ALARM (STRUCTURE THREATENED)

**FIRE (DUMPSTER)**

Fire inside a dumpster or trash compactor that is not threatening a structure.

**FIRE (EQUIPMENT)**

Any outside fire in a piece of equipment other than electrical equipment. Included are off-road vehicles or heavy equipment, boats not in the water and on dry land, construction equipment, etc...

**FIRE (SHED/OUTBUILDING)**

Any fire in a structure that is no greater than 10-feet by 10-feet (100 square feet) in area, is not exposing any other structures to fire, and does not or would normally not have any utility connections. Examples would be a small tool shed in a backyard well away from the main house, a port-a-potty fire in the middle of a parking lot, a dog house, or other small building that can easily be extinguished with one hose line.

This signal should only be used when all of the criteria above can be reasonably obtained from the caller with a high degree of confidence. If the TCO cannot confirm this information or if the TCO is not confident that the caller information is reliable, dispatch this incident as a full BOX ALARM as appropriate.

**FIRE (TRAIN)**

Any fire in a rail vehicle. Includes all locomotives and rail cars, including intermodal containers and passenger cars that are mounted on a rail car.

**FIRE (TRANSFORMER)**

Any outside fire involving electrical transformers, power poles, or any piece of electrical equipment (whether it is energized or not) that is not endangering structures.

**FIRE (UNKNOWN)**

This signal should be used for any reported fire where the caller cannot give any more specific information and does not meet the criteria for any other signal code given here. If the TCO receives information from the caller that a structure may be involved or if the TCO believes that there is the possibility that the reported fire may involve a structure, use the signal BOX ALARM (STRUCTURE FIRE).

**FIRE (VEHICLE)**

Vehicle fire not endangering structures or carrying hazardous cargo. Included are motorized passenger vehicles, pickup trucks, buses, motor homes, and freight trucks. Vehicle fires that are equipped with LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) or CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) fuel tanks should be classified as a HAZARDOUS CONDITION. Vehicle fires (large trucks or tractor-trailers) that are carrying hazardous cargo should be classified as a HAZMAT ALARM.

### **INVESTIGATE SMOKE IN AREA**

Any reported smoke visible outside of a building or structure where the caller cannot identify the source of the smoke. Any smoke reported to be inside of a building or structure should be classified as a BOX ALARM (SMOKE IN BUILDING).

### **INVESTIGATE SMOKE ODOR (INSIDE BUILDING)**

Any reported odor (with nothing visible) of smoke inside a structure where the caller cannot identify the source of the smoke. Any visible smoke reported to be inside of a building or structure should be classified as a BOX ALARM (SMOKE IN BUILDING).

### **WIRES ARCING**

Any report of power lines that are arcing but have not fallen or started any fires.

### **WIRES DOWN**

Any report of power lines that have come down on the ground but have not started any fires.

### **DETAIL (NON-EMERGENCY) ALARMS:**

#### **PUBLIC SERVICE-FIRE DEPT**

Any non-emergency public service request for the fire department. This includes any request to service/change batteries on smoke detectors, questions about fire department related issues where they wish to speak with a fire department representative, etc...

#### **FLUID SPILL**

Any request by a city PD for fire department response to a motor vehicle collision for fluid cleanup. For requests by county SO, dispatch the call to the fire department as a "Fluid Spill" but leave the call signal as "ACCIDENT (MINOR)".

#### **LIFT ASSIST**

Requests for help with disabled persons requiring lifting assistance that do not indicate or warrant medical attention.

#### **BROKEN WATER PIPE**

Report of a broken water pipe.

#### **OPEN HYDRANT**

Citizen report of an open and flowing water hydrant.

#### **UNSAFE COOKING**

Any BBQ grill that is reported to be operated in an unsafe or illegal manner. Included are BBQ grills being operated on the balcony of an apartment building (illegal in most cities and some ESDs by code).

#### **BURNING COMPLAINT**

Citizen complaint of a nuisance control burn that is under control.

## **GRASSFIRE & WILDFIRE ALARMS:**

### **GRASS FIRE**

Any small grassfire or out-of-control control burns not threatening any buildings or structures with a low probability for the alarm to escalate. During times of high, very high, or extreme fire danger, the Williamson County Fire Chief's Association may elect to have all grassfires automatically classified as BRUSH ALARMS for initial dispatch. Normal response for a grass fire will usually be a single engine and/or brush truck.

### **BRUSH ALARM**

Any grass fire or brush fire threatening structures, that has moderate or high potential for the alarm to escalate, or of significant size to warrant additional response. Normal response may include several brush trucks, engines and tankers.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> BRUSH ALARM**

### **3<sup>RD</sup> BRUSH ALARM**

### **4<sup>TH</sup> BRUSH ALARM**

### **5<sup>TH</sup> BRUSH ALARM**

### **6<sup>th</sup> BRUSH ALARM**

Additional alarms are called in order to bring additional resources. Refer to the CRC Wildland Fire Response Procedures for specific instructions. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Brush Alarm will usually be a mutual aid request to a single neighboring department. 3<sup>rd</sup> Brush Alarms and greater will involve CRC activation and CRC Task Force responses (3<sup>rd</sup> Alarm=1 task force, 4<sup>th</sup> alarm=2 task forces, 5<sup>th</sup> alarm=3 task forces, 6<sup>th</sup> alarm=4 task forces).

## **RESCUE / MULTIPLE COMPANY ALARMS:**

### **RESCUE ALARM (COLLISION)**

Entrapment or pin-in vehicle collision requiring extrication for rescue.

### **TECHNICAL RESCUE ALARM**

Persons trapped in trench cave-ins, structural collapses, high-angle environments or confined spaces. Included are persons trapped in industrial, agricultural or other mechanical equipment (including escalators).

### **WATER RESCUE ALARM**

Dive or swift water rescues, vehicles stalled in high water or low water crossings, missing persons near or in water.

## **RESCUE / SINGLE COMPANY ALARMS:**

### **ELEVATOR RESCUE**

Persons trapped inside an elevator.

## **LOCKOUT**

Lockout with children/handicapped/elderly involved. Fire department will normally respond to any lock-in/lock-out scenario involving trapped occupants or a hazardous condition such as a running vehicle inside a garage (Running vehicles outside of a building with no one trapped inside will not generally constitute an emergency response). Persons locked outside of a house that report that they have food on the stove should be dispatched as a BOX ALARM (STOVE/OVEN FIRE).

## **SEARCH (MISSING PERSON)**

Any request to assist with a search for a missing person on land. Missing persons reported to be missing in or near water should be classified as a WATER RESCUE ALARM.

## **AIRCRAFT EMERGENCIES:**

### **AIRCRAFT ALERT 1 (MINOR PROBLEM)**

Aircraft is experiencing minor difficulties such as a warning light, low fuel, or rough running engine.

### **AIRCRAFT ALERT 2 (MAJOR PROBLEM)**

Aircraft experiencing major difficulties such as engine on fire, faulty landing gear, problem with hydraulic problem.

### **AIRCRAFT ALERT 3 (CRASH/FIRE) (replaces AIRPLANE CRASH)**

Aircraft is involved in an accident on the taxi/runway or has crashed.

## **HAZARDOUS MATERIALS/CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS:**

### **CARBON MONOXIDE INVESTIGATION**

Carbon Monoxide (CO) detector activation incidents where a CO detector has activated with no victims experiencing any signs/symptoms of CO poisoning (flu-like symptoms including shortness of breath, nausea, headache, dizziness, and light-headedness) and everyone is outside the residence. If both of these indicators can be determined by the call taker (no signs/symptoms and everyone outside the affected building) and relayed to the responding engine company, they will usually reduce to a code-1 response.

### **CARBON MONOXIDE INCIDENT**

Reported carbon monoxide incidents where there are reported victims experiencing signs/symptoms of CO poisoning.

### **HAZMAT/ODOR INVESTIGATION**

Investigate reported possible hazmat incidents. Included are odors of gas or any reported suspicious or unusual odors or substances where there is not enough information to classify the call further. The main purpose of this call signal is to dispatch a single unit to respond to determine if a true emergency exists and to investigate further. Company officer shall respond either code 1 or code 3 IAW department policy and/or discretion based on call information received by the TCO.

## **HAZARDOUS CONDITION**

Confirmed or reported hazardous materials spills/leaks of a minor nature. Included are fuel and chemical spills (less than 5 gallons), gas leaks (both LPG and propane), broken gas lines (2-inch diameter and less), and vehicle fires that are equipped with LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) or CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) fuel tanks.

“HAZARDOUS CONDITION” is the default response category for all hazardous materials incidents. If you are unsure how to classify an incident, use this signal and dispatch the first-in unit. Once they are enroute, advise them of the incident details and inquire from the company officer if they would like to upgrade/downgrade the alarm.

## **HAZMAT ALARM**

Confirmed or reported major hazardous materials spills/leaks, major gas line breaks (larger than 2-inch diameter lines), or fire/leaks/explosions/ruptures involving chemical containers. Upon arrival of the first unit, the officer will advise Communications if the County HAZMAT needs to be notified.

## **HAZMAT TASK FORCE**

Signal code used when the County HAZMAT Chief has activated CRC and the County HAZMAT response team to respond to a hazmat alarm.

## **OTHER ALARMS:**

### **BEE INVESTIGATION**

Report of a bee swarm that is not immediately endangering people. Indicates a code 1 response. Most fire departments will not disturb a bee colony and will refer the problem to a bee keeper or pest control company.

### **BEE ALARM**

Report of a bee swarm (or any other insect) that is actively harming or endangering people. Indicates a code 3 response by the fire department along with at least one EMS unit.

### **COVER ASSIGNMENT**

Any request from a fire agency outside of Williamson County to have fire department units standby at a fire station or move-up to cover a fire station. Cover assignments that are requested by fire agencies inside of Williamson County should be simply noted in the CAD using the CL (Change Location) function.