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GENERAL NEWS

False alarm ordinance watch**South Lake Tahoe, Calif.**

The South Lake Tahoe police department requested city officials adopt a false alarm ordinance that proposes businesses and homeowners be permitted for having an alarm installed. The permit fee has not been determined, but any person operating a non-registered alarm system will be subject to a \$250 fine, reported the Tahoe Daily Tribune.

The permits for residential homes would be valid for three years from the date issued, while permits for business alarms would be valid for one year.

A false alarm fee will also be implemented if the ordinance is approved. The cost for false alarms within a year would be \$50 for a third, \$100 for a fourth, \$150 for a fifth, \$250 for the sixth and \$275 for the seventh. Business and residential owners with alarms that carry signals transmitted to police and fire departments by phone or from a central station may face fines after two false alarms within a year.

The ordinance is designed to reduce the false alarms the police and fire department here respond to, which is estimated to cost \$41,800 a year. A date has not been determined to when the proposal will pass.

Harford County, Md.

Harford County fire officials and county council members here want to increase the penalty for false fire alarms by implementing a bill to reduce them. The legislation would double the fine for a second false alarm from \$50 to \$100 with no penalty for the first false alarm. But a third false alarm would result in a fine of \$500, and the penalty would jump to \$1,000 for each subsequent false alarm within a year, reported the Baltimore Sun.

The money from the fines would go to the county's general fund, not to fire departments.

In most cases the false alarms are from businesses, not private homes. The council has scheduled a public hearing on the bill in April.

Sterling Heights, Mich.

Sterling Heights City Council proposed a false alarm ordinance to develop a three-tiered approach which would include education, restitution and prosecution, reported The Source. The city council would first send a letter to property owners or occupants regarding the false alarm and details of the ordinance.

However, for a second false police alarm or third false fire alarm in a year, fees would be imposed to fund the city's expenses.

The proposed fees for a third false alarm would be \$25 for residential, \$75 for commercial; fourth false alarm, \$50 for residential and \$150 for commercial and for the fifth and consecutive false alarms, \$100 for residential and \$300 for

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non-residential. While for fire alarms the second false alarm would be a fee of \$100, the third is \$250 and the fourth is \$500.

Under the proposed law, if the false alarm problem is not resolved, the city may seek help from the District Court.

Olympia, Wash.

After responding to about 3,000 security alarms each year, with less than one percent being real emergencies, a city ordinance approved in July aimed at decreasing false alarms will go into effect this month.

The ordinance requires alarm customers to pay a registration fee to get an automatic police response anytime the person's alarm is triggered. However, those who do not register would only get an officer once an authorized individual verifies that a crime has occurred. The registration fee is \$25 for a private residence and \$35 for a business or government office.

The city will charge \$60 to \$200 for false alarms. More than three false alarms would result in suspension of an alarm user's registration. Under the law, private alarm companies will notify customers. The alarm company will bill the people who agree to the fee, reported The Olympian.

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