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General News

August 2005

False alarm ordinance watch

Rialto, Calif.

In July, the city increased fees for police response to commercial false alarms. Under Rialto's new guidelines, the first two false alarms are free. However, the third false alarm coming from a business will cost \$100, up from \$50. The fourth will cost \$150, up from \$75. The fifth subsequent alarm will cost \$200 each, reported the Inland Valley Daily Bulletin.

Police said the measure to increase fines would help the city recoup costs of responding to false alarms.

Clive, Iowa

City council members approved a false alarm policy earlier this year that limits the number of free false fire and security alarms. Residents and business owners can have up to two free false incidents each year, reported the Des Moines Register.

For the third false alarm, the fines increased from \$50 to \$75, while for the fourth false alarm is a \$100 fee and \$150 for any additional false alarms.

According to police records, officials responded to 747 false alarms in 2004. Approximately 167 businesses and residences triggered two or more alarms this year before the ordinance was enacted. However, since the ordinance has gone into effect, police have responded to roughly 50 false alarms.

Gainesville, Fla.

In July, fire officials orchestrated a false fire alarm ordinance in the Alachua County area. Under the plan, residents and business owners will be required to obtain permits for fire alarm systems. Each permit holder is allowed one false alarm per year. The permits for residential and commercial fire alarm systems cost \$15, while a dual burglar and fire alarm residential permit will cost users \$15.75. Although the false alarm fines are not yet set, they could cost from \$25 to \$400, depending on the number of times the fire department is called to address a false alarm.

Someone found to have a non-permitted alarm could face a \$200 fine, reported The Gainesville Sun.

The ordinance mirrors the county's burglar alarm ordinance adopted in 2000. It was developed due to the increase in calls caused by pranks or alarm malfunctions.

Augusta, Ga.

The city's public safety committee proposed a fire and security alarm ordinance for the downtown business district. Alarm owners that have two false alarms each year will be fined \$100 each, while each subsequent false alarm will result in an additional \$100 fine. If the penalty is not paid within 30 days, the fine amount could be increased to \$300.

At a city meeting in July, the committee voted to send the proposed ordinance to the full commission with a recommendation for approval, reported the Augusta Chronicle.

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