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### False Alarm Update: Dallas, Pittsburgh, San Bernardino, Durham

Dec 07, 2005, DALLAS -- Proponents and opponents of a proposed verified burglar alarm response policy traded barbs during the last Dallas City Council meeting before the revised plan is expected to be put up for a vote, with Dallas' mayor expressing support for the proposal for the first time. The council is considering allowing police to not respond to commercial burglar alarms unless private security guards hired by the alarm company have verified the alarm. The proposal is a revision of a highly criticized previous plan that had verified response across the board in Dallas. The new plan would [keep police response for residential alarm customers](#).

Comments by council members during the Dec. 5 meeting appeared to show a split in the council leading up to when the body votes on the plan during its Dec. 14 meeting, according to the *Dallas Morning News*. However, Mayor Laura Miller, who had previously stayed neutral on the matter, said she now supports the proposal because she has been assured by Dallas Police Chief David Kunkle that it will help reduce crime in a city with a reputation for high crime rates.

“If our chief says this is going to work, I think we've got to go with our chief,” Miller said according to the *Morning News*.

The alarm industry, however, says that a lack of response to commercial alarms will increase crime and rejects verified response even if it only applies to businesses.

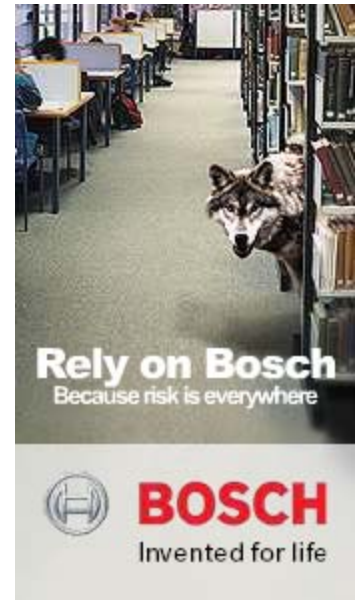
Councilman Ron Natinsky decried the proposal as being unfair to business, which he says are being kept under the possibility of verified response only because they haven' t been as vocal against it as residents.

“We're sending the wrong message to the business community that we heard an uproar from the citizens, so we're not going to put verified response into effect for residential false alarms,” Natinsky said.

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If passed on Dec. 14, the new ordinance would add stiffer fines to residential alarm owners for false alarms, with a \$50 fine for a fourth, fifth and sixth false alarms within a year and a \$75 fine for a seventh and eighth offense. After that, the residential alarm owner's permit would be revoked and police response would stop.

### ***In other false alarm news ...***

**PITTSBURGH:** The city of Pittsburgh is increasing the fines for false alarms and will put them into effect on Jan. 1, according to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. As part of the city's recently passed fiscal recovery plan, the number of "free" false alarms within a year without a fine is being reduced from three to two. From there, the fine rise from \$50 for a third false alarm within a year to \$500 for a ninth. Previously, the city had a uniform false alarm fine for each false call after a third of \$15 for residential alarm and \$50 for a commercial false alarm. The fines will now be the same for both residences and commercial establishments.

**SAN BERNARDINO, Calif.** The city council in the Southern California city of San Bernardino is considering a different approach to the false alarm problem that doesn't involve verified response or fines: The city is considering hiring retired police officers who would specifically be tasked with responding to alarm calls. The *Press-Enterprise* reports the council is looking into a proposal from the city's administrator where at least eight retired officers would be hired to respond to residential and commercial alarms, leaving the rest of the city's police force to attend to other duties.

**DURHAM, N.C.:** The city's council has approved a new alarm ordinance that would institute an alarm permit process and fines for excessive false alarms. NBC 17 says there will now be a \$25 yearly alarm permit fee for all alarm owners in Durham and false alarm fines ranging from \$100 for a third false alarm within a year to \$300 for a 10th incident. The new fees take effect on Jan. 1.

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