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False Alarm Update: Washington County Fines Alarm Companies Instead of Users

Jan 11, 2006, TACOMA, Wash. -- The county in Washington state that includes the city of Tacoma and Mt. Rainer National Park has adopted a new alarm ordinance where alarm companies are fined for false alarms instead of alarm users. The revised ordinance for Pierce County, which went into effect on Jan. 1, requires alarm companies in unincorporated areas of the county to pay fines for each false alarm.

Under the ordinance, alarm companies are required to register with the Sheriff's Department and will also be responsible for the registration fee of each system. The companies have also been mandated to augment all of its alarm customers' systems with One Plus duress codes and single-action, non-recessed button alarm activation devices.

The alarm users themselves are no longer responsible for permit fees or false alarm fines.

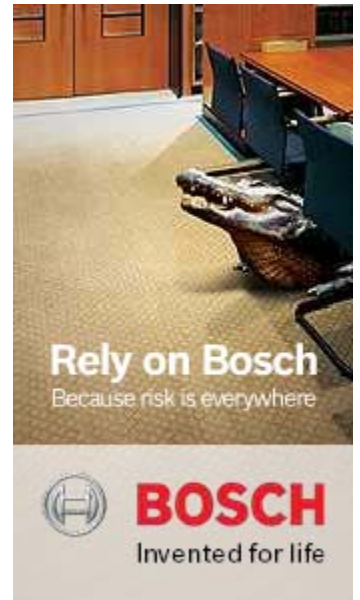
Alarm companies will be fined \$250 for each false burglary alarm and \$125 for false robbery, panic and duress alarms.

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False Alarm Update: City Considers Jail Time for False Alarm Offenders

Jan 18, 2006, MONTCLAIR, N.J. -- A city in New Jersey is considering a new twist on punishment for alarm owners who commit multiple false alarms: jail time. The police department in Montclair, which lies seven miles north of Newark and about 16 miles northeast of New York City, is proposing a system of punishment for false alarm that leads up to a \$1,000 fine and jail time.

According to the *Montclair Times*, after one “free” false alarm within a year for a residential or commercial alarm owner, the fines start at \$50 for a second false alarm, \$100 for a third and keep going up until reaching \$1,000 and 90 days of jail.

Montclair Township Manager Joseph Hartnett told the *Times* that Police Chief David Sabagh’s proposal is not meant to punish all alarm users.

“This is not a draconian law meant to come down hard on all residents. It will affect a small group,” Hartnett said.

However, during the Montclair City Council’s Jan. 12 meeting, some councilpeople showed aversion to some aspects of the false alarm proposal.

“I don't want to create a disincentive for people to have alarms,” said Councilman Gerald Tobin.

The council intends to consider the plan in February.

In other false alarm news ...

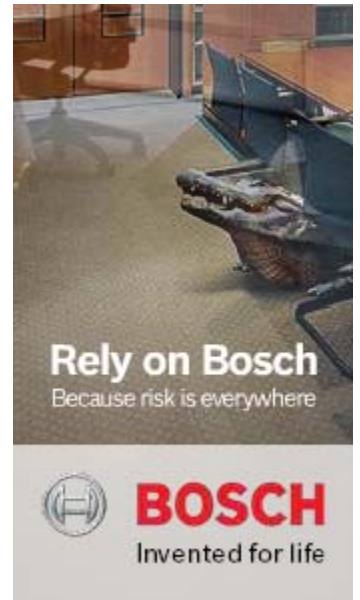
OLYMPIA, Wash.: Police in the capital city of Washington are crediting a new alarm ordinance for cutting false alarms 71 percent since it went into effect [last June](#).

According to the *Olympian*, police say they’re now responding to an average of 72 false alarms a month compared to the average of 250 a month they were responding to before the new ordinance went into effect.

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Under the ordinance, residential and commercial alarm owners must pay a registration fee to receive police response. Then, alarm owners are fined \$60 for each false alarm. In addition, someone at the site must verify alarms before police respond to alarm customers with more than three false alarms in a year.

LANSING, Mich.: The city that is home to Michigan State University is considering an alarm ordinance that would mandate alarm firms educate their customers on how to avoid false alarms. Television station WILX says the Lansing City Council will consider a measure where alarm companies would be required to tell their customers how to cancel a false alarm before police are called. The proposed ordinance would also institute fines after three false alarms within as year.

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False Alarm Update: Dallas Dealers Ask for Delay to Verified Response

Jan 24, 2006, DALLAS -- City officials in Dallas are considering a delay in the implementation of a verified response policy after a local alarm association sent a letter to Dallas' police chief urging a delay. Meanwhile, Dallas' city attorney is looking into charges that city officials who were the architects of the policy took kickbacks from security guard companies, which stand to gain from the new policy.

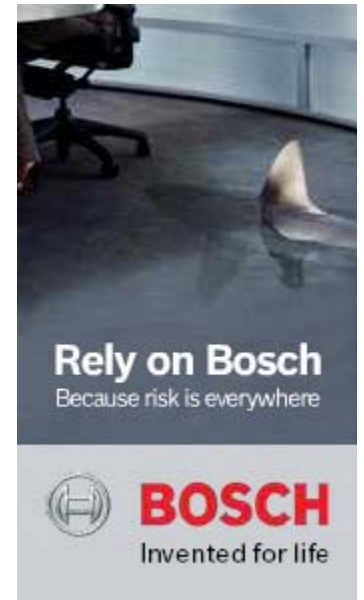
Under the new alarm ordinance, [passed by the Dallas City Council on Dec. 14](#), officers will no longer respond to commercial burglar alarms unless they are verified by a private security guard hired by the alarm company. Police response will continue for residential customers, though they will see increased false alarm fines and could have their permits revoked after eight false alarms in a year.

The start of a slow roll-out of the new policy was set to begin on Feb. 1, where commercial customers will be under the new policy after their permit renewal date. Industry leaders, led by North Texas Alarm Association (NTAA) President Chris Russell, are asking for a delay to June 1 for the start of the phased roll-out.

In the letter to Police Chief David Kunkle, Russell says more time is needed to either prepare for the verified response plan in place, or work on options for an "alternative response plan."

"The Dallas City Council based its support of verified response, in part, on the belief that private security guards are available throughout the city to respond to alarms in a timely manner," says Russell in the letter. "I hope you would agree that fairness and equal protection for our citizens requires that guard services be available throughout the entire community and that these services are organized to be able to respond to alarms in a timely manner before police response is curtailed. This is not the current situation."

A task force set up by the NTAA has found that only one security guard company is currently capable of



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responding to alarms south of Interstate 30 and most of the guard companies reached by alarm companies said they wouldn't be ready to respond to alarms by Feb. 1.

CBS 11 in Dallas says that in response to the letter, the Dallas city attorney's office is looking into how it could delay the implementation of the program.

The television station also reports that the city attorney is also looking into whether members of the city's Commission on Productivity and Innovation, which first recommended the city start the verified response program, may have taken illegal donations from security guard companies. CBS 11 reports city documents show two security guard companies provided \$15,000 to the commission to lobby itself and the public for the new policy.

Commission Chairman Larry Davis defended taking the donations, saying it was a small amount compared to the amount of money raised by the alarm industry to oppose the program. "I never really thought it was a conflict of interest," Davis told CBS 11. "It was never the intent for us to do anything that would give the wrong impression."

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