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GENERAL NEWS

Alarm ordinance watch

09.2006

HERCULES, CALIF.

CBS 5 reported that an Aug. 22 city council meeting, after Security Systems News went to press, in Hercules, Calif., would determine whether to go forward with a new false alarm ordinance, which would update a current ordinance that allows police to collect fees from a home or business owner following a false-alarm call, but does not specify amounts and is not enforced. The new ordinance would impose a \$150 fee for a third false alarm in one year, with successive false alarms resulting in \$200 fines. A part-time police officer would be hired to administer the program. Police Chief Fred Deltorchio said that a permitting process will also be initiated for alarm systems and the program would likely start in January because of the need to hire another officer, though the ordinance, if passed, would technically go into effect 30 days later. Locally, Daly City and Oakland, Calif., require permits for systems; Fremont, Calif., does not respond to alarms without verification of a break-in or security breach.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

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ASHTABULA, OHIO

On Aug. 3, the city of Ashtabula began enforcing its false-alarm ordinance, reported the Star Beacon. Though the law was passed in 2000, no action had been taken thus far to enforce it. Now, false alarms responded to by police will result in a \$75 fine per occurrence. Failure to notify police before testing an alarm system will result in a \$100 fine. Finally, audible alarms that sound for more than 10 minutes will lead to fines for their owners. Fines may be waived in the case of weather problems or malfunctioning alarms that don't involve human error.

KINGMAN, ARIZ.

Kingman's seven-month-old false-alarm ordinance is already coming under scrutiny, reported the Kingman Daily Miner. Specifically, citizens are complaining about the annual \$25 registration fee that all alarm owners must pay. The Kingman Police have responded by suggesting the fee be dropped for owners who have not had a false alarm call in the past calendar year. Further, the current \$25 fee for a third false alarm in a year would be waived if the alarm owner attended a police-sponsored alarm-safety seminar. There is no talk of eliminating the ordinance, however, as police have already seen a 33-percent reduction in false alarms. Kingman is requesting help from area alarm companies in developing this course. The city council was considering the changes as Security Systems News went to press.

COLUMBUS, MISS.

The City Council and E-911 board reached a compromise over how false-alarm incidents would be recorded by the board and passed a new false alarm ordinance (see the August issue of Security Systems News). At issue was whether the E-911 operators would record certain alarm information and issue reports to the police department. The police department will help the E-911 operators with the extra work.

SAN RAFAEL, CALIF.

The Marin Independent Journal reports that San Rafael in late August began consideration of amendments to its false alarm ordinance. The current fine structure would not be changed, but the one-time registration fee of \$60 would be converted into an annual fee that has yet to be determined. Further, the police department is looking to revoke the licenses of alarm owners with repeated violations and suspend response to unresponsive alarm owners. The police department reports that \$250,000 a year is spent responding to false alarms, which represents at least two full-time officer salaries.

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