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- [FULL INDEX](#)
- [TOP STORIES](#)
- [GENERAL NEWS](#)
- [EDITORIAL](#)
- [NEWSWIRE](#)
- [SECURITY SYSTEMS NEWS RESOURCES](#)
- [CLASSIFIED ADS](#)
- [DATABANK](#)
- [NEW PRODUCTS](#)
- [PRODUCT FOCUS](#)
- [SECURITY STATS](#)
- [SOURCE BOOKS](#)
- [COMMERCIAL & SYSTEMS INTEGRATORS](#)
- [FIRE SYSTEMS INSTALLATION](#)
- [MONITORING](#)
- [RESIDENTIAL SYSTEMS](#)
- [SUPPLIERS](#)
- [EDITORIAL CALENDAR](#)
- [MEDIA KIT](#)
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GENERAL NEWS

Alarm ordinance watch: New fines in Texas

High School top generator of alarms in Belmont, N.C., Police to make follow-up visits 10.2006

CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS

A new ordinance in Corpus Christi that went into effect August 1 institutes fines for false alarms and mandates a permit for all residential and commercial security systems, reported KRIS 6. Police, finding 98 percent of the 15,000 annual alarms they respond to are false, recommended the change. Going forward, police will not respond to non-permitted alarms at all. False alarms will cost system owners \$50 after the third each year, \$75 for the sixth and seventh false alarms, and \$100 for the eighth and ensuing occurrences. Police also have the right to cancel permits following the eighth false alarm in a year. Permits are \$25 for residents, \$47.50 for businesses.

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BELMONT, N.C.

Thanks to an alarm ordinance passed last year, the South Point High School is the top generator of false-alarm fines, racking up \$500 in 2005 and on track for \$7,500 in 2006, according to the Charlotte Observer.

School officials have asked city officials to waive the fines, but the city instead convened a meeting in mid August with representatives of the school, city and police department to discuss the issue. As a result, false alarms at the school will be closely monitored for the next three months, with police making follow-up visits after each alarm and keeping a detailed log of false-alarm causes. Possible solutions offered at the meeting included adjusting the system, meeting with the alarm company, and training the 50 or so people who operate the system on a regular basis.

LEAWOOD CITY, KAN.

The Leawood City Council voted Aug. 7 to adjust the ordinance that governs false alarms, reported the Johnson County Sun. Since 1994, fines have been levied against alarm owners after a fourth false alarm in a year.

Fines will now take effect with a third false alarm. A second false alarm in a year will now require participation in a False Alarm Prevention program. Further, changes in the ordinance require standardized features on alarm panels and require enhanced call verification. According to police, there are more than 4,100 alarm systems in the city, and false alarms occur at a rate of .41 alarms per system per year.

TAUNTON, MASS.

In a somewhat ironic development, cash-handlers Loomis Fargo have been fined \$7,900 for 33 false alarms already in 2006, leading the list of false-alarm offenders here, reported the Enterprise. Though the false alarm ordinance has been in place here for some time, this year the police department announced a renewed crackdown on offenders. A \$100 fine is levied after a fourth false alarm, the seventh through 11th alarms result in \$200 fines, and the 12th and further false alarms cost \$300. Fines can be appealed for 10 days following notice from the police. So far in 2006, 13 businesses have been fined. No residents have received fines.

POWELL RIVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Powell River Peak reported that the City Council here on August 15 amended the Security Alarm System Regulation Bylaw passed in October of 2005 after hearing citizen complaints.

The new bylaw clarifies what constitutes a false alarm and the notification process. Attempted break-ins thwarted by the alarm system are no longer considered false alarms, nor are alarms where the monitoring company advises the local Royal Canadian Mounted Police not to respond, although it is their policy to do so. Further, the city clerk will now have the power to cancel a false alarm notice.

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February 26-28 2007

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