

SECURITY SYSTEMS NEWS

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August 2006

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Alarm ordinance watch: Tiered system in Virginia

LOUDON COUNTY, VA.

On July 1, a three-month grace period ended for the county's newly enacted false-alarm ordinance, reported the Connection. The new ordinance updates the old ordinance, which simply forces owners of residential and commercial alarm systems to register with the False Alarm Reduction Unit of the Sheriff's Office. There is no cost for the registration, but a good deal of information about appropriate contacts and monitoring must be supplied. Now, alarm owners will be fined \$100 for a third false alarm in a calendar year, and monitoring companies will not be allowed to issue a dispatch alarm within the first seven days of a system's installation.

For residences, the fine escalates \$50 for every false alarm after three, then increases \$100 for each alarm after eight, with the 15th false alarm resulting in a \$1,000 fine. For commercial properties, the fine increases \$100 for each incident after three, \$250 for each after 11, \$500 for each after 15, with the 16th alarm and beyond costing \$4,000 per false alarm.

COLUMBUS, MISS.

The Commercial Dispatch reports that the Columbus City Council is close to finalizing an ordinance dealing with "habitual false security and fire alarms." At issue is language dictating what the E-911 Board's role in the process will be, as what was thought to be a final draft of the ordinance was called into question by the 911-Board, citing extra workload that the city does not have the authority to convey to them. The Council and police chief believed that the collection of information, to be passed along to the Alarm Administrator, would be similar to 911 dispatchers' routine duties. The E-911 Board disagreed, saying it would increase workload significantly. A compromise was being ironed out as Security Systems News went to press.

NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DEL.

Delawareonline.com reported in mid-June that the New Castle County Council unanimously approved a new measure to penalize property owners with security systems that send out repeat false alarms. Taking effect on Jan. 1, 2007, the ordinance will require security system registration and impose \$100 fines for the third false alarm in a calendar year, \$350 for the fifth and beyond.

County police reportedly responded to 14,391 burglar alarms in 2004, 13,985 of which were false. Bill Moody represented the Delaware Alarm Association at the meeting where the vote was held. He hoped to get the fee pushed back to the fourth alarm, and felt the fees were too high, but the Council was not swayed, and passed the ordinance with only one amendment: to exclude financial institutions.

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.

The Grand Rapids City Council approved in early July an ordinance that allows the Grand Rapids Fire Department to charge \$250 for the third false fire alarm, \$300 for the fourth, \$350 for the fifth, and \$500 for six or more. The Fire Department estimates that each response to an alarm costs \$1,200 and that it responded to 1,500 false alarms in 2005.

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