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Alarm ordinance watch

DARLINGTON COUNTY, S.C.

While many municipalities have gotten tough on false alarms by imposing false alarm fees, Darlington County decided to stop imposing false alarm fines altogether.

The decision to eliminate its \$25 false alarm fine enables the county to discontinue its fine billing process, which cost the county more in invoicing and mailing than the revenues it generated, according to a report in the Morning News. The Darlington County Council approved eliminating the fines, despite the Palmetto Fire Department fire chief favoring the fines and two county councilors voting against the ordinance amendment.

KIRKLAND, WASH.

Kirkland, Wash., is the latest city in the area to implement a non-response provision in its false alarm ordinance.

The new law gives a written warning for the first false alarm, but after the sixth false alarm police will stop responding for 90 days while the resident or business owner puts together a report explaining the steps that will be taken to stop false alarms, according to a report in the King County Journal.

Fines also increase significantly under the new ordinance. Instead of topping off at \$50, a false alarm fine can reach as much as \$200. And, after the seventh false alarm, police will stop responding for one year.

The new law is scheduled to take effect July 1.

OIL CITY, PENN.

Fines for false fire alarms and house fires, along with charging \$50 for each fire extinguisher training session given by the fire department, are among several methods outlined by the fire chief in February as ways to pick up extra revenue for the department.

According to a report in The Derrick and News-Herald, the city already has a false fire alarm ordinance, but the ordinance is not enforced. Based on 2005 numbers, the city would generate \$850 annually by imposing false fire alarm fees.

Recommendations made by the fire chief could be adopted by the city council this spring.

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, CALIF.

In an attempt to reduce false alarms, the city passed an alarm ordinance that requires alarm owners to buy an alarm permit for \$10 or face a \$250 fine.

The ordinance went into effect in April, according to a report in the Tahoe Daily Tribune. A software system at the police department will help police monitor alarm calls and send out notices to those who do not have an alarm permit. As part of the alarm ordinance, the city will charge a \$50 fine after the third false alarm.



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