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GENERAL NEWS

False alarm ordinance watch**Bexar County, Texas**

Facing the rising cost of false alarms as well as wasted manpower and resources, Bexar County is launching a program to target false alarms.

In mid-October, the sheriff's department created a unit to oversee alarm permits and assess fines at locations where deputies are summoned to the same location more than five times. The county had previously not required residents and businesses to obtain permits for security alarms, but that will change as of Jan. 1, 2005, reported The Express-News.

Beginning on the first of the year, residents will be required to pay \$25 and businesses will be charged \$35 for an alarm permit. A deputy will be required to inspect the unit before a permit is issued.

After the fifth false alarm, the county will fine owners \$75 per call. Owners who fail to get a permit will also be subjected to fines.

The permits will only be required for burglar alarms, not for fire. Residents who live in gated communities will be required to pay a one-time registration fee.

Since the department began keeping track of false alarms in 2001, deputies have responded to approximately 40,000 alarm calls and nearly 90 percent of those calls were false.

Plantation, Fla.

A new city ordinance has been passed here to regulate fire and burglar alarms.

The new law, which updates an ordinance developed 11 years ago according to the Sun-Sentinel, requires permits for residential and commercial alarm systems and defines how permits will be distributed. The goal of the ordinance and fines is to encourage alarm users and installers to ensure systems are functional and stable. Officials estimate that 80 percent of daily fire calls are false.

The law requires alarm system owners to purchase a permit for \$25. Annual renewal of the permit will be \$10 - although the renewal fee can be waived if there were no false alarms reported at an address the previous year.

Alarm owners will be allowed three false alarms per year. A \$75 will be assessed for the fourth and fifth false alarms, \$90 for the sixth false alarm and \$105 for the seventh and any subsequent calls.

Pine Bluff, Ark.

Pine Bluff police will begin enforcing a city ordinance that nets penalties for multiple false burglar alarms although no official date for the start of the program has been announced.

The ordinance calls for a \$25 fine for four or more false alarms in one month or between seven and 15 during a calendar year,

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reported the Pine Bluff Commercial.

In a one-year period, 16 to 30 false alarms will result in a fine of \$50 for each incident and business and individuals whose alarms go off 31 or more times in a year will be assessed a \$100 fine for each instance. The ordinance also requires alarm owners to register with police. Permit registration is free.

Wichita, Kan.

False alarm fees are rising for Wichita area alarm owners.

The Wichita City Council approved an amendment to the city's false alarm ordinance in mid-October. The change will increase false alarm charges from \$28 to \$40 for residential calls, from \$40 to \$50 for residential panic calls and from \$60 to \$70 for false dispatches at business locations.

The fee increases will assist in offsetting growth costs associated with police responses to false alarms, reported The Wichita Eagle.

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