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False Alarm Update: California City Initiates Limited Verified Response

May 04, 2005, SIMI VALLEY, Calif. -- The Southern California city of Simi Valley is implementing a limited form of verified response where only repeat offenders of false alarms would have to verify the alarm with police before police respond. Even for those who will have to verify alarms, police will still automatically respond during late night hours.

The Simi Valley City Council unanimously approved the new alarm ordinance May 2 and it is expected to be implemented immediately. Under the new law, police will no longer respond to an alarm at a home or business with more than three false alarms within a year unless it is verified at the source, according to the *Ventura County Star*. The law also says that verification must come through the use of two of the following methods: a video feed, activation of exterior alarm sensors, interior activation of alarm sensors, verification by telephone or verification by a private guard.

The law also sets up a system of fines, where a \$150 fee would be assessed for a third false alarm in a year, \$250 for a fourth and \$500 for each false alarm after that.

The Simi Valley law has been three months in the making and included [input from Simi Valley residents and business leaders](#) at a March 30 community meeting. "Holding that public meeting was a good idea," Simi Valley Mayor Paul Miller told the *Star*. "It got their input."

The limited form of the Simi Valley ordinance is similar to one that went into effect [last year in nearby Los Angeles](#), where police don't respond to alarm customers with more than two false alarms in a year unless it is verified. Fremont (see below) remains the only California city with a policy where every alarm must be verified before police response.

In other false alarm news ...

DURHAM, N.C.: The North Carolina city is considering

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raising its fees for fire and police response to false alarms.

According to the *Herald-Sun*, the Durham City Council will consider on May 5 a measure that would raise the current fine of \$48 for police response and \$100 for fire department response to a second and third false alarm in a year to \$150. The fine would go up incrementally to a maximum for \$350 for each false alarm after a ninth.

If passed, the new ordinance would go into effect on Jan. 1.

FREMONT, Calif: After more than a month under a total verified response policy, both supporters and foes of Fremont, Calif.' s verified response policy say it has yet to be seen just what effect it will have on police response and crime.

Fremont Police Chief Craig Steckler told the *San Jose Mercury-News* that the burglary rate has gone down since the new policy was put in place [March 20](#) and criticized those who predicted that the new policy would lay out a "welcome mat" for thieves.

However, Steckler also warned that crime figures are cyclical and an 11-percernt drop in burglaries can' t necessarily be linked to the new policy.

"The reality is, like all crime, burglary is cyclical,"

Steckler told the *Mercury-News*. "A lot of burglaries are committed by young men ages 15 to 25, and we'll probably see an upward trend during summer vacation."

Michael Salk of the East Bay Alarm Association told the newspaper he agrees with the chief about one thing: "A 30- day sample is statistically irrelevant."

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