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GENERAL NEWS

False alarm ordinance watch**Bethany, Conn.**

Effective July 1, Bethany Resident State Troopers began enforcing the town's ordinance regarding false alarms.

According to The Orange Bulletin, for false burglar and holdup, a maximum of two false alarms in a fiscal year will be allowed without penalty. After that, the fines begin adding up.

The third through eighth false alarms receives a \$50 fine. The fines rise to \$90 when a ninth false alarm occurs.

There is no penalty for an initial false fire alarm, but a second occurrence racks up a \$50 charge. However, instead of forking over the money, alarm owners can request an inspection report from their alarm company certifying that the system is working properly. This report can be submitted instead of paying the fine, if it is sent in within 10 days of the false fire alarm. Each false fire alarm thereafter, receives a \$90 fine.

Cincinnati

A law that requires all security alarms to be registered and imposes higher fines for false alarms has been a success, according to city officials here.

According to the Cincinnati Post, since the law took effect last July, the number of alarm calls requiring a police response has dropped by more than 16 percent.

Cincinnati police have responded to 3,622 fewer alarm calls between August 2003 and April 2004, compared to the same period a year ago. The new law has allowed the police to spend more time on patrol and other duties that impact crime.

The amount of time officers saved based on the reduction on alarm calls equals more than 300 eight-hour shifts - or almost nine hours for each day, according to the report.

Officials began working on a process to reduce false alarms after data indicated nearly 98 percent of all alarms turned out to be false.

Indianapolis

The rising amount of homes and businesses in this city and its surrounding suburbs equipped with security systems are triggering more false alarms - along with tallying more fines.

City officials here originally expected to collect almost \$300,000 in fines for false alarms this year, but now estimate the total could double that, according to The Indianapolis Star.

Six months into the year, police have issued more than \$450,000 worth of citations and have collected \$250,931 to date. Officers attribute the rise to more alarm systems, stricter penalties and better false alarm tracking.

The number of security systems in the area has more than doubled since 2000 to 81,175. More than 23 percent of the calls to police last year were false, up from 9 percent in 2001.

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After officials revised the city's alarm ordinance in 2001 and installed an updated computer system to track false calls, the number of tickets issued increased from 6,622 in that year to 9,500 in the first half of this year.

Under the city ordinance, property owners receive a warning for their first false alarm. The second instance nets a \$25 fine; the third, \$50; fourth, \$75; and five or more adds up to \$100 each.

Salisbury, Md.

False alarm calls have cost the Salisbury Police Department more than \$500,000 in the past four years, according to The Daily Times.

Police Chief Allan Webster said officers responded to more than 10,000 alarms since 2000, each one costing \$50 in time and manpower.

In early April, the city council repealed the city's previous false alarm ordinance and implemented a new one. Now, alarm companies must pay a one-time license fee of \$50. The license must be renewed each year, and there is no cost to renew past the initial registration fee. Operating without a license can result in a fine of up to \$500 and up to 30 days in jail.

Businesses that operate under a contract with an alarm company will also be fined for excessive false alarm calls. The first two occurrences will garner no fines, but the third offense nets a \$50 fine that may escalate up to \$1,000 for the 14th false alarm. Failure to pay any fine within 30 days could result a lien on the property.

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