

## **NEW CITY OF SAN DIEGO ALARM ORDINANCE BECOMES EFFECTIVE ON MAY 8, 2005**

The majority of burglar and robbery alarms that the San Diego Police Department responds to are false, resulting in enormous waste of resources, and may lull some police officers into an unwarranted sense of security. The use of tax dollars to respond to false alarms is excessive and must be reduced. False alarms create an unnecessary danger to citizens and police officers by requiring the Police Department to affect an emergency response.

The City Council adopted a new alarm ordinance to protect the citizens of the City of San Diego by ensuring that public safety resources are available to respond to protect the public's safety and welfare rather than needlessly responding to false alarm activations; to reduce the costs and expenses associated with public safety responses to false alarm activations and ensure that alarm businesses and alarm users abide by all laws relevant to the use of alarm systems, thus reducing false alarm activations.

### ***ALARM ORDINANCE CHANGES:***

- The number of false alarms prior to revocation of a permit are reduced by one;
  1. One false alarms in any 30 day period
  2. Two false alarms in any 90 day period
  3. Three false alarms in any 180 day period
  4. Four false alarms in any one-year period
  
- Revocation fines were substantially increased to more effectively target chronic abusers;
  1. First revocation ---- \$75.00
  2. Second revocation ---- \$150.00
  3. Third revocation ----\$300.00
  4. Fourth and each additional revocation in initial two-year period --- \$1500.00
  
- Chronic abusers whose permits have been revoked and who fail to correct the false alarm problem will be deemed a public nuisance, and once deemed a public nuisance, there will be no police dispatches to alarm signals that are not robbery or call-for-help alarms; upon the user reinstating the permit and correcting the false alarm problem, police response will resume in response to alarm signals;
  
- Alarm businesses will be required to obtain the alarm user permit on behalf of their customers prior to activation of an alarm system;
  
- The permit application must include a signed certification by both the user and alarm business, stating the alarm user has been given written operating instructions for the alarm system, guidelines on how to avoid false alarms, and training on how to operate the system; the certification must also include the City Business Tax Certificate number of the alarm business;
  
- An alarm monitoring company will have the responsibility to ensure, prior to any conversion of an alarm system, that an alarm user permit has been obtained for the alarm user;

- An alarm monitoring company will also have the responsibility to ensure that an alarm user permit has been obtained by any alarm user who has taken over control of an existing monitored alarm system previously controlled by another alarm user;
- An owner or property manager of an apartment complex will have the responsibility to ensure that an alarm user permit has been obtained for a tenant prior to the activation of an alarm system serving the tenant; if an individual unit is vacant and the system remains active, the owner or property manager would be responsible for both the permit and any false alarm activations within the unit;
- An alarm monitoring company would have the responsibility to verify an alarm prior to requesting a police response to an alarm signal, except “duress or robbery” alarms, and would be allowed to verify the alarm by telephone or other electronic means, whether or not actual contact with a person is made, to avoid an unnecessary alarm dispatch.
- Unpermitted alarm users that generate alarm dispatches will pay a \$100.00 penalty fee in conjunction with their alarm permit fee if they fail to obtain the permit within (15) days of notification.
- Residential permits are \$55.00 and commercial permits are \$95.00.
- The Police Department will track and document alarm statistics across a range of alarm users and geographies to establish a baseline of statistics to measure reductions in false alarm responses.
- Twelve months after the effective date of the ordinance, the False Alarm Task Force will reconvene, review the statistics in light of the ordinance amendment, and make a recommendation to the City Council of any needed changes/amendments.

The Police Department and the False Alarm Task Force believe the new ordinance will reduce false alarm calls and will increase efficiency in both costs and use of officer’s time. It is unlikely that police staffing will increase proportionately with the increase in population in the City of San Diego in the foreseeable future. The Department is seeking to find a way to strike a balance between the needs of alarm owners and the constituents who need other types of police services.

Permits can be obtained through the mail or in person.

San Diego Police Department  
 Permits & Licensing Unit MS 735  
 1401 Broadway  
 San Diego, CA 92101

619-531-2243  
 619-531-2249  
 619-531-2274

**More Information:**

City Manager's Report regarding amendments to the regulation of alarm systems in San Diego:

[http://clerkdoc.sannet.gov/RightSite/getcontent/local.pdf?DMW\\_OBJECTID=09001451800b1b37](http://clerkdoc.sannet.gov/RightSite/getcontent/local.pdf?DMW_OBJECTID=09001451800b1b37)

San Diego Municipal Code section 33.370 regarding alarm systems:

<http://clerkdoc.sannet.gov/legtrain/mc/MuniCodeChapter03/Ch03Art03Division37>