

REPORT FROM

OFFICE OF THE CITY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Date: May 2, 2018

CAO File No. 0160-01575-0000

Council File No. 12-0122

Council District: -

To: The Public Safety Committee

From: Richard H. Llewellyn, Jr., City Administrative Officer

Reference: Report request from the Chair of the Public Safety Committee

Subject: **FALSE/UNWANTED FIRE ALARM PROGRAM**

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Council, subject to the approval of the Mayor:

1. Request the City Attorney to assist the Fire Department in the preparation of an Ordinance amending the Los Angeles Municipal Code to provide for the implementation of an Unwanted Fire Alarm Program and corresponding fee schedule;
2. Instruct the Fire Department to procure a contractual services agreement with a third-party vendor for tracking and billing services associated with the Unwanted Fire Alarm Program; and,
3. Instruct the Fire Department to report back to the Public Safety Committee within 120 days on the timeline and progress on implementing the Unwanted Fire Alarm Program, that includes the status of program elements including resources and required staffing; permit fee recommendations; community notification and outreach; alarm user compliance; the appeal and adjudication process; and any other issues or challenges experienced with the program.

SUMMARY

On August 23, 2017, during discussion of Council File No. 12-0122, the Public Safety Committee instructed the City Administrative Officer (CAO) to report back on recommendations for implementation of a false/unwanted fire alarm program under the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD).

Subsequently, the LAFD submitted correspondence and a draft ordinance to the CAO (attached) with details on its plans for, and progress on, the implementation of a false alarm fee and fine program. The LAFD envisions the program to be known as the Unwanted Fire Alarm Program to be consistent with terminology provided in the National Fire Protection Association NFPA-72 National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code.

Based on the information provided by and discussions with the LAFD and the City Attorney, the major steps required for implementation of an Unwanted Fire Alarm Program include a modification to the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) via ordinance to incorporate the characteristics of fire alarm systems, Fire Code provisions, a fee schedule and the required administrative processes. Other elements of the program include providing public outreach to educate property owners and promote enrollment in the Unwanted Fire Alarm Program and the development of a staffing and technology plan to implement and manage the program. As the Unwanted Fire Alarm Program is initiated, the LAFD will make programmatic adjustments based on metrics and initial outcomes.

BACKGROUND

The LAFD estimates that it currently receives notice of approximately 25,000 automatic alarms annually; of this amount, approximately 12,000 are deemed false or unwanted prior to fire companies arriving on-scene. Per the NFPA, a false alarm is classified as a malicious alarm (currently a misdemeanor); whereas an unwanted alarm is caused by system malfunction or incorrect installation. These calls may be generated automatically or through an alarm company based on various alarms components such as smoke detectors, water flow detectors, and manual pull stations. Although many of these alarms are deemed to be unwanted prior to fire companies arriving on-scene, vital resources can nonetheless be diverted for 30 minutes or more by responding to investigate the source of the call, to ensure that there is no imminent emergency or risk to life or property.

Based upon the adoption of an Unwanted Fire Alarm program, the LAFD may recover revenue to offset the expense of deploying unnecessary resources to unwanted fire alarms. In addition, compliance with this enforcement program may reduce the reliance on LAFD resources, which may enhance response times to actual emergencies.

The LAFD proposes an Unwanted Fire Alarm Program with similarities to the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) false alarm fee and fine program. The LAPD's program utilizes a customized false alarm management system (CryWolf) to track false alarms and calculate invoices, along with nine departmental staff to process alarm permits and renewals; investigate violations; and manage billing, collections, appeals, payment plans and account reconciliation. The LAPD sets alarm permit and false alarm fees based on the cost of LAPD and the Office of Finance staff time required to process and manage permits and fees, as well as sworn staff time spent responding to false alarms. The fees are adjusted on an annual basis. The LAPD receives approximately 54,000 false alarm calls annually and generates more than \$11 million a year in revenue from permits and false alarm fees. Through this program, the number of false alarm calls has been reduced from a high of 145,000 calls in 2009 to 54,000 in 2017. The LAPD alarm permit fee for 2017-18 is \$48; the initial false alarm fee is \$216, with increased rates for subsequent false alarms. The LAPD program also includes an 'Alarm School' which allows alarm system users with a valid alarm permit who have experienced a false burglar alarm activation to complete an on-line, or mail-in study course instead of paying one false alarm charge. This 'Alarm School' option will also be incorporated into the LAFD program.

Unwanted Fire Alarm Ordinance and Corresponding Fee Schedule

The LAFD's proposed program consists of a fire alarm permit fee and a progressive fine schedule for unwanted alarm occurrence. In determining an optimal fine level amount, the Department calculated the costs incurred by an Engine Company dispatched on-scene to validate an unwanted alarm. The Department determined that the average time to respond and travel to a call, evaluate and determine an unwanted alarm, and travel back to the station is 30 minutes. The original 30-minute full-cost recovery calculation for an Engine Company comprised of a Captain I, an Engineer, and two Firefighters would equate to \$696. The Department determined that this amount was onerous for an initial violation fee, and therefore proposed a methodology that would allow for the full cost recovery of the average 15-minute time period spent on-scene only. Based upon this methodology, a fee of \$348 would be imposed for the first unwanted alarm call out.

Upon further analysis and discussions with the Department, however, it was determined that the Department's original calculations were based upon the costs of a full 24-hour platoon duty response instead of a single Engine Company response. With the Department's concurrence, it was agreed that calculating the penalty fee based upon a single Engine Company response was the proper methodology. Based upon this revision, a cost calculation of \$172 for a 15-minute on-scene time, or \$343 for a 30-minute response time, was deemed appropriate.

This calculation, provided as an attachment, is based on the average hourly direct cost of \$336 as of February 2018, for a single Engine Company on platoon duty, comprised of one Captain I, one Engineer, and two Firefighter IIIs, including bonus and overtime costs. Additionally, to capture full-costs, the rate established in the 2017-18 Cost Allocation Plan (CAP) 39 prepared by the Controller's Office of 141.88 percent, plus a Fire Department-calculated Division overhead rate of 12.44 percent was applied to the direct salary rate to calculate an indirect cost of \$351 per hour. This resulted in a total cost of \$687 per hour, or \$343 for a 30-minute response. It is therefore recommended that the Department pursue an initial Unwanted Alarm Fee of \$343. The recommended per incident alarm fee schedule is provided below, along with a comparison of local fire service agency fee rates for unwanted alarms.

Unwanted Alarm Incidents	With Alarm Permit	Without Alarm Permit
1 st	\$343*	\$443* (\$343 + \$100)
2 nd	\$393 (\$343 + \$50)	\$543 (\$343 + \$200)
3 rd	\$443 (\$343 + \$100)	\$643 (\$343 + \$300)
4 th	\$493 (\$343 + \$150)	\$743 (\$343 + \$400)

*The 1st Alarm fee of \$343 would be waived with completion of Alarm School.

Fire Service Agency	1 st Alarm	2 nd Alarm	3 rd Alarm
City of Beverly Hills	\$214 (waived with Alarm School)	\$266	\$373
City of Pasadena	\$ 0	\$353	\$353
Orange County Fire Authority	\$ 0	\$100	\$250
City of Santa Monica	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$526

Source: LAFD

The Department's proposed draft ordinance also provides for an initial \$48 alarm permit fee requirement in order to capture the names, addresses and other related information of all alarm users within the City. The annual renewal of this permit would be \$31. This proposal was based on utilizing the LAPD's Alarm System Subscriber permit fee rates for 2017-18. As stated previously, the LAPD's rates are based on a time and motion study of the cost of LAPD and the Office of Finance staff time required to process and issue permits, and is re-evaluated on an annual basis. It is recommended that the LAFD work in consultation with the City Attorney to develop an appropriate initial permit fee not to exceed the reasonable costs for staff time and contract costs to process and issue permit applications, to be reviewed and updated annually, and present the proposed permit fee amount to the Council for consideration and approval.

Implementation of an LAFD Unwanted Fire Alarm Program will also require an ordinance modification to the LAMC. The ordinance should ideally incorporate the necessary characteristics of fire alarm systems, Fire Code provisions, a fee schedule and an administrative review process. The proposed draft ordinance prepared for consideration by the City Attorney, provides for the recovery of costs associated with the unnecessary deployment of LAFD resources, and also includes incentives for properties experiencing unwanted alarms to obtain an alarm permit.

This Office recommends that the Council request the City Attorney to work with the Fire Department to prepare an ordinance amending the LAMC for the implementation of an Unwanted Fire Alarm Program and associated fee schedule, and to return to Council for approval.

Contractual Services and Staffing Requirements

The LAFD is currently exploring an intergovernmental agreement to utilize an existing public agency contract to track unwanted alarms and the issuance and collection of permit fees, renewal notices, and violation fees. The Department anticipates that a revenue-sharing agreement could be negotiated with the vendor to mitigate initial start-up costs. Contracting for this service would also allow the City to avoid laying-off personnel should the occurrence of unwanted fire alarms within the City be reduced as a result of the program's implementation.

The Department estimates that one Management Analyst and one Senior Administrative Clerk would be required to undertake various programmatic duties consisting of contract administration and dispute resolution; evaluation of appeals; processing of requests for waivers; and the performance of other support functions as necessary to ensure an effective program.

This Office recommends that the Council instruct the Fire Department to procure a contract with a third-party vendor for tracking and billing services of unwanted fire alarms. Once the contract is executed, the Department should return to Council to report back on the need for any additional position authorities and the timing of the required resources as necessary. It is also recommended that the costs for any additional personnel and of the cost-sharing agreement with a third-party vendor be considered in the permit and/or penalty fee rates as appropriate.

The Department estimates that it may generate revenue from 5,000 alarm users paying a first offense false alarm fee, which would translate to \$1.72 million based on the recommended initial penalty fee of \$343. It should be noted that this amount would be impacted by the terms of the

cost-sharing agreement with the third-party billing and processing vendor, and any costs associated with additional staffing needs. As such, a true fiscal impact is not known at this time.

Interim Unwanted Alarm Enforcement Initiatives

Despite the lack of a current officially dedicated program, the LAFD has recently undertaken interim efforts to accurately track false and unwanted alarms and properly align dispatch protocols. These initiatives include a Fire Watch Trial Program, which refers recurring alarm users to a Regulation No. 4 (fire protection systems) Hearing; site investigations performed by the Fire Prevention Bureau to gain compliance; and, the utilization of computer-aided dispatch and National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) data to conduct monthly audits of various citywide fire systems including automatic alarms, water flows, smoke detectors and bells.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The General Fund impact attributed to adoption of the recommendations in this report is related to the total revenue generated by the program's permit and penalty fees, net of the program's operational expenses—figures which are unknown at this time. The LAFD estimates that it currently receives notice of approximately 25,000 automatic alarms annually; of this amount, approximately 12,000 are deemed false or unwanted prior to fire companies arriving on-scene. Based upon the adoption of the unwanted fire alarm ordinance and an initial penalty fee of \$343, an estimated revenue amount of approximately \$1.72 million may be realized through payment of unwanted alarm penalty fees. Offsetting program operational expense costs are subject to contractual negotiation and subsequent staffing level determination.

RHL:JCY:04180103

Attachments

**ESTIMATED COST FOR ENGINE COMPANY ALARM RESPONSE
FISCAL YEAR 2017-18**

STAFFING	CLASS CODE	NO.	2017-18 AVERAGE SALARY**	TOTAL SALARY	TOTAL SOD**	SOD PER AUTH 43.88%	EMERG OT \$ 49.08	BONUS \$ 1,507	EXPENSES \$ 2,858	TOTAL DIRECT COST	CAP 39 FRINGE BENEFITS 69.86%	CAP 39 CENTRAL SERVICES 22.89%	DIVISION/ BATTALION OVERHEAD 12.44%	CAP 39 DEPT. ADMIN. 49.14%	TOTAL
----------	------------	-----	--------------------------	--------------	-------------	------------------------	----------------------	-------------------	----------------------	-------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------	--	-------------------------------	-------

LIGHT FORCE/ASSESSMENT LIGHT FORCE

CAPT I	2141	1	\$ 135,302	\$ 135,302	\$ 59,344	\$ 59,344	\$ 49	\$ 1,507	\$ 2,858	\$ 199,060	\$ 94,509	\$ 30,971	\$ 16,832	\$ 66,488	\$ 407,859
ENGR	2131	1	\$ 117,095	\$ 117,095	\$ 51,358	\$ 51,358	\$ 49	\$ 1,507	\$ 2,858	\$ 172,867	\$ 81,791	\$ 26,803	\$ 14,567	\$ 57,541	\$ 353,568
FFIII	2112-3	2	\$ 111,311	\$ 222,623	\$ 97,642	\$ 48,821	\$ 98	\$ 3,014	\$ 5,716	\$ 329,093	\$ 155,502	\$ 50,958	\$ 27,694	\$ 109,397	\$ 672,644
TOTAL		4		\$ 475,020	\$ 208,344		\$ 196	\$ 6,028	\$ 11,432	\$ 701,020	\$ 331,801	\$ 108,732	\$ 59,092	\$ 233,425	\$ 1,434,071

* Based on PaySR data as of 2-19-18

** Scheduled Overtime Duty

Source: LAFD

Average Hourly Direct Cost: \$ 336

Hourly Cost: \$ 687


15-minutes: \$ 172

30-minutes: \$ 343

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

September 1, 2017

TO: Richard H. Llewellyn, City Administrative Officer
Office of the City Administrative Officer

FROM:  Ralph M. Terrazas, Fire Chief
Fire Department

SUBJECT: UNWANTED FIRE ALARM PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

SUMMARY

On August 23, 2017, the Public Safety Committee instructed the Office of the City Administrative Officer to develop an implementation plan for the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) Unwanted Fire Alarm Program (the term "unwanted fire alarm" is used to be consistent with terminology contained in National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 72 - National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code). We are providing the following information toward developing a workable implementation plan for the LAFD.

Unwanted Fire Alarm Ordinance

The LAFD has prepared a working draft ordinance (attached) to amend applicable provisions of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) that would incorporate the characteristics of fire alarm systems, Fire Code provisions, fee schedule and administrative processes. This draft, providing a very basic structure, will be transmitted to the City Attorney to initiate discussion toward development of a comprehensive unwanted fire alarm ordinance.

Full cost recovery for 30 minutes of a four member engine company is calculated at \$696. This amount covers the time the call is dispatched, travel time to the incident, evaluation time on-scene to determine the unwanted alarm, and travel time back to quarters. Because this is a high amount to implement for a new program, the LAFD recommends a fee of \$348 which covers the average time of 15 minutes on-scene to determine the unwanted alarm. Shown below are false fire alarm fees of other local fire agencies:

Fire Agency	1 st Alarm	2 nd Alarm	3 rd Alarm
Beverly Hills	\$214 (waived with Alarm School)	\$266	\$373
Pasadena	\$0	\$353	\$353
Orange Co. Fire Authority	\$0	\$100	\$250
Santa Monica	\$0	\$0	\$526

The draft ordinance provides for an alarm permit fee requirement to capture the names, addresses and other relevant information of alarm users. The current LAPD permit fee is \$48, with an annual renewal fee of \$31.

The proposed fee schedule shown below provides higher penalty assessments for alarm users without a permit, with increased penalty assessments as the number of false alarms increases.

Proposed Alarm Fee Schedule per Incident

False Alarms	With Permit	Without Permit
1st	\$348	\$348 + \$100 = \$448
2nd	\$348 + \$50 = \$398	\$348 + \$200 = \$548
3rd	\$348 + \$100 = \$448	\$348 + \$300 = \$648
4th	\$348 + \$150 = \$498	\$348 + \$400 = \$748

The LAFD program will offer Alarm School online and through a mail-in home study course, allowing alarm users with a valid alarm permit to obtain a fee waiver of the lowest false alarm activation charge per 365 days.

A written appeal process, similar to the LAPD, will be included in the ordinance. The LAPD allows for waiver/reversal of the fee if activation of the alarm system was caused by documented criminal activity as evidenced by a LAPD Investigation Report, or due to acts of nature (e.g., earthquake, flood, gale force winds, etc.)

Contracting Billing and Collection Services

In 2009, the LAPD contracted for development of the customized false alarm management system, CryWolf, to track false alarms, process invoices and collect payments. System development was at a cost of approximately \$1.75M and took approximately nine months to complete. CryWolf interfaces with the Office of Finance LATAX system for the alarm permitting and renewal process. It also interfaces with the LAPD Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system to track the number of responses to alarm call incidents at each address. This feature allows the LAPD to manage resource deployments to alarm calls. That is, due to the high volume of false burglar alarms, and in accordance with LAMC Section 103.206(l)(6), the LAPD does not dispatch an officer response to an address after two false alarms in a 365 day period, unless verification of an unauthorized or attempted unauthorized entry is received (e.g., by alarm system user, physical observation). The integration of CryWolf into the CAD has enabled LAPD dispatchers to determine the addresses for which two false alarms have been cited.

The LAPD Alarm Section is comprised of nine staff members at an annual cost of approximately \$800,000 to process approximately 54,000 false alarms, a reduction from 145,000 in 2009. The LAPD believes that administering the program internally has been effective given its high volume of false alarms and the complexity of issues and disputes that arise.

While integrating CryWolf with the CAD has allowed the LAPD to manage resource deployments to alarm calls, it would be inappropriate to apply the "verification policy" to the LAFD. The additional time required to obtain verification could, potentially, result in the loss of life or significant property loss. Compared to the LAPD, the LAFD anticipates a significantly lower volume of unwanted alarm billings in its first year, estimated at 10,000 to 15,000.

For these reasons, the LAFD is exploring piggy-backing onto a contract with another public agency for unwanted alarm cost recovery services as a more cost beneficial and expeditious option toward implementation. Revenue sharing with the City would be the payment mechanism to the contractor. There would be no technology start-up costs if the vendor's standard transfer and processing software for the alarm incident data files extracted from the LAFD's data base does not require customization. If interface methodologies are required, the additional costs could be paid through a monthly pro-rated reduction of the City share. Further, out-sourcing would result in limited on-going staff costs to administer the program. The contractor's services would be in accordance with LAFD's alarm ordinance, business rules and fee schedule, including:

- Processing alarm permit applications and annual renewal notices.
- Completing billing (invoicing) and collection process services, including written communications to alarm users (warnings, notices, fees and charges regarding unwanted alarm fees).
- Providing for an efficient payment process through various payment options (e.g., check, credit card, debit card).
- Tracking and monitoring unwanted alarm incident data.
- Providing customer service support for questions and dispute resolution.
- Development assistance of Alarm School online through the LAFD website.
- Receiving and processing written supporting documentation for appeals of unwanted alarm billings.
- Referral of delinquent accounts to collections.
- Providing training to LAFD staff of its system and processes.

For illustration purposes, only, the below calculation shows potential revenue to the City and to the contractor based on the specified assumptions. This calculation assumes a 90%/10% cost share for the City and contractor, respectively, with processing costs deducted from gross collections to arrive at the cost sharing amounts.

First offense fee: \$348
of alarm users paying first offense fee: 5,000
Gross collections (\$348 x 5,000): \$1,740,000
Processing costs (e.g., mailings, postage, bank/credit card fees): (\$200,000)
Net collections (\$1,740,000 - \$200,000): \$1,540,000
City revenue share at 90%: \$1,386,000
Contractor revenue share at 10%: \$154,000

At this time, it is anticipated that one Management Analyst (\$92,106) and one Senior Administrative Clerk (\$66,378), at an annual cost of \$158,484, would be required to manage the contract, assist the contractor to resolve issues and disputes, evaluate appeals and requests for waivers, and perform other administrative and support activities to ensure an effective program.

Public Education

Providing information to the Greater Los Angeles Security Alarm Association (GLASAA), Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), alarm companies, building owners and the general public regarding the alarm fee program, and preventing unwanted alarms by repairing alarm systems, will be an important activity prior to implementation and on an on-going basis. Such information will also be disseminated through the LAFD website, social media, and other means of mass communication.

Timeline for Program Implementation

Many of the activities required for program implementation will be performed concurrently. We have cited below the various steps required to complete the process, which we project will take up to 120 days to ensure proper, accurate and effective implementation. It is anticipated that most of the tasks will be dedicated to working with the selected contractor to develop and implement the billing, collection and administrative processes.

- City Attorney prepares and submits the unwanted fire alarm ordinance to City Council.
- LAFD Tasks:
 - Identify appropriate contract with a public agency for unwanted/false alarm billing, collection and other services; negotiate with the vendor on contract terms and conditions.
 - Work with the City Attorney on contract development.
 - Prepare a report to the Board of Fire Commissioners recommending contract approval and submission to the City Council and Mayor for consideration.
 - Work with selected contractor on implementation tasks (see below).
 - Hold discussions with stakeholders and develop public education information regarding the prospective unwanted alarm fee, and measures to prevent unwanted alarms and citations.
- LAFD/Contractor Implementation Tasks:
 - Establish alarm data base and import alarm location and alarm data to contractor.
 - Develop website information (ordinance, appeal guidelines, tips for reducing false alarms, FAQs, online alarm school).
 - Integrate online payment processing.
 - Establish payment and collection processes (bank lockbox and alarm program bank account; engage online payment processor; walk-in payment process; delinquent collection process; accounting reconciliation procedures.)

- Establish appeal process and waiver rationales.
- Review interface methodologies (alarm incident data transfer process; test alarm data interfaces).
- Establish administrative processes (review ordinance provisions and interpretations; develop operating procedures and telephone scripts).
- Prepare program correspondence, forms, invoice formats; review and test address (geo) validation process.
- Conduct end-to-end program test to validate proper functioning of processes and systems.

We look forward to discussions with your staff on this effort. Please feel free to contact June Gibson, Fire Administrator, at 978-3731 or Battalion Chief Rodd Souter at 978-3579.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That City Council:

1. Request the City Attorney to prepare and transmit amendments to the Los Angeles Municipal Code to implement an unwanted fire alarm ordinance.
2. Authorize the Fire Department to piggy-back onto a contract with another public agency providing unwanted alarm cost recovery services.

Attachment

DRAFT

ORDINANCE NO. _____

An ordinance amending Sections 57.901 and 57.907 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code relating to Fire Alarm Systems.

THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES DO ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Section 57.901 and Section 57.907 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code is added to read:

Sec. 57.901: Fire Protection Systems

Sec. 57.907: Fire Alarm and Detection Systems

(a) **Definitions.** Unless the context or subject matter otherwise requires, terms defined here shall have the following meaning when used in this chapter:

1. **Alarm Signal** – A signal indicating an emergency requiring immediate action, such as an alarm for fire from a manual pull station, a water flow alarm, an alarm from an automatic fire protective signaling system, or other emergency signal.
2. **Alarm System User** - The person who controls both the Alarm System and the premises upon which it is installed, or the person who controls the premises and is the subscriber, client or customer of an Alarm Company Operator.
3. **Annunciation** – A visual or visual and audible alarm at the main fire alarm control panel which indicates the location of any alarm or trouble signal reported by a fire protective signaling device.
4. **Automatic Fire Detection Alarm System** - Is a system that complies with Los Angeles Fire Department requirements and is an approved arrangement of smoke, rate-of-rise, fixed temperature, or any other detector, which is approved for the use intended. The system shall alert all occupants of a building in case of fire and, when required by the Fire Chief, notify the Fire Department through Central Station Monitoring.

5. **Board** - The Los Angeles Fire Department Board of Fire Commissioners.
6. **Department** - The Los Angeles Fire Department.
7. **Unwanted Fire Alarm** - Shall mean an activated fire alarm or fire alarm signal from any alarm system, which causes response by the Los Angeles Fire Department, but for which no emergency situation exists or where there is no evidence to indicate that there was an emergency situation as determined by the responding officer. Unwanted fire alarms, that qualify under this section includes:
 - (1) Alarm caused by improper alarm system installation or maintenance. This includes missing or depleted backup batteries, loose connections, poorly installed or mounted smoke detectors or otherwise overly sensitive detection devices.
 - (2) Alarm caused by construction and/or demolition to the fire alarm system.
 - (3) Alarm caused by construction related activities such as painting operation or other operations that cause dust to release.
 - (4) Alarm caused by problematic or out of service fire alarm systems.
 - (5) Alarm caused by failure to provide proper notification to the responsible parties (Alarm Company and Fire Dispatch) of a fire alarm system being repaired or tested.
 - (6) Alarm caused by occupant or owner conducting a fire drill.
 - (7) A security (burglar) alarm reported as a fire alarm by an Alarm company.
 - (8) Alarm for which there is no explanation. If a cause for the alarm cannot be identified - no pull station activated, smoke was not present, etc. - the alarm system will be assumed to have malfunctioned.
8. **Fire Alarm System** - A system or portion of a system consisting of components and circuits arranged to monitor and annunciate the status of a fire alarm or supervisory signal-initiating devices and to initiate the

appropriate response to those signals.

9. **Heat-Activated Detectors** – Detectors capable of reacting to rapidly rising or elevated temperatures.
10. **HVAC** – An abbreviation for the words “heating, ventilation, air conditioning.”
11. **Local Alarm System** – A local system sounding an alarm as the result of the operation of a manual pull station or the operation of fire protection systems, such as water flowing in a sprinkler system, the discharge of an automatic fire extinguishing system, the detection of smoke, or the detection of heat.
12. **Schedule of Fees or User Fees** - Fees established annually by the Board of Fire Commissioners and approved by the City Council.
13. **Trouble Signal** – An audible and visual signal indicating an abnormal condition, such as a circuit break or a ground occurring in the devices or wiring associated with a fire protective signaling system.
14. **Zone** – A building or a defined area of a building which is approved by the Chief for purposes of identifying locations of devices.

(b) Fire Alarm Requirements:

1. **Fire Alarm Permit** - No person shall install or connect an Alarm System without a valid Fire Alarm System installation permit having been issued for that purpose by the Fire Department.
2. **Duties of the Alarm System User** –
 - (1) The Alarm System User shall display on the premises the Alarm System permit number and the telephone number of the person or representative designated to respond to the location in the event of an alarm.
 - (2) All Alarm System notifications to the Department shall begin with the complete address including unit or apartment number where the alarm is being sounded, the specific alarm device type and a call back

telephone number. Additional information that may be required by the Department Dispatcher may include the fire alarm permit number and the Alarm System User's name.

(3) The Alarm System User or a designee of the Alarm System User is required to respond to the premises following activation of a fire alarm after being requested to do so by the Department. This requested response shall be made within a reasonable time and, in no event, more than thirty (30) minutes after being requested to do so by the Department.

3. Impermissible Alarm Systems and Uses.

(1) It shall be unlawful for an Alarm System User to control or possess any Security (burglar) and/or Fire Alarm System, which generates, transmits or issues a False Fire Alarm as defined in this Section.

(2) It is unlawful for any Person to knowingly activate a Security (burglar) and/or Fire Alarm System for the purpose of summoning the Fire Department except if such person knows or suspects that there is an actual fire or related emergency as defined in this Section.

(3) No person shall operate or use any Alarm System that emits a sound similar to that of an emergency vehicle siren or a civil defense warning system.

(4) No person shall provide false information, which causes the Department to dispatch fire resources to the location of an Alarm System.

4. Unwanted Alarm Fees and Penalties.

(i) **False Alarm Fees.** Alarm System Users shall pay an Unwanted Alarm fee of \$348.00 for each False Alarm.

(2) **Penalty Assessments.** All penalties assessed under this section shall be in addition to any False alarm fee.

i. **Permitted Alarm System.** In addition to the False Alarm fee an alarm System User with a valid permit shall pay a penalty assessment of \$50.00 for the second False Alarm within 365 days

of the first False Alarm. The penalty assessment will increase by \$50.00 increments for each additional False Alarm incurred during a 365 day period.

- ii. **Non-Permitted Alarm System.** In addition to the False Alarm fee an Alarm System User who does not possess a valid permit on the date of the False Alarm shall pay a penalty assessment of \$100.00 for the first False Alarm. The penalty assessment will increase by \$100.00 increments for each additional False Alarm incurred during a 365 day period.

5. Late Permit Penalty – An Alarm System User who fails to obtain a permit as required by this Section shall pay a Late Permit Penalty of \$15.00 in addition to the permit fee established in Section XXXXX.

6. Waiver of Fees – The Fire Chief may waive the fees and penalties in compliance with guidelines for the waiver of fees adopted by the Board of Fire Commissioners.

7. Violation – Violation of this section, other than by failure to pay a fee or penalty assessment, shall constitute a misdemeanor.