

LOS ANGELES FIRE COMMISSION

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June 2, 2015

Honorable Members of the City Council
City of Los Angeles
City Hall, Room 395
Attn: City Clerk

Honorable Eric Garcetti
Mayor, City of Los Angeles
Room 303, City Hall
Attn: Mandy Morales, Legislative Coordinator

[BFC 15-053] – UNWANTED ALARM MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

At its meeting of June 2, 2015, the Board of Fire Commissioners approved the report for the Unwanted Alarm Management Implementation Plan. The report is hereby transmitted concurrently to the Mayor and City Council for consideration and approval.

Should you need additional information, please contact the Board of Fire Commissioners' office at 213-978-3838.

Sincerely,

Leticia Gómez
Commission Executive Assistant

Attachment

cc: Board of Fire Commissioners (without attachments)
Fire Chief Ralph M. Terrazas (without attachments)

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



RALPH M. TERRAZAS
FIRE CHIEF

May 18, 2015

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS FILE NO. 15-053
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TO: Board of Fire Commissioners
 FROM: *RMT* Ralph M. Terrazas, Fire Chief
 SUBJECT: UNWANTED ALARM MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

FINAL ACTION:	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved w/Corrections	<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn
	<input type="checkbox"/> Denied	<input type="checkbox"/> Received & Filed	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

SUMMARY

As directed by the Board of Fire Commissioners and the Budget and Finance Committee, the Fire Department is providing an update for the Unwanted Alarm Implementation Plan that is being proposed to register fire alarm systems, improve performance of problematic systems, and to recover the cost of emergency responses to repetitive unwanted alarm locations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Board:

1. Approve the Unwanted Alarm Management Implementation Plan.
2. Instruct the Fire Department to develop a Request for Proposal (RFP) to outsource the tracking of and billing for false alarms.
3. Recommend that the City Council request the City Attorney to prepare, and transmit to Council within 30 days, a draft Ordinance to the Los Angeles Municipal Code (L.A.M.C.), 57.122 establishing charging a fee for an Unwanted Alarms, 57.202, defining an Unwanted Alarm, and 57.113.6.3.2 establishing the method of calculating the fee.
4. Request that this report be forwarded to the City Council for consideration and approval.

DISCUSSION

False alarms also referred to as "Unwanted Alarms" by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) are a problem for everyone, the alarm user/alarm owner, the alarm company and the Fire Department. Several cities throughout the country have implemented no response policies due to excessive false alarms. With the growing number of alarm systems used throughout the City of Los Angeles, all alarm users or alarm owners must be made aware of how to correctly operate their alarm system. In

addition to the personnel costs to City of Los Angeles taxpayers, there are other concerns impacted by fire response to unwanted alarms. For example, firefighters can become complacent when they routinely respond to unwanted alarms at the same location.

Limited resources and the increasing number of automatic alarm calls have hampered our efforts in attempting to educate user/alarm owners and alarm companies to address unwanted alarms. Developing an Unwanted Alarm Management Plan that includes an online education component as well as developing educational materials for our first responders and associated penalties will serve as an inducement for alarm owners to fix their alarms.

The initial enforcement will be on commercial properties and multi-family residences only. After one year of gathering data, the enforcement, if warranted will expand to single family residents.

Definition of Unwanted Alarms (FireStatLA)

Unwanted Fire Alarm shall mean an activated fire alarm or fire alarm signal from any alarm system which causes response by the 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 include:

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.

Implementation Plan

The Department has developed the following action items that will be required to implement an Unwanted Alarm Management Plan. The following is a projected timeline for the various steps required for implementation. It must be noted that the program costs (including start-up costs for system development and annual billing processing costs) will not be known until responses are received following release of a Request for Proposals (RFP). Given that no funding has been appropriated for this program, the RFP will state that contract award will be subject to funding approval by the Mayor and City Council. Following completion of the RFP process, the LAFD will transmit a report to the City Council of its recommendations.

UNWANTED ALARM ACTION ITEMS	ACTIVITY DATES
Establish stakeholders group; initiate meetings	May-June 2015
Program CAD identifier(s) for unwanted alarms	June-July 2015
Develop Unwanted Fire Alarm Policies and Procedures	June-August 2015
Prepare fee and revenue analysis; develop implementation plan (e.g., billing process, including staffing requirements; system requirements; develop draft Unwanted Alarm Ordinance with City Attorney; develop fee structure; public education materials; appeals process)	June-September 2015
Develop and release RFP for billing services (contract award subject to funding by Mayor/City Council); evaluate responses including conducting interviews; prepare report to Fire Commission recommending: City Attorney prepare Unwanted Alarm Ordinance; contract award; staffing and funding requirements by Mayor/City Council; CAO report	July- November 2015
Submit Ordinance to City Council by City Attorney	November – December 2015
Consideration of Unwanted Alarm Ordinance by City Council	December 2015 – January 2016
Publication or posting of Ordinance	January – February 2016
Unwanted alarm fee implementation with billing contractor	February – March 2016

Board report prepared by Deputy Chief John N. Vidovich, Bureau of Fire Prevention and Public Safety.