



## **CITY OF MENIFEE**

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SUBJECT: Burglar Alarm Registration Process, Ordinance and Fee Resolution

MEETING DATE: February 17, 2021

TO: Mayor and City Council

PREPARED BY: Imelda Huerta, Senior Management Analyst

REVIEWED BY: Jeff Wyman, Assistant City Manager

APPROVED BY: Armando G. Villa, City Manager

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### **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

1. Conduct a public hearing; and
2. Introduce an Ordinance, adding Chapter 11.30 to Title 11 of the Menifee Municipal Code establishing regulations for the operations of burglar alarm systems; and
3. Adopt a Resolution establishing burglar alarm permit and false alarm response fees; and
4. Approve City Manager authority to enter into a contract with a third-party for security alarm systems management services and authorize City Manager approval of subsequent amendments.

### **DISCUSSION**

Every year, law enforcement responds to a significant number of false alarms. In Menifee, prior to July 1, 2020, the Riverside County Sheriff's Department (RSO) responded to approximately 3,560 security false alarm calls in 2018 and 3,603 in 2019. On average, RSO responded to 9.8 false alarm calls per day.

Between July 1, 2020 and January 28, 2021, the Menifee Police Department (MPD) received 1,881 alarm calls, of which 1,635 were dispatched to patrol officers. Of the 1,635 dispatched alarm calls, only 18, or .95%, were found to be legitimate alarms. Of the 1,881 total alarm calls, 931 were for commercial alarms and 950 were for residential alarms. Many calls are from repeat locations; 62% of the commercial alarms were at repeat locations and 22% of the residential alarms were at repeat locations. On average, MPD officers are responding to 8.3 alarm calls per day, most of which are false.

A false alarm can be caused by a few different reasons, such as faulty/malfunctioning equipment, user error, poor installation, or the lack of maintenance to the equipment. Once an alarm is triggered, the alarm company notifies dispatch to report the activation. Each activation requires an emergency response from the Police Department. The false alarm calls pull from law enforcement resources, which could lead to longer response times to other legitimate crimes, and/or other emergency calls.

The Menifee Police Department wishes to be proactive in minimizing false alarm calls. The Police have previously analyzed false alarm data and have determined that there is a significant cost associated with responding to false alarms. The average time spent responding to and handling a false alarm varies between 30 minutes and one hour, occasionally longer depending on the incident type. All alarm calls require a minimum two officer response for officer safety. The approximate fiscal impact is \$200.00 per response. This includes the officers' salary and benefits, dispatch services, vehicle fuel and maintenance, and other clerical duties. In addition to the fiscal impact, there is also lost officer productivity.

Position	# Staff Required	Hourly Rate	Benefits	Total
Police Officer	2	\$47.17	\$12.18	\$118.70
Records Tech	1	\$31.94	\$10.45	\$42.39
Dispatcher	1	\$46.80	\$12.91	\$59.71
Vehicle	# Vehicles	Fuel	Maintenance	Total
Tahoe/Charger	2	\$4.81	\$1.88	\$13.38
<b>GRANT TOTAL:</b>				<b>\$234.18 per hour</b>

The purpose of this Ordinance is designed to minimize the amount of residential and commercial owners who have frequent false alarms. This will be done through a permit process and an escalating fee system. Staff researched fees from other local agencies, including Chula Vista, Citrus Heights, Fullerton, Pasadena, San Diego, Murrieta, Vista, Los Angeles, and RSO and propose the registration/permit fees, and false alarm fee as noted below.

### **Alarm Registration/Permit**

The reason for requiring alarms to be registered is to obtain the alarm owner's name to allow false alarms to be turned off. In addition, registration/permitting provides the Police Department with emergency contact information in case of a true emergency.

Alarm registration and permitting requirements vary dramatically from city to city. In some cities, the alarm owner is required to register the alarm upon installation. This provides the police with emergency contact information on alarm systems. In others, registration is never required.

The proposed Ordinance would require an alarm owner to register the alarm and obtain a permit once it is purchased. This will allow the Police Department to have emergency contact information for habitual false alarms, but will not place any burden on owners of properly functioning systems. In addition, it reduces the amount of paperwork needed to maintain a security alarm Ordinance.

The recommended residential alarm registration fee is \$25 for year one and \$10 for year two plus subsequent years. Due to frequent changes in commercial permit holders requiring an update to the permit each time, the recommended alarm registration fee for commercial alarms is \$35 for year one and \$20 for year two plus subsequent years. The residential registration/permit fee for persons aged 55 and older will be waived. If an owner does not register their alarm, a non-compliance fee of \$50 will be imposed on residential systems and \$60 for non-residential systems. However, the permit fee will be deducted from the penalty once the system is registered/permitted. Staff is also recommending a six-month grace period at implementation.

See the fee chart below:

**Burglar Alarm Registration/Permit Fees per Year**

<b>Alarm Type</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Cost of Fee</b>
Residential	1	\$25
Residential	2 +	\$10
Residential	Non-Compliance Penalty	\$50*
Commercial	1	\$35
Commercial	2 +	\$20
Commercial	Non-Compliance Penalty	\$60*
Persons aged 55 and older**	1 +	NO FEE

*\*Alarm permit fee will be deducted from this amount*

*\*\*Residential only*

**False Alarm Fee**

The proposed Ordinance and Resolution allows one false alarm in a 365 consecutive day period without a fine imposed. Beginning with the second false alarm, if the alarm is in compliance with a permit, the alarm owner would be issued a \$25 fine. For each additional false alarm within the 365 day period, the fine escalates as noted below:

**False Alarm Response Fees**

<b>False Alarm Type</b>	<b># of Alarm</b>	<b>Cost of Fee*</b>
Residential/Commercial	First	No Charge – Issue order to comply
Residential/Commercial	Second	\$25
Residential/Commercial	Third	\$100
Residential/Commercial	Fourth	\$200
Residential/Commercial	Fifth & Subsequent	\$300

*\*If an invoice for the service charge is unpaid sixty (60) days after mailing, a penalty of ten percent (10%) shall be charged, and an additional one and one-half percent (1.5%) per month shall be charged until the charges and penalties are paid in full.*

Alarm owners who accidentally set off newly installed alarms will not be penalized, nor will owners of alarms in which there may have been a break-in attempt, but the burglar had since fled. The intent of this proposal is not to penalize those alarm owners who have properly functioning alarms, but to recover some of the costs of responding to repeated false alarms at the same locations.

### **False Alarm Tracking**

The most common issues with alarm Ordinances include tracking the number and location of false alarms, determining if fees are due, and collecting the fees. Because this takes a great deal of time, the staff recommendation is to utilize the services of an alarm tracking company. These services would be performed on behalf of the City for a percentage of the revenues recovered. As proposed, the Police Department would submit false alarm information to the alarm company. Staff has prepared a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a third-party security alarm systems management services. Additionally, staff proposes and recommends City Manager authority to enter into the contract and approve subsequent amendments.

### **City Staff Participation**

The proposed Ordinance is designed to minimize unnecessary burden to City staff and police resources, while promoting the most effective reduction in false alarms. In addition, appeals to the false alarm penalties and/or denial or suspension of alarm permits would be directed to the appropriate staff as noted in the Ordinance for resolution. A hearing filing fee of \$25 will apply.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE**

Regular City Business

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The accompanying Resolution will allow the City to recover a portion of the costs associated with responding to false alarm calls by Police, as well as additional revenues from alarm permit fees.

Due to the implementation of the permit program and fee structure being established in the latter part of the start-up year for the Menifee Police Department, the revenues generated are expected to be minimal as the City must conduct outreach to notify residents and businesses of the permit program. Revenue for this program is not included in the FY 20/21 budget, and any such revenue received will be evaluated to determine if a budget adjustment is warranted. In future years, a revenue line item will be included with the submitted annual fiscal year budget document.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Burglar Alarm Systems Ordinance
2. Burglar Alarm Permit and False Alarm Response Fees Resolution
3. Burglar Alarm Permit and False Alarm Response Fees Resolution - Exhibit A