



ORDINANCE NO. 28990

1 AN ORDINANCE relating to false alarm calls; amending Chapter 6B.40 of the
 2 Municipal Code, relating to Alarm Devices, by amending various sections,
 3 and by adding a new Section 6B.40.115, entitled “Administrative review by
 4 Director of false alarm fee - appeal”, and a new Section 6B.40.140, entitled
 5 “Requirement to maintain industry standard information current for alarm
 6 users”; to increase the false alarm service fee, add an option to not respond
 to alarm calls from locations that trigger excessive false alarms, and
 enhance requirements for alarm companies to confirm valid alarm calls prior
 to requesting police response, effective January 1, 2025.

7 WHEREAS this recommendation from the Finance Department Tax &
 8 License Division is based on decreasing the number of false alarm calls
 9 responded to by the Tacoma Police Department, with a focus on locations that
 10 generate a high number of false alarms every year, and
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12 WHEREAS decreasing the time police officers are responding to false
 13 alarms provides more time for officers to patrol neighborhoods, respond to calls
 14 for service, and investigate and solve crimes, and

15 WHEREAS on October 15, 2024, the Government Performance and
 16 Finance Committee voted unanimously to move this proposal forward to the full
 17 City Council; Now, Therefore,

18 BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF TACOMA:

19 Section 1. That the City Council hereby adopts the Recitals of this
 20 Ordinance as its formal legislative findings.
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22 Section 2. That Chapter 6B.40 of the Municipal Code, relating to Alarm
 23 Devices, is hereby amended, by amending various sections, and by adding a new
 24 Section 6B.40.115, entitled “Administrative review by Director of false alarm fee -
 25 appeal”, and a new Section 6B.40.140, entitled “Requirement to maintain industry
 26



1 standard information current for alarm users”; to increase the false alarm service
2 fee, add an option to not respond to alarm calls from locations that trigger
3 excessive false alarms, and enhance requirements for alarm companies to confirm
4 valid alarm calls prior to requesting police response, effective January 1, 2025, as
5 set forth in the attached Exhibit “A.”
6

7 Section 3. That the City Clerk, in consultation with the City Attorney, is
8 authorized to make necessary corrections to this ordinance, including, but not
9 limited to, the correction of scrivener’s/clerical errors, references, ordinance
10 numbering, section/subsection numbers, and any references thereto.
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12 Passed _____
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14 _____
15 Mayor

16 Attest:
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18 _____
19 City Clerk

20 Approved as to form:
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22 Deputy City Attorney
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EXHIBIT "A"

**CHAPTER 6B.40
ALARM DEVICES**

Sections:

6B.40.010 Purpose.

6B.40.020 *Repealed.*

6B.40.030 Licenses required.

6B.40.035 Exemptions.

6B.40.040 Definitions.

6B.40.050 *Repealed.*

6B.40.060 *Repealed.*

6B.40.070 *Repealed.*

6B.40.080 Mandatory Regulations.

6B.40.090 Prohibited alarm systems.

6B.40.100 *Repealed.*

6B.40.110 False alarm ~~service~~response fee.

6B.40.115 Administrative review by Director of False alarm fee – appeal.

6B.40.120 Fees.

6B.40.130 Requirement to provide annual ~~L~~list of monitored alarm devices to City.

6B.40.140 Requirement to maintain industry standard information current for alarm users.

6B.40.150 ~~Duty~~ Requirement to supply ~~ordinances and~~ information to ~~system subscribers~~ alarm users.

6B.40.160 *Repealed.*

6B.40.010 Purpose.

The purpose and intent of this chapter is to: (1) protect public safety by curtailing or eliminating the extraordinary number of false alarms which prevent, hinder, or delay public safety personnel from responding to legitimate calls for public service; (2) recover the costs associated with responses to false alarms as the expenditure of such public funds constitutes an unlawful gifting of public monies; (3) stop the current subsidization of private business with public tax dollars; (4) reduce or eliminate the instances of false alarm activations in the City; and (5) license the alarm industry in the City.

6B.40.030 Licenses required.

A. Monitored Alarm Device.

Monitored alarm device licenses shall be required for any alarm system operator renting, leasing, installing, placing, subscribing, contracting, subcontracting, or otherwise arranging to monitor an alarm device within the City limits. Each monitored alarm device license shall be issued for a particular device and shall not be transferable from one monitored alarm device to another; from one person to another; or from one premise, building, dwelling, or residence to another.

B. Transfer of monitored alarm device to another alarm system operator.

If an alarm system operator or ~~system subscriber~~ alarm user transfers, assigns, or subcontracts monitoring services for a validly licensed alarm device to another alarm system operator, the existing valid monitored alarm device license shall remain in full force and effect for the



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remainder of the calendar year in which it was issued. An alarm system operator who assumes responsibility for monitoring an alarm device that has already been licensed for that year must report all such transfers in its annual report on a form required by the Director. The transfer information shall include, at a minimum, the name of the alarm system operator under which the device was previously licensed, the name of the alarm system operator assuming responsibility for the alarm, the address where the device is installed, and the name of the [alarm user](#)~~system subscriber~~.

C. Alarm System Operator.

An alarm system operator license shall be required for any person to be or become or operate or provide an alarm monitoring service within the jurisdictional limits of the City. This includes any person who monitors alarm devices installed in the jurisdictional limits of the City even if such monitoring is conducted from a location outside the City limits. Such license shall be valid for the calendar year in which it is issued and is not transferable.

* * *

6B.40.040 Definitions.

Terms defined herein shall have the following meanings when used in this chapter:

“Alarm system” or “alarm device” means any system, device, [series of devices](#), or mechanism which, when activated, transmits a telephonic, wireless, electronic, video, or other form of message or communication to an alarm system monitoring company or some other number, or emits an audible or visible signal that can be heard or seen by persons outside the protected premises, or transmits a signal beyond the premises in some other fashion, except any system, device, or mechanism primarily protecting a motor vehicle. An alarm system or alarm device may consist of one or more components (e.g. motion detector, window breach detector, or similar components) all reporting to a central unit/system panel which, in turn, is connected to or reports to an alarm system monitoring company via telephonic, wireless, electronic, video, or other form of message. All alarm systems are included within the definition of “alarm system”; e.g. any burglary, intrusion, panic, premises, property, robbery, or other type of alarm device.

“Alarm system monitoring company” or “alarm system operator” means any ~~Person, as defined in TMC 6B.10.030, individual, partnership, corporation, or other form of association~~ [a Person](#) that ~~are~~^{is} located outside the City limits and which monitor alarms installed within the City limits [and a Person, registered as the alarm system operator or alarm system monitoring company as indicated on the Computer Aided Dispatch \(CAD\) reports.](#)

[“Alarm user” means any individual, corporation, or other business entity owning, leasing, or operating an alarm system or on whose premises an alarm system is maintained for the protection of such premises.](#)

“False alarm” means the reporting of the activation of any monitored alarm system where police units dispatched to the location determine that there is no evidence of a crime or other activity on the premises that would warrant a call for immediate police assistance or investigation. An alarm shall be presumed to be false if responding City personnel do not locate evidence of intrusion, commission of an unlawful act, or emergency on the premises that might have caused the alarm to sound. If earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, or other acts of God set off a large number of alarms, a police supervisor may determine that no responses will be made to such alarms during the pendency of such event.



1 “Fire alarm” means a signal initiated by a device such as a manual fire alarm box, automatic fire detector, waterflow switch, smoke detector, or other device which, when activated, is indicative of the presence of a fire or fire signature.

2 “Monitored alarm system” means any system, device, or mechanism which, when activated, transmits a telephonic, wireless, electronic, video, or other form of message or communication to a private monitoring company, other number, or person who can then notify police that an alarm has been activated. This includes all systems which transmit telephonic, wireless, electronic, video, or other form of message or communication from an alarm installed within the City limits to any location within or outside the City. All alarms that are monitored, except fire alarms, are included within the definition of “monitored alarm system”; e.g., any monitored burglary, intrusion, panic, premises, property, robbery, or other type of alarm device.

7 “Premises” means any area and any portion of any area protected by an alarm system.

8 “Verified Alarm” shall be defined as an electronic security system event in which a trained central station operator utilizing a standardized protocol has determined the presence of human(s) and the high probability that a criminal offense is in progress.

9 ~~“System subscriber” means any person, corporation, or other business entity that purchased, contracted for, or has had any alarm system installed in or on premises owned or controlled by them.~~

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12 **6B.40.080 Mandatory Regulations.**

13 A. Alarm Confirmation. Alarm system operators or alarm system monitoring companies must confirm an alarm prior to requesting a police response. The alarm confirmation may be one of the following:

15 1. The alarm system operator or monitoring company has contacted the alarm user and spoken to a person to confirm that the presence of human(s) and the high probability that a criminal offense is in progress, requiring law enforcement to respond; or

17 2. The Premises is equipped with an interior live-time video or audio monitored remotely by the alarm system operator or monitoring company or the alarm user, and it can be seen or heard the presence of human(s) and the high probability that a criminal offense is in progress, requiring law enforcement to respond; or

19 3. The Premise is equipped with a control panel which has confirmed that at least two independent zones (e.g. an exterior perimeter and an interior zone) has been triggered and the alarm system operator or monitoring company has completed the Enhanced Call Confirmation in TMC 6B.40.080.B; or

21 4. The alarm is an older system and not in compliance with the two independent zone standard, therefore, the alarm system operator or monitoring company has completed the Enhanced Call Confirmation in TMC 6B.40.080.B. They must ensure that they have received two or more alarm signals during the same alarm event period (ten minutes).

23 ~~AB. Mandatory enhanced call verification confirmation (ECC). ECC procedures are required to be employed by :~~ All alarm system operators or alarm system monitoring companies to confirm the event is a verified alarm prior to requesting police response. ~~must make a minimum of two calls to attempt to verify an alarm prior to requesting a police response~~



1 1. Exempted are monitored audio or interior live-time video alarm systems with evidence of presence of human(s) and the high probability that a criminal offense is in progress or a person on site reporting evidence of a crime.

2 2. If the first attempted contact fails to reach an alarm user who can properly identify themselves to determine whether an alarm signal is valid before requesting police response. ~~The first call shall be to the premise protected by the activated alarm. The a second attempt call shall be made to contact the alarm user except in cases of a fire, panic, robbery-in-progress alarm or verified alarm, a separate off-site number such as the mobile telephone of the owner or manager of the property.~~

5 * * *

6 **6B.40.110 False alarm ~~service~~responses fee.**

7 A. Alarm system operators or monitoring companies, as identified on the CAD report, shall be assessed a false alarm ~~response~~service fee for each police response to a false ~~monitored~~alarm which is registered to the alarm system operator or monitoring company.

9 B. No fee shall be assessed if the responding police units are canceled prior to arrival at the scene.

10 ~~C. No license hereunder shall be granted or renewed under this chapter unless all assessed false alarm response fees are paid in full. Licensees who fail to pay assessed response fees within 60 days may have all licenses suspended by the Director. Licensees who fail to pay assessed response fees within 90 days may have all licenses and registration revoked by the Director.~~

13 ~~D. Any license suspended or revoked by the Director shall not be reinstated without payment of all outstanding balances for licenses and false alarm response fees.~~

14 **6B.40.115 Administrative review by Director of False alarm service fee – Appeal.**

15 A. General.

16 An alarm system operator or monitoring company to whom a false alarm service fee or excessive false alarm service fee was assessed, may request an administrative review.

17 B. How to request administrative review.

18 An alarm system operator or monitoring company may request an administrative review of a false alarm service fee or excessive false alarm service fee assessed for a Premise by filing a written request with the Director within 60 calendar days from the date of the fee assessment. Requests for a review of a false alarm service fee on a commercial Premises shall include time stamped audio or video evidence that there was a presence of human(s) and the high probability that a criminal offense was in progress. An alarm triggered based only on sensor or motion activations will not be considered as supporting evidence to qualify for a cancellation of the fee. Failure to include supporting evidence shall be cause for dismissal of the review.

23 C. Adjustment of a false alarm service fee.

24 The Director may cancel a false alarm service fee or excessive false alarm service fee based on:

25 1. Supporting evidence with time stamped audio or video that there was presence of human(s) and the high probability that a criminal offense was in progress.

26 2. An extenuating circumstance or to encourage correction action, limited to one false alarm service fee or excessive false alarm service fee per calendar year.



D. Decision of Director.

1 After considering all the information provided, the Director shall determine, within 30 days of
2 the date the request was received, whether a false alarm has occurred and shall affirm or cancel
3 the fee assessment. The Director's decision shall be delivered in writing.

E. Appeals to the Hearing Examiner of Director's decision.

4 Appeal of the Director's decision shall be made within 10 calendar days after the date of the
5 Director's decision by filing a written notice of appeal, clearly stating the grounds that the
6 appeal is based on, with the City Clerk, and the City Clerk shall set a date for the hearing of
7 such appeal before the Hearing Examiner of the City, which appeal shall be governed by TMC
8 1.23, and shall notify the appellant by mail, of the time and place of hearing.

6B.40.120 Fees.

9 A. The license fees are hereby fixed as follows:

Alarm System Operator <u>or Monitoring Company</u> License	Fee
For one to 100 devices	\$100 per annum
For 101 to 200 devices	\$200 per annum
For 201 to 500 devices	\$400 per annum
For 501 or more devices	\$500 per annum
Monitored Alarm Device	\$40 per device
False alarm service fee	\$100 per occurrence

B. False Alarm Service Fee

17 It has been determined that three or more false alarms within a 12 month period is excessive.
18 Therefore, the third and subsequent false alarms generated at a particular Premise within a 12
19 month period shall be assessed a higher fee per occurrence as shown in the table below:

<u>First or Second Occurrence</u>	<u>\$115</u>
<u>Third or Fourth Occurrence</u>	<u>\$215</u>
<u>Fifth or Sixth Occurrence</u>	<u>\$265</u>
<u>Seventh or Subsequent Occurrence</u>	<u>\$315</u>

C. Five or More False Alarms.

24 When a Premise has generated at least five false alarms in a 12 month period any of the
25 following may be implemented to further deter multiple false alarms.

26 1. No Response to Alarm. The City may issue a No Response for the Premise which will
suspend response to a request for City police response from the alarm system operator or



monitoring company, excluding hold-up, robbery, and panic alarms, for up to a 12 month period.

2. The alarm system operator or monitoring company and alarm user are responsible for obtaining any private security response for the Premises during the No Response at their discretion.

6B.40.130 Requirement to provide annual ~~L~~list of monitored alarm devices to City.

Alarm system operators or monitoring companies shall provide ~~with their annual monitored alarm license fees~~annually, in the format and timeframe specified by the Director, a list of all addresses for Premises at which monitored alarms are installed, and the name of the corresponding ~~system subscriber~~alarm user(s).

6B.40.140 Requirement to maintain industry standard information current for alarm users.

All persons required to be licensed pursuant to this chapter shall:

A. Maintain current contact information for the alarm user.

B. Maintain current keyholder information that is provided to Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs).

C. Promptly provide the most current contact information for the alarm user and contact a key holder for a response when requested.

6B.40.150 ~~Duty~~ Requirement to supply ~~ordinances and~~ information to ~~system subscribers~~alarm users.

~~A.~~ All persons required to be licensed pursuant to this chapter shall:

~~A.~~ Supply each of their ~~system subscribers~~alarm users with copies of all current ordinances pertaining to alarms, including that when an alarm user generates more than four false alarms in a 12 month period that response may be suspended (excluding hold-up, robbery or panic alarms) to the premise and a copy of the licensee’s policies and practices with respect to billing an ~~system subscriber~~alarm user for any fees or licenses established by this or any other chapter of the TMC.

B. Prior to activation of an alarm system, provide to the alarm user instructions on the proper operation of the alarm system and how to obtain service from the alarm system operator or monitoring company, which may include:

1. How to maintain the premises and the alarm system in a manner that shall minimize or eliminate false alarms.

2. Not to activate an alarm system for any reason other than an occurrence of an event that the alarm system was intended to report.

3. To notify the monitoring company when the names and telephone numbers of contact and keyholder individuals change.

4. To keep a set of written operating instructions for each alarm system at each premise.

~~BC.~~ All persons licensed pursuant to this chapter shall notify each of their ~~system subscribers~~alarm users of the revocation or suspension of any license issued by the City. The notice shall be in writing and shall be ~~mailed sent~~ to all ~~system subscribers~~alarm users no later than the tenth calendar day following such suspension or revocation and include information that response may be suspended (excluding hold-up, robbery or panic alarms) until the license has been reinstated.



~~C. Failure to comply with the notice requirements set forth herein shall constitute separate and independent grounds for imposition of penalties as provided in 6B.10.~~

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D. Request alarm users to provide to the alarm system operator or monitoring company, the names and telephone numbers of at least two individuals who are reasonably able and have agreed to:

1. Receive notification of an alarm system activation at any time
2. Respond to the premise upon request by the alarm system operator or monitoring company; and
3. Provide access to the Premise and deactivate the alarm system, if necessary.

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