

# Memorandum



DATE: September 12, 2008

TO: Members of the Public Safety Committee

SUBJECT: Legislative Proposal to Address Penalty for False Alarms

## Introduction

On September 5, 2007, the Dallas City Council opted to repeal the use of verified response involving burglar alarms at commercial locations. In the course of discussions, the suggestion was made to examine the possibility of seeking changes to the State's Local Government Code during the upcoming legislative session. The idea is to allow municipalities to impose a financial penalty after one false alarm during a 12 month period instead of the current law, which allows three false alarms during a 12 month period prior to imposing a financial penalty.

## Historical Review

False alarms have made up 6.3% of all calls for service during the first seven months of 2008. The year to date response time is 20.6 minutes for all alarms. Below is a recap of alarm numbers for the last several years.

Year	Total Alarms	False Alarms	% False
2005	58,419	56,732	97.1%
2006	35,316	34,300	97.1%
2007	31,272	30,053	96.1%
2008 (YTD)	24,540	23,319	95.0%

The City of Dallas alarm ordinance parallels the state law, which allows municipalities to charge \$50 for the fourth, fifth, and sixth false alarms, \$75 for the seventh and eighth, and \$100 for the ninth and subsequent false alarms that occur during a 12 month period.

For the time period between August 1, 2007, and July 31, 2008, the Dallas Police Department has handled 5,633 alarms as second time false alarms at a permit location, and 2,261 third time false alarms at a permit location.

## Options

In an effort to encourage alarm permit holders to minimize their own false alarms, a change in state law could allow for only one false alarm during a 12 month period prior to imposing a financial penalty. Departmental policy could determine whether the change in law would be imposed on either commercial or residential alarm permit holders, or both.

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While proposing a change in state law, an amended fee schedule would be required to address the second and third false alarm. A recommended fee schedule would establish a second false alarm penalty of \$25 and a third false alarm would result in a \$35 penalty.

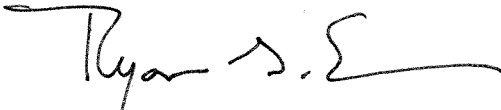
During the last 12 months, 5,633 second false alarms have been reported while 2,261 third false alarms have been reported. Using these numbers to forecast an anticipated annual average, a projected \$219,960 in financial penalties would be recovered toward the response to false alarms if state law allowed a \$25 and \$35 penalty to be imposed for second and third false alarms.

Other options for legislative change could include an increase to the current fee structure and an extension to the permissible 30 minute response time, while still allowing a municipality to assess a financial penalty for the false alarm.

**Request**

In preparation for the upcoming legislative session in January 2009, the Police Department and Intergovernmental Services respectfully requests the Public Safety Committee provide an opinion on developing potential legislation to reduce the number of allowed false alarms prior to imposing a financial penalty.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.



Ryan S. Evans  
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