

Alarm Ordinance Proposal

Wichita Police Department

June 24, 2014



Objectives for Today

- History of the alarm ordinance
- Current issues related to false alarms
- Action items to reduce false alarms
- Expected outcomes
- Discussion of relevant issues



Alarm Ordinance History

- Ordinance adopted in 1999
- Revised in 2004
- Current version adopted in 2010



Meeting the Stakeholders

- Citizens gave input on Activate Wichita and Survey Monkey
- Local news media ran stories
- City Channel 7 ran a segment
- Citizens and alarm businesses called and emailed
- Public meetings were held in late 2013 and early 2014



What the current issues are

- #1 Businesses and citizens reading the ordinance are confused at the wording
- #2 Alarm companies have been registering customers alarms, not the customers
- #3 The verbiage for “non-response” has made it difficult to hold alarm abusers accountable
- #4 The four minute alarm cancellation requirement has been questioned



Businesses and Citizens have had difficulty understanding the ordinance

- Alarm business licensing sections are scattered throughout the ordinance
- In some sections there is duplicated information
- Terminology used in the ordinance is not consistent with industry standards and department name changes



Proposed Response - - Change the ordinance verbiage

- Re-written to organize the sections in a more sequential and easy to follow order
- Sections were combined and any duplications were removed
- Language and terms to the proposed ordinance read consistent with terms and language used in the alarm industry
- The sections of the ordinance dealing with revocation and appeals of alarm company licensing have been combined
- Proposed new revocation and appeal process is streamlined:
 - Revoked only by Department Leaders
 - 1st Appeal – City Council
 - 2nd Appeal – 18th Judicial District Court



Alarm companies have been registering customer's alarms, not the alarm customers themselves

- Fourteen years ago, there was not a way for an individual to register the alarm
- Consistency--sometimes missing address and billing information
- Alarm companies asked that the responsibility be moved to the alarm customer



Proposed Response - - Allow alarm users to register their alarm

- Technology allows users to now register with City
- More consistency in keeping records straight
- More comprehensive information, such as pets, weapons, disability can be provided to officers responding to alarms



The verbiage for “non-response” makes it difficult to hold alarm abusers accountable

Current ordinance reads, “The Alarm User and any alarm servicing company will be notified by certified mail that the communication center will not respond to further alarms from the system unless the delinquent fee and late charges are paid.” 3.40.090 (g)

- ✓ There is no accountability for habitual false alarm users. Defined as those who have more than six (6) false alarms per registration period.



Proposed Response - - Strengthen our “Non-Response” Clause

Recommend change ordinance to read:

“Response to alarm systems by law enforcement or fire personnel may be suspended if:

- ✓ (1) An alarmed location has more than six (6) false alarms during the 12-month registration period; and/or
- ✓ (2) An alarmed location fails to pay fees or penalties as set forth in this Chapter



Benefits to changing non-response clause

- Reduce false alarms caused by user error and faulty equipment
 - Users must get a certificate from a licensed alarm company stating that the alarm system is functioning properly and all users are trained
- Reduce amount of resources spent handling delinquent accounts
- Reduce resources spent responding to alarm abusers



Time allowed to cancel the alarm through 911 has been questioned

- Citizens and businesses questioned why there is a 4 minute cancellation time
- Citizens and businesses questioned why fire and police alarms were not differentiated
- The indication was that they wanted more time to cancel



Proposed Response - - Do Not change alarm cancellation time

- The current cancellation time is 4 minutes
- Alarms not classified as Hold up alarms are dispatched as a Priority 2
- Cancellation is not based on officer/fire arrival time
- Cancellation is based on time 911 is notified and the alarm is cancelled or exceeds four minutes
- Recommend **NOT** changing cancellation time



Summary of Proposed Actions

- Change verbiage of Alarm Ordinance to make it easier to read
- Allow Alarm Users to register their own alarm
- Strengthen the “Non-Response” clause
- Do not change alarm cancellation time
- No fees will be changed for false alarms or registrations



Expected Outcomes

1. More customer satisfaction
 - Fewer explanations on day to day alarm administration
 - Clear expectations for alarm users
2. Fewer false alarms and cost savings
 - In 2013 City responded to 18,461 alarms
 - There are 37,768 active alarm permits today
 - Currently 1,369 accounts qualify for “Non-Response”
 - 1,210 for non-payment
 - 159 for excessive alarms



Timeline

1. Place Alarm Ordinance on Council Agenda for First Reading
2. If approved, delay adoption of ordinance for three months to all existing delinquent account holders time to come into compliance
3. Give alarm billing vendors an opportunity to bid on false alarm contract with new ordinance in place



Discussion

