

# Wichita Alarm Program Alarm Users Information Packet



## **False Alarm Statistics:**

- Over 35,000 residential and commercial alarm systems in Wichita
- Number of false alarms each year:
  - 2010: 19,458 false alarms
  - 2011: 17,814 false alarms
  - 2012: 17,997 false alarms
  - 2013: 18,461 false alarms
- Costs of false alarms:
  - Each burglary alarm: \$60
  - Each fire alarm: \$1500
  - Approximately \$2.5 million spent annually to respond to false alarms

## **What is a false alarm?**

A false alarm is defined as the activation of an alarm system in the City resulting in a request for response by law enforcement, fire, or emergency services personnel when a situation requiring a response does not, in fact, exist at the time of the activation of the alarm, or an alarm system designed to be used to report a robbery or holdup, when used for any other purpose.

## **How are false alarms caused, and what can be done to prevent them from happening?**

### **Most common causes:**

- Equipment quality
- Installation quality
- Misapplication of equipment
- Sensor sensitivity levels
- Weather
- User inexperience
- User error

### **Prevention tips:**

- Understand how your system works.
- Lock and secure all doors and windows.
- Know your password.
- Train anyone with access to the home or business how to use the keypad.
- Inspect your system:
  - Monthly visual inspection.
  - Annual alarm company inspection.
- Communicate with your alarm company:
  - Keep contact numbers updated.
  - Advise them when doing construction.
  - Call them if you suspect a problem with your system.
  - Ensure they know your expectations for when to call 911.

## **What do I need to know about the Wichita Alarm Ordinance?**

- All alarm systems inside the jurisdiction boundaries of the Wichita Police and Fire Departments must be registered.
  - The Alarm User must register their alarm system permit within five (5) business days of installation of the alarm system.
  - Registration will be completed online using the City of Wichita's billing vendor website at <http://www.crywolfservices.com/wichitaks>.
  - If an Alarm User has multiple alarm systems, a permit is required for each alarm system even if the alarm systems are located at the same address.
  - A fee of \$25.00 per alarm permit is required upon registration and annual renewal. However, if the alarm user has not had any false alarms during the previous 12-month registration period the annual \$25.00 permit fee shall be waived for the upcoming year.
  - Any change of address or ownership of the alarm system will require a new permit to be registered and will be subject to the \$25.00 registration fee.
  - Permits expire 1 year from issuance. The Alarm Administrator will notify the Alarm User of the need to renew the alarm permit 30 calendar days prior to the expiration date.
  - Alarm systems designed only to signal the presence of medical emergencies are not required to be registered under Chapter 3.41.
  - \$150.00 civil penalties will be assessed to customers who have failed to pay the annual permit fee and have alarm activations on an expired permit.
- False alarm fees are based on cancellation time, not Police or Fire response.
  - Alarm must be cancelled by the alarm company to 911 within 4 minutes.
  - If the request for response is not cancelled in 4 minutes, a false alarm will be charged, whether or not Police or Fire personnel arrive at the location.
- First false alarm each permit year is free.
  - False alarm fees are assessed starting with the 2<sup>nd</sup> alarm activation.
  - Burglary alarms and Fire alarms have independent fee schedules that increase on a graduated scale.
  - Users are allowed to complete online Alarm School to remove 1 false alarm fee per permit year. This will not waive the alarm, or remove any late fees.
- All disputes regarding a false alarm must be done in writing within 30 days of the original invoice date.
  - A \$10.00 appeal fee is required per alarm activation being appealed.
  - Failure to submit an appeal within 30 days of notification shall constitute a waiver of the right to contest the assessment of fees or penalties.
  - Appeals will not be processed by phone, or without the required appeal fee(s).
  - Full appeal guidelines available, and can be faxed, mailed, or emailed upon request.
  - Mail appeals to:
    - Wichita Police Department
    - Attn: Alarm Administrator
    - 455 N Main – 4<sup>th</sup> Floor
    - Wichita, KS 67202
- Response to an alarm system may be suspended if the location has more than 6 false alarms per registration year and/or fails to pay fees or penalties as required. Response may be reinstated if the alarm user:
  - Pays, or otherwise resolves to the satisfaction of the Alarm Administrator, all fees and/or penalties; and

- Submits a certification from an alarm company, properly licensed by the City of Wichita, stating that the alarm system has been inspected and repaired (if necessary), is in proper working order, and that the Alarm User has been re-trained on the proper use of the alarm system.

### **What should I expect from my alarm company?**

Every alarm company is different. Many companies offer products and services similar to other companies. This can make it difficult to be confident that you have chosen the alarm company that will meet your needs the best. The City of Wichita cannot encourage or discourage a customer from choosing one alarm company over another. Nor can the City recommend a particular company or their products and services. It is up to you, the consumer, to research your options if you are considering purchasing an alarm system or switching alarm companies. Characteristics of a good alarm company include:

- Proper licenses.
- Providing a written instruction manual.
- Provide clear training at the time of installation.
- Available to answer follow-up questions.
- Prompt and effective repairs to the system.
- Alarm verification by telephone call, video, or audio built into the system.
- Available to update account information.
- Ability to identify zones or sensors which have been activated.