

**ORDINANCE NO. 957  
AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE  
REGULATING ALARM SYSTEMS  
AND DECLARING REPEATED FALSE ALARMS A PUBLIC NUISANCE**

The Board of Supervisors of the County of Riverside ordains as follows:

Section 1. FINDINGS. The Board of Supervisors finds that each year the Sheriff's Department and the Fire Department respond to thousands of alarm calls in our unincorporated communities, the vast majority of which are false alarms. By way of example, in 2016, the Sheriff's Department had 15,172 alarm calls in unincorporated areas, of which only 37 were determined to be legitimate and 13,461 were responded to but found to be false. The other 1674 were cancelled before any officers arrived on the scene. In 2017, the Fire Department reports responding to 2,662 false alarms in 2017. False alarms consume public safety resources and can increase response times for legitimate emergencies. Adoption of a false alarm ordinance will reduce the number of false alarms and the time spent responding to them, allowing first responders to focus on real emergencies and promote the public health, safety and general welfare of the community.

Section 2. PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY. The purpose of this ordinance is to establish standards and controls to reduce the incidents of false intrusion, false robbery alarm, and false fire alarm calls that are responded to by the Sheriff or Fire Department within the County's unincorporated areas pursuant to California Constitution Article XI, Section 7, Government Code section 25132, and Business and Professions Code section 7592.8.

Section 3. EXEMPTION. This ordinance shall not apply to hand-held or portable personal safety devices and medical alert devices.

Section 4. DEFINITIONS. As used in this ordinance, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

- a. Alarm System. Any device designed for the detection of any unauthorized entry on premises, for alerting others of the commission of an unlawful act or for the detection of an emergency situation not limited to fire, natural gas leak or medical emergency, and when activated, emits an Audible Alarm or transmits a signal to indicate that an emergency exists and which may transmit a signal to a monitoring point designed to contact a Sheriff or Fire dispatch center to which law enforcement or fire department personnel or other resources are expected to respond to the location of the reported activated Alarm System.

- b. Alarm User. Any person using an Alarm System at his or her place of business, residence or other property.
- c. Alarm Business. Any person who monitors, specifies, designs, manufactures, installs, maintains, tests or uses an Alarm System and forwards to a Sheriff or Fire dispatch center information regarding the activation of an Alarm System.
- d. Audible Alarm. An Alarm System that, when activated, generates an audible sound.
- e. False Alarm. The activation of an Alarm System to which emergency public safety personnel respond when an emergency public safety situation does not exist, and did not exist at the time of Alarm System activation. Any hold-up or robbery alarm improperly activated for the purpose of obtaining Sheriff response when a hold-up or robbery is not in progress shall be classified as a False Alarm. Alarm activations caused by natural disaster or other violent conditions of nature or other extraordinary circumstances not subject to the control of the Alarm User or Alarm Business shall not constitute a False Alarm.
- f. Premises. Any private property and buildings located thereon within the unincorporated area.
- g. Responsible Party. Any person, firm, partnership, company, association, or corporation, or school district, or any owner or lessee of premises on which an Alarm System is installed or maintained, or the agent or representative of the above, who utilizes an Alarm System on the premises.
- h. Supervising Station. A facility that receives Alarm System signals and at which personnel are in attendance to respond to these Alarm System signals.

Section 5. FALSE ALARMS-PROHIBITED. No Alarm User or Responsible Party shall give, signal, transmit, cause or permit to be given, signaled or transmitted a False Alarm.

Section 6. ALARM SYSTEM STANDARDS. All Alarm Systems and appurtenant equipment installed and used within the County shall meet or exceed industry standards and applicable laws at the time of installation. Upon the effective date of this ordinance, the Alarm Businesses shall, on new installations or equipment replacements, use only security alarm control panel(s) which meets Security Industry Association (SIA) Control Panel Standard CP-01 for security Alarm Systems or

Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) or approved listing agency. Fire Alarm Systems and components shall be listed and approved by the California State Fire Marshal in accordance with California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1. The approved listing agency shall be as determined by the County Building Official for security Alarm Systems and the County Fire Marshal for fire Alarm Systems.

Section 7. ALARM BUSINESS. It shall be unlawful and a violation of this ordinance for any person to engage in business or accept employment within the County to install, maintain, alter, sell on premises, monitor, or service Alarm Systems or respond to Alarm Systems, unless such person holds all State and local licenses, listings, certifications or permits which may be required for such business or employment.

- a. Every Alarm Business that has a Supervising Station to monitor security or fire Alarm Systems located within the County shall maintain on file a current listing of all such Alarm Systems, along with the address and telephone number of the person from whom consent to enter the protected premises may be obtained, and shall include the following information:
  1. The name address, and telephone number of the property owner, if other than the Alarm User.
  2. The name of the Alarm User and his or her business address and telephone number and residential address and telephone number.
  3. The name of at least one other person responsible to respond to the alarm site and his or her business address and telephone number.
- b. At the time of installation, the Alarm Business shall provide instructions to each of its Alarm Users in the proper use and operation of their Alarm Systems. Such instructions will specifically include all instructions necessary to turn the Alarm Systems on and off and to prevent False Alarms.
- c. An Alarm Business shall not use automatic voice dialers which call 911, the Sheriff's Department or the Fire Department.
- d. After completion of the installation of an Alarm System, an Alarm Business employee shall review with the Alarm User the customer False Alarm prevention checklist established by the Alarm Business's policy.
- e. The Alarm Business shall not make an alarm dispatch request to the Sheriff's Department in response to a burglar alarm

signal, excluding Panic, Duress and Holdup signals, during the first seven (7) days following an Alarm System installation. The Sheriff or his designee may grant an Alarm User's request for an exemption from this waiting period based upon a determination that special circumstances substantiate the need for the exemption. This subsection does not apply to fire Alarm Systems.

f. An Alarm Business shall:

1. Ensure that all Alarm Users of Alarm Systems equipped with fire, duress, hold-up or panic alarm(s) are given adequate training as to the proper use of the fire, duress, hold-up or panic alarm(s). Alarm System training shall be provided to every Alarm User at the time of installation and additional training provided in situations where the Alarm User has demonstrated a pattern of False Alarms within the preceding twelve (12) month period of False Alarms resulting from unintentional or accidental activation.
2. Attempt to verify every burglar alarm signal prior to requesting a Sheriff dispatch by making at least two phone calls to the responsible party (Enhanced Call Verification). This procedure does not apply to fire, duress or hold-up signals.
3. Communicate alarm dispatch requests to the Sheriff Dispatch and Fire Department Emergency Command Center in a manner and form determined by National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 72 for fire alarms and by the Sheriff or his designee for security alarms;
4. Communicate any available information (e.g., type of alarm, zone north, south, front, back, floor) about the location on all alarm signals related to the alarm dispatch request.
5. Communicate type of alarm activation (e.g., silent or audible, interior or perimeter).
6. Attempt to contact the Alarm User or any Responsible Party by telephone or other electronic means immediately after an alarm dispatch request is made.

7. After an alarm dispatch request, promptly advise the Sheriff dispatch or Fire Department Emergency Command Center if the Alarm Business knows that the Alarm User or any Responsible Party is on the way to the location of the reported activated alarm system; and
8. Upon the effective date of this ordinance, Alarm Businesses must maintain records relating to alarm dispatch requests, for a period of at least one year from the date of the alarm dispatch request.
  - A. Records must include:
    - i. name, address and telephone number of the Alarm User;
    - ii. alarm system zone(s) activated;
    - iii. time of alarm dispatch request; and
    - iv. evidence of an attempt to verify as set forth in subsection f. 1. of this section.
  - B. The Sheriff or Fire Chief or their designees may request copies of such records for individually named Alarm Users.
  - C. If the request for copies of records is made within sixty days (60) of an alarm dispatch request, the Alarm Business shall furnish requested records within three (3) business days of receiving the request.
  - D. If the records are requested after sixty (60) days but within one year after an alarm dispatch request, the Alarm Business shall furnish the requested records within thirty (30) days of receiving the request.
- g. An Alarm Business that purchases fire alarm system accounts from another person shall notify the Fire Chief or his designee of such purchase and provide details as may be reasonably requested by the Fire Chief or his designee.

- h. Each Alarm Business shall designate one person as the Alarm Response Manager (ARM) for the company who will manage alarm related issues and act as the point of contact for the Sheriff and Fire Chief or their designees. The appointed person must be knowledgeable of the general provisions of this ordinance, as well as have the knowledge and authority to deal with False Alarm issues and respond to requests from the Sheriff and Fire Chief or their designees. The name, phone number, and email address of the designated ARM must be provided to the Sheriff and Fire Chief or their designee.

Section 8. FALSE ALARMS - INVESTIGATION; NOTICE; REPORT.

- a. Upon responding to the alarm location and determining that there is a False Alarm, the responding County department shall notify the Alarm User of the False Alarm by posting a notice at the premises or mailing notice to the property owner which shall include the date and time of the response and a statement that the alarm was a False Alarm. The notice shall also state that the Alarm User should act to correct the causative problems and shall also include a warning that more than two false alarms in any 12-month period will result in the imposition of fines under Section 10 of this ordinance. Said notice shall also contain a statement that any Alarm User or Responsible Party may, within ten days of issuance of the notice, make appeal the False Alarm determination as set forth in Section 13 of this ordinance. Any notice mailed under this Section shall also be mailed to the Alarm User at the address of the premises and any other address listed with the Alarm Business for the Alarm User.
- b. Upon investigation of a False Alarm, if an Alarm System continues to emit an Audible Alarm signal in excess of 30 minutes, after reasonable efforts to contact the Alarm User or the Alarm Business that monitors such alarm system, the Sheriff or Fire Chief may cause such Alarm System to be disconnected by the Alarm Business. The Alarm User shall pay the cost of such disconnection.

Section 9. ALARM SYSTEMS REGULATIONS.

- a. Automatic Deactivation. Every audible alarm used for security purposes installed after the adoption of this ordinance shall have a timing device which automatically shuts off the alarm within fifteen (15) minutes after the alarm is activated. Every

audible alarm installed prior to the adoption of this ordinance without such a timing device shall be required to have such a device installed if any activated alarm is not deactivated within a thirty-minute time limit. The Alarm Business or person responsible for the maintenance of the Alarm System and the owner of the audible alarm shall be responsible for deactivating any alarm within thirty (30) minutes after notification that such alarm is activated and ringing, or within thirty (30) minutes after reasonable efforts have been made to provide such notification. This subsection shall not apply to fire alarm systems.

- b. Automatic Dialing Prohibited. No Alarm System shall be equipped with automatic dialing or recorded message to the Sheriff or Fire Department.
- c. Battery Backup System. No Alarm System shall be installed or used at any time which is not equipped with a ready-to-function battery-operated backup system or equivalent secondary source of power approved by the Building Official for security Alarm Systems and by the Fire Marshal for fire Alarm Systems.
- d. Notification. An Alarm User shall give or cause notice to be given to the Sheriff's Department for security Alarm Systems or the Fire Department Emergency Command Center for fire Alarm Systems prior to, and immediately after, any service, test, repair, maintenance, alteration or installation of an Alarm System which might produce a False Alarm. The Alarm User or the Alarm User's contractor shall contact the Alarm Business to place the system in test mode. When a contractor fails to place an Alarm System in test mode during maintenance, repair, or other similar activities, the contractor shall be responsible for false alarm fines as detailed in Section 10 of this ordinance.
- e. Prohibited Sound. No Alarm System shall be installed or used which emits a sound similar to that of an emergency vehicle siren or a civil defense warning system. For the purposes of this subsection, any variable pitch siren as opposed to steady pitch, shall be considered to emit a sound similar to the sound emitted by an emergency vehicle. This subsection does not apply to sirens mounted inside a building which cannot be heard outside the building.

- f. Repairs. After each False Alarm caused by a malfunction of the Alarm System, the Alarm User shall cause the Alarm System to be adjusted or repaired as necessary to eliminate the malfunction before placing the Alarm System back into operation. Upon disruption or diminishment of the fire protective qualities of a Fire Alarm System required by the California Fire Code, the Fire Marshal shall be promptly notified and immediate action shall be instituted to affect a reestablishment of the fire Alarm System to its original normal and operational condition. The Fire Marshal may require that the building be evacuated or an approved fire watch be provided until the fire Alarm System has been returned to service.
  
- g. Inspections:
  - 1. The Sheriff or Fire Chief, or their designees, may inspect any and all Alarm Systems installed in the unincorporated areas of the County.
  
  - 2. The Sheriff or Fire Chief, or their designees, shall be authorized to require any Alarm System designated as a public nuisance to be inspected by the Alarm Business at the Alarm User's expense. Inspections shall be complete enough to detect any likely malfunctions and shall include testing of the equipment. Particular attention shall be paid to the conditions that have the potential of causing False Alarms. The person making the inspection shall provide a written report to the Alarm User and the Fire Department and Sheriff's Department, detailing measures taken to eliminate the likelihood of further False Alarms caused by the Alarm System. The report shall be kept on the premises for two (2) years, and shall be subject to inspection by the Fire Department or Sheriff's Department upon request.

Section 10. FALSE ALARM PREVENTION FINE.

- a. Any Alarm User or any Responsible Party who uses an Alarm System regulated by this ordinance which has caused more than two False Alarms in a twelve-month period to be transmitted to the Sheriff's Department or Fire Department, either by direct communication from an Alarm Business or from a person responding to an Audible Alarm, shall pay a



False Alarm prevention fine to the County General Fund as provided below:

Third false alarm, \$50.00

Fourth false alarm, \$100.00

Fifth false alarm, \$150.00

Each additional false alarm, \$200.00

- b. The County shall issue a bill to the Alarm User or any Responsible Party for any unpaid fines accrued within sixty (60) days of discovery of a False Alarm pursuant to Section 8.a of this Ordinance. The bill shall be due and payable within 30 calendar days after the billing date.
- c. A 15% late penalty shall be added to the fines imposed by this section for any fines not paid by the due date.
- d. The amount of any fine and late penalty shall be deemed a debt to the County. The County may commence an action in any court of competent jurisdiction for the unpaid debt.
- e. In addition to any fine and late penalty imposed under this ordinance, any person who activates the False Alarm shall be subject to such other penalties as the law allows.

Section 11. EXCESSIVE FALSE ALARMS AS PUBLIC NUISANCE. The Sheriff or Fire Chief may designate an Alarm System a public nuisance if it activates excessive False Alarms. It is determined that three False Alarms within any three consecutive calendar months is excessive and constitutes a public nuisance.

Section 12. ENFORCEMENT. Non-payment of fines for False Alarms, and repeated number of False Alarms from the same premises constituting a public nuisance will be considered a violation of this ordinance. Non-payment of fines and late penalties shall be considered a civil debt to the County and the County may use any lawful means to collect upon such debt from the debtor.

Section 13. APPEALS.

- a. An Alarm User who wants to appeal the validity of a False Alarm determination by the Sheriff's Department or Fire Department may appeal to the Alarm Appeals Officer designated by the Sheriff to provide impartial judgment and determine whether the False Alarm prevention fine that has been levied for the false alarm is justified when a person

appeals that fine. . The appeal must be in writing and must be requested by the Alarm User or Responsible Party within ten (10) days of issuance of the notice of the False Alarm as set forth in Section 8 of this ordinance. The written appeal must contain sufficient information to allow the Alarm Appeals Officer to determine the events surrounding the Sheriff Department's or Fire Department's response to the False Alarm. Failure to appeal the determination within ten (10) days of receipt of the notice results in a conclusive presumption that the alarm was false.

- b. The Alarm Appeals Officer will conduct a de novo review the appeal and provide a decision based on the facts of the case. The Alarm Appeals Officer shall determine the validity of the False Alarm and shall issue written findings. The reasons for waiving a False Alarm notice shall not include, wind, power failure, loose animals, system malfunctions, and errors committed by the monitoring service, Alarm User, or their personnel.
- c. No appeal will be considered without payment of unpaid fines and penalties for False Alarms owed to the County under this ordinance, prior to filing of the request for an appeal process. If upon review of the appeal, the Alarm Appeals Officer's decision is in favor of the appellant, the fines and penalties, if any, will be refunded to the appellant. The decision of the Alarm Appeals Officer on such matter shall be final and conclusive.

Section 14. SEVERABILITY. If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this ordinance as herein acted or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid by a decision of any court of competent jurisdiction, such invalidity shall not affect the other provisions or applications of this ordinance which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end, the provisions of this ordinance are hereby declared to be severable.

Section 15. EFFECTIVE DATE. This ordinance shall take effect thirty (30) days after its adoption.

**Adopted:** 957 Item 3.2 of 01/12/2021 (Eff: 02/11/2021)