



City of McKinney News Release

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McKinney amends alarm permit ordinance to decrease false alarms

Police work with alarm companies for enhanced verification of alarms

McKINNEY, Texas (Oct. 7, 2009) – In order to reduce the amount of time public safety officers spend responding to false alarm calls, the City of McKinney adopted an ordinance in 2006 governing alarm system operations within the city. This week, City Council approved an amendment to the 2006 ordinance that will further decrease false alarm response time, enabling the police department to spend more time responding to actual crimes in McKinney.

Business and residential burglar alarms remain some of the top calls for service of the Police Department. Nearly 99 percent of residential alarm calls are false, and more than 96 percent of business alarm calls are false. The McKinney Police Department worked with the Security Industry Alarm Coalition to develop the amendment, approved on Oct. 6.

The City continues to require that residences and businesses operating an alarm system must annually register with the city for an alarm permit. Per the original ordinance, if a home or business burglary alarm is activated, there will be no response if the home owner or business does not have a permit to operate the alarm. Failure to register an alarm system could result in a fine of up to \$500.

The new amendment to the 2006 ordinance requires that alarm monitoring companies conduct an enhanced call verification procedure by attempting to make two calls to the alarm user prior to reporting a burglar alarm to the McKinney Police Department. Alarm monitoring companies may report the alarm immediately if secondary information or verification proves that the alarm is likely valid. All human activated alarms, like panic or duress, robbery or medical alarms will result in police dispatch to the home without verification.

Verification or secondary information includes events or circumstances that indicate that the burglary alarm dispatch request is valid. They can consist of additional video or audio alarm monitors that provide information that a crime is in progress, witness reports that a crime has occurred or is in progress, and multiple activations of different devices or zones at the same location during the same incident, like a window alarm and a motion detector.

“The purpose of the ordinance is to encourage alarm users and alarm companies to properly use and maintain the operational effectiveness of alarm systems in order to improve the reliability of the systems and reduce or eliminate false alarms,” said Police Chief Doug Kowalski. “We want to use our police patrol in the most efficient way possible to make sure McKinney remains one of the safest communities in the country, and we are certain this amendment to the alarm ordinance will help us maintain that goal.”

The “No Permit, No Response” program has resulted in increased compliance with the city’s permit requirements and has reduced staffing demands, a result of excessive false alarm calls. However, in order to further reduce these false alarms, the Police Department will work with the alarm company to require attempts to verify the validity of the alarm prior to police response.

If a home or business owner operates an alarm that only notifies the occupants, a permit is not needed. Requirements for this exception include no outside lights or sirens, and the police department must not be called or notified of the alarm activation by a third party monitoring such a system.

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About McKinney

McKinney, Texas, is unique by nature. As one of the fastest-growing cities in the U.S., McKinney has a current population of 122,000. Incorporated in 1848, the city is located 30 miles north of Dallas and is the county seat of Collin County. McKinney offers rolling hills, lush trees, a historic downtown square and unique neighborhoods and developments, and it was recently ranked as one of the Top 10 Best Places to Move by Forbes Magazine. Visit the city’s Web site at www.mckinneytexas.org.

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