



**City
of
Milwaukee**

INTERDEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE
LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU

Memorandum

To: Ald. Robert W. Puente
From: Richard L. Withers *RW.* ext 8532
Date: March 23, 2010
Re: Private Alarm Business Permit Options
Private Alarm Systems Task Force – Memo 2

Item 3 on the Agenda for Thursday's task force meeting is "Permitting or licensing systems, salespersons, installers and first responders."

This memo addresses the permitting or licensing of residential and commercial alarm systems. After reviewing the manner in which other municipalities issue permits or licenses for the installation and operation of individual alarm systems, there are a number of alternatives that the task force may wish to consider. The following list is not exhaustive:

- If a permit process is established, should it be limited to installation or be renewed annually or for some other period?
- Which office will handle the permit (examples from other cities include the office of the city clerk, the police department, or the tax collector through a form submitted by alarm companies on behalf of their customers)?
- Which types of alarm systems should be covered by permits (for example: self-installed and unmonitored, audible signal only, or systems installed by a licensed alarm business whether monitored or not)?
- Should a penalty be prescribed for unpermitted systems?
- Should false alarm penalties be applied to users or subscribers, and should the penalties be escalated for unpermitted systems?
- Should police response be limited to permitted system premises?
- Should a permit or registration be required before initial operation or should a grace period be allowed?
- Should permits be transferable to new owners?
- Should a process be established for denial, nonrenewal, suspension or revocation of a permit and also for reinstatement? If so, on what grounds are decisions made?

The following information updates and expands upon information about permit processes in other cities previously provided to the task force.

The Permit and Registration Process in Other Cities

Austin, TX

Austin provides for a 12-month permit, with a \$200 misdemeanor penalty for operating without a permit. The regular permit fee for a residence is \$25 and is \$50 for a business. The permit applies to operating an alarm system and not to installation.

Baltimore County, MD

The system may not be activated until registered. Registration by the user includes filing of an installer's certificate. The Baltimore ordinance also provides that alarm businesses provide a list of users to the County. Registrations are for 3 years.

Brea, CA

A permit is required to install, replace, maintain, or operate an alarm system. Permits expire each June 30. Alarm "subscribers" are required to have an annual inspection conducted by the alarm business responsible for installation or continuing service once every 12 months.

Cincinnati, OH

Alarm system users are required to register with the police department.

Kansas City, KS

Kansas City requires permits in 3 categories. An initial annual permit fee is \$45 for a residence. In addition to residential and commercial permits, the City requires a "Master Permit" for apartment complexes of 6 or more units. Failure to obtain a permit is a misdemeanor.

Los Angeles, CA

Los Angeles requires a permit to install, connect, activate, operate or use an alarm system. The initial permit fee is \$31, and subsequent annual permit fees are \$30. Permits may be denied, suspended or revoked. Penalties for false alarms are \$115 for each false alarm plus a user penalty of an additional \$50 for a permitted system and \$100 for an unpermitted system. Non-monitored systems require a permit, but there is no fee. Permit numbers must be displayed on the premises.

Philadelphia, PA

Philadelphia provides for an annual alarm system registration with a fee of \$35. There is a \$100 fine for use of an unregistered system.

San Antonio, TX

San Antonio requires annual permits with no penalty for the first 5 false alarms in burglaries and no fee to provide services for the first false alarm; service fees may be charged for subsequent responses. A permit must be obtained at least 24 hours prior to initial operation. Alarm permits cannot be renewed if alarm service fees are unpaid. San Antonio police will respond to alarms from unpermitted systems as well as permitted systems unlike several other Texas jurisdictions.

San Francisco, CA

San Francisco treats alarm system permits as licenses and users as alarm subscribers. The initial license fee (\$40 for a residence and \$50 for a commercial establishment) is paid by the subscriber to the alarm installation company. If self-installed, the fee is paid to the City Tax Collector. Licenses expire every January 1. Non-licensed alarm systems are subject to a \$100 penalty and penalties of \$250 for each false alarm. Permitted systems are subject to a false alarm penalty of \$250 for the second false alarm and this penalty is increased by \$50 for each additional false alarm up to 5 or more.

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RLW

3/24/2010