

# LOS ANGELES POLICE COMMISSION ALARM SYSTEM FACT SHEET

## ATTENTION: PERMIT APPLICANTS AND ALARM SYSTEM SUBSCRIBERS --

To ensure compliance with the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) Section 103.206, the following is a brief explanation of your responsibilities as an alarm system owner:

1. As an alarm user you are responsible for obtaining an alarm permit which costs \$31. You must then notify your alarm company of your permit number.
2. Permittees are required by law to display the name and telephone number of the person or alarm company designated to respond to the location in the event of an alarm activation. This information must be current, clearly visible and located on the exterior of the premises.
3. Permittees will not be charged for the first two (2) false alarm calls occurring in any twelve (12) month period. If calls exceed the initial two (2) calls within a twelve (12) month period, a charge of \$80.00 for each additional call will be imposed. These charges are calculated on a "continuous twelve (12) month period," not a calendar year".  
  
Non-permittees are allowed only one free false alarm call. Obtaining an alarm permit after being billed as a non-permittee does not immediately entitle you to two free false alarms. To be entitled to two free false alarms, there should not be any false alarm for the next 12 months following your last false alarm.
4. Permittees questioning service charges billed to them may request a waiver investigation by presenting a written request to the Board of Police Commissioners. Such request shall include documentation to support why such charge should be waived. A service charge shall be waived or reversed when the Board or its designee has determined that activation of the permittee's alarm system was caused by:

- a. criminal activity as evidenced by a Preliminary Investigation Report filed within thirty (30) days of the alarm date, or other verifiable evidence of a crime occurring on the alarm date which is deemed acceptable by the Board, or
- b. verified acts of nature such as earthquake, flood, hurricane force wind, fire, and verifiable power or telephone line failure.

5. Alarm permits must be canceled by the original permit holder prior to vacating the property. Cancellation requests must be in writing and mailed to the Office of the City Clerk, T and P Alarm Unit, P. O. Box 53235, Los Angeles, CA 90053-0235 and accompanied by verification of sale of property or termination of lease.
6. Before an alarm call can be transmitted to the Police Department, your alarm company must attempt to verify the alarm, either through a listening or video device, or through telephone confirmation. Failure to attempt to verify the alarm activation is considered a violation of the alarm ordinance. This verification procedure also ensures that you are aware of every occasion that LAPD has been dispatched on your behalf.  
  
Robbery or panic alarms are not verified.
7. Section 103.206 LAMC does not impose a requirement on the Police Department to leave a False Alarm Notification Card informing the permit holder of a false alarm. These notifications serve only as a courtesy to the subscribers informing them that there has been an alarm activation which, upon initial investigation, appears to be false.
8. Alarm systems may not be used for any purpose other than signaling and reporting unauthorized entry. Alarm systems must automatically shut off after thirty minutes.
9. Alarm companies must have a City of Los Angeles Business Tax Registration Certificate.
10. Violation of any part of the alarm ordinance other than failure to pay a service fee can result in a misdemeanor conviction punishable by a fine of up to \$1000, a year in jail or both.

## ALARM SYSTEM CONTACTS

The following agencies will assist regarding:  
**WAIVERS** (written requests required)

Wind (in excess of 70 mph)  
South Coast Air Quality Management District  
Attn: Meteorology Section  
21865 E. Copley Drive,  
Diamond Bar, CA 91765

### Telephone Line

Call the telephone number shown on the telephone bill to request verification of telephone line failure.

### Power Outage

Department of Water and Power  
Attn: Alan Turkheimer  
P.O. Box 10210, Room 2B  
Van Nuys, CA 91410-0210

### COMPLAINTS (re: Alarm Companies)

Regulatory Agency  
State of California, Dept. of Consumer Affairs  
Bureau of Security & Investigative Services,  
400 R Street, Suite 3040  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Telephone (800) 952-5210

Civil Dispute-Small Claims  
L.A. County Courthouse  
110 N. Grand Ave., #429  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Telephone (213) 974-6131

Better Business Bureau  
Telephone (213) 368-3850

To check if Alarm Company has a State License  
Telephone (916) 445-7366

## ALARM INDUSTRY INFORMATION

Greater Los Angeles Security Alarm Association  
980 S. Arroyo Parkway Suite 100  
Pasadena, CA 91105  
Telephone (626) 795-7000 or (805) 496-5325

Los Angeles County Burglar/Fire Alarm Assoc.  
6727 Odessa Avenue  
Van Nuys CA 91406  
Telephone (800) 732-2345

## BILL INTERPRETATION

Los Angeles Police Commission  
150 N. Los Angeles Street, Room 144  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Alarms Section Telephone Numbers  
(213) 485-2931 or  
(800) 439-2909 then press 485-2931 or  
(818) 756-8121 then press 485-2931.

## PAYMENT INFORMATION

City Clerk, Tax and Permit Division  
111 N. Hope Street, Room L68  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Telephone (213) 485-7000

## 37 WAYS TO ELIMINATE FALSE ALARMS

False alarms are a problem for everyone. If every alarm user has just a few false alarms, Los Angeles will end up with hundreds of thousands of false alarms and waste tens of millions of dollars worth of police resources. Following are 37 ways to eliminate false alarms in homes or businesses. Following these steps will save vital police resources and improve the effectiveness of everyone's alarm systems.

## ALARM INSTALLATION

1. Have your alarm installed by a qualified company which is licensed by the State of California. Check references, and get a business address of the alarm company. You may want to visit the alarm company's facility to ensure that it is a well established company that will be around after the installation is complete.
2. Use dual technology sensors whenever possible. This is where the sensor has more than one type of detector which must be activated before an alarm signal is sent.
3. Make sure all motion detectors have a second sensor on the same circuit to ~~verify the first~~ sensor in the event of false alarms from the first sensor.
4. Install an alarm system with two-way voice communication. This will allow the alarm company to hear what's going on when the alarm is activated. An alarm activation with listen-in verification has a higher priority police response.
5. Make sure your alarm system is installed with at least 22 awg conductors. This is the National Burglar and Fire Alarm Association standard.
6. Program door alarm sensors to have at least a

45-second delay before they activate.

7. Make sure that panic buttons are not accessible to children, who might push them out of curiosity.

## **ALARM SYSTEM OPERATIONS**

8. Have your alarm system maintained and inspected once a year. Make sure that all door and window contacts meet properly and check all batteries.
9. Inspect your motion detectors, door & window contacts, alarm screens or any other alarm components for dust, spider webs, moisture or anything else that might interfere with proper operation.
10. **CANCEL ALL FALSE ALARMS WITH YOUR ALARM COMPANY IMMEDIATELY.**
11. In the event of a false alarm, find out what sensor activated and what caused it. Take steps to ensure that it does not happen again.
12. Be especially watchful and alert after any unexplained alarm activation.
13. Rehearse alarm cancellation procedures with anyone who might use your alarm system.
14. Do not use +1 duress alarms. This is where the usual alarm activation code is changed by only one number to signal a panic or duress call.
15. Make the alarm system user's manual available to all users.
16. In businesses, make sure you immediately switch off your alarm system and any answering devices upon opening so that the alarm company will not get your answering machine or a busy signal after an alarm activation and send out the police.
17. Make sure the alarm panel transformer is plugged into a 24-hour outlet. If your power is to be off for more than 10 hours, call your alarm co.

## **ALARM COMPANY DEALINGS**

18. Have your alarm company provide you with an orientation and training on your alarm system's functions and operation.
19. Make sure your alarm company verifies all alarm activations.

20. Consider asking your alarm company to not call in alarm signals for the first 1 to 4 weeks after your alarm is installed. This will give you time to work out the bugs in the system, as well as develop your own routine for using the alarm system. This may also save false alarm service fees due to user error.

21. When construction or repairs are scheduled on your home or business, call your alarm company and alert them not to dispatch during these periods.
22. Give your monitoring company detailed instructions about who to call when your alarm is activated, and what they should do when they receive an alarm signal.
23. Periodically check with your monitoring company to ensure that your call list is up to date.
24. Notify monitoring facility of unscheduled business openings and closings.
25. Notify your alarm company if you will be away from home for an extended period of time. Provide them with your revised call list for the period while you are away.
26. Verify alarm cancellation procedures with your alarm company.
27. Confirm any special agreements with your alarm company in writing.

## **HOME & BUILDING MANAGEMENT**

28. Make sure that pets are not loose in a room with motion detectors.
29. Do not leave helium balloons or other mobile items in a room with motion sensors.
30. Be aware of changes in your environment and how they affect your alarm system. New pets, design changes, new house plants, air conditioning usage, and promotional or holiday displays can all set off an alarm system.
31. Make sure that all doors and windows are latched securely to eliminate false alarms from wind or from someone accidentally jiggling the door.
32. Install and use dead-bolt locks.
33. Eliminate any rodent or other pest or insect.

problem. These are a common cause of alarm activations.

34. Quickly repair broken windows or holes in roofs to ensure that birds, cats or other animals do not enter and set off your alarm.
35. Ensure that everyone who uses your alarm system knows the code word and has been trained in its operation. This includes employees, janitors, delivery personnel, domestic help, etc.
36. Ask a reliable locksmith for an evaluation of the locking devices in your home or business.
37. Attend Alarm School. This is a two-hour class where you can learn more about eliminating false alarms, alarm system operation, and the City's alarm ordinance. In addition, those who attend alarm school can have one false alarm fee waived. Alarm school may be attended once a year. Prior to attending, you must call the Alarms Section to reserve a seat.

### **CHOOSING THE RIGHT ALARM COMPANY**

Your alarm system is a sizable investment in your home or business. A quality, well-designed and maintained alarm system can provide a degree of security as well as act as a deterrent to crime. A poorly installed alarm system can waste valuable police resources, cost you hundreds of dollars in false alarm service fees, and give little deterrent to crime. The following suggestions can help ensure you've gotten a quality alarm system from a reliable alarm company.

- Reliable alarm companies usually join one of the local or national alarm associations. This will show that the company is trying to deal with vital alarm company issues and false alarms. The major alarm associations are listed on the Alarm System Contacts page in this brochure.

### **FALSE ALARM REDUCTION**

False alarms are a major problem in the alarm industry. Responsible companies are the ones trying to reduce this problem. The following inquiries can help you determine how your company deals with false alarms.

- Does the company have a false alarm reduction program? If so, what are the details?
- What is the alarm company's policy on dealing with alarm responses? Do they verify alarm

activations by telephone or a direct audio or video link? At least one of these methods is required under the City of LA ordinance. Also, do they contact the people on your call list in the event of an alarm?

### **COMPANY SUPPORT**

- What kind of training have the installation technicians received?
- Does your alarm company hold all alarm calls for the first 7 to 30 days? This will give persons operating the system time to become familiar with proper operations and ensure that the equipment is functioning properly. This could save future alarm charges.
- How long has the alarm company been in business? Can they give you references of recent installations in your area?

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

- How will your alarm be monitored? Does the alarm company do its own monitoring, or do they contract for central monitoring? If they contract for central monitoring, what information will that station have about your alarm's operations?
- Will your system include a cancellation code to allow you to easily cancel a false alarm activation?

### **HARDWARE**

- Is there a regular maintenance schedule for the entire alarm system? Who provides maintenance, and how much are you charged for it?
- Will your system include a back-up battery? If so, what happens when the battery goes bad? Will you be notified? Will the battery be checked on the regular maintenance schedule?
- Is the wiring used in your alarm system 22 awg minimum?

If you get positive answers to all or most of these questions, then you are probably dealing with a responsible alarm company.

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