

# City of San Diego False Alarm Program

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

### **Who is required to have an alarm permit/license?**

Everyone operating an alarm system inside the city limits is required to register their alarm system. An alarm system means any single mechanical or electrical device used to detect unauthorized entry into or detect fire and/or harmful gas in any building or other structure. The system alerts others to the possible commission of an unlawful act within a building, or alerts of fire or harmful gas, and that when triggered emits a sound or transmits a signal or message that is intended to evoke a law enforcement response or emergency responder. This includes any audible alarm or other alarm system whether or not it is monitored by an alarm business, alarm agent, or alarm user; or installed by an alarm business or alarm user. The fire alarm user permit is for systems that are monitored by an alarm company.

A permit is required by the Police Department if your home or commercial building is monitored for burglary/robbery.

A permit is required by the Fire-Rescue Department if your home or commercial building is monitored for fire/smoke or harmful gas.

### **Exemptions:**

The only exemptions are for municipal, county, state, federal or other government.

Non-Profit organizations must obtain a Police Alarm permit, but are exempt from the permit fee. If you are a Non-Profit organization, please include your IRS 501 (c)(3) documents along with the completed application.

### **How do I register my alarm system?**

#### **For the Police Alarm Permit:**

To obtain a police alarm permit within the City of San Diego, create a permit and pay online at <https://sdpdalarmpermits.sandiego.gov>. You may also mail the permit application to San Diego Police Department Permits and Licensing, MS 735 P.O BOX 121431, San Diego, CA 92112 or apply in person at San Diego Police Department 1400 E Street, San Diego, CA 92101.

#### **For the Fire Alarm User Permit:**

To obtain a fire/harmful gas alarm permit within the City of San Diego, create a permit and pay online at <https://sdpdalarmpermits.sandiego.gov>. You may also mail the permit application to or apply in person at San Diego Fire-Rescue Department 1010 Second Avenue, Suite 400, San Diego, CA 92101.

### **What is the cost of the alarm registration?**

#### **Police Alarm Permit:**

The cost of an alarm registration is as follows:

Residential Property: \$10

Commercial Property: \$10

#### **Fire Alarm User Permit:**

A fire alarm user permit for commercial or residential properties is \$18.00 for two years.

### **What if I move into a home or take ownership of a business with a burglary/robbery or fire/harmful gas alarm System, or switch alarm companies?**

Alarm system permits shall not be transferable from one person or location to another. It is recommended that you work with your alarm company. You will need to complete an alarm permit application with updated contact information. Also, provide a certification from the alarm company detailing the effective date of the alarm change and information regarding the company that will now perform the monitoring services. The alarm company should also provide you with information about how to avoid false alarms.

You can create or update an account online at <https://sdpdalarmpermits.sandiego.gov>.

### **Do I need a Permit if I live in an apartment complex or condominium?**

Yes, you will need a permit if your unit has its own alarm system panel and you have an alarm system for inside your unit only. However, if the alarm system is for the common areas in your building, the building owner will need to obtain a permit for each alarm system control panel in the complex.

### **How will I know that my Permit is due for Renewal?**

You will receive a notice in the mail 30-45 days prior to your permit expiring. You will have the opportunity to send in the renewal form with payment, or complete your renewal online. A separate renewal notice will be issued by the Fire-Rescue or Police Department for their respective alarm user permits.

### **Where do the registration fees and alarm service fees go?**

The fees are used to offset the City's administrative costs of the program.

**Are false alarms a problem?**

Yes, they are. Across the nation, the growth of alarm system ownership has resulted in a tremendous amount of false alarms. The response to false alarms has created an additional burden on law enforcement agencies and fire/safety emergency responders. Nationwide, approximately 99% or more of all the alarms responded to are false alarms. Most importantly false alarms take away from real emergencies that are occurring.

**What does the City hope to accomplish by enforcing the false alarm ordinance?**

The City wants to substantially reduce the number of false alarms that Fire-Rescue and Police Departments respond to.

**Will I be charged for alarm activations that are not false?**

No, you will never be charged for an alarm activation that is not false. The ordinance allows charges for false alarms only.

**What if my alarm goes off? Will I be charged for the false alarm or accidental activation?**

As an alarm user, you are subject to fees and penalties for false alarms as follows:

**Police Alarm Permit:**

False alarm activations within a 365 day period will result as follows:

1 <sup>st</sup> Occurrence:	\$100.00
2 <sup>nd</sup> Occurrence:	\$200.00
3 <sup>rd</sup> Occurrence:	\$300.00
4 <sup>th</sup> Occurrence:	\$400.00
5 or more occurrences:	\$500.00 each additional alarm
No Permit Penalty	\$300.00

## Fire Alarm User Permit:

Two (2) false alarms per calendar year (January 1 to December 31) are allowed without penalty or fee. Subsequent false alarms of three or more in the same calendar year are subject to the following fees and penalties:

1 <sup>st</sup> Occurrence:	No fee
2 <sup>nd</sup> Occurrence:	No fee
3 <sup>rd</sup> Occurrence:	\$195.00
4 <sup>th</sup> Occurrence:	\$305.00
5 <sup>th</sup> Occurrence:	\$525.00
6 or more occurrences:	\$2,285 each additional alarm

## How do I know if I have had a false alarm?

A letter concerning false alarms that have been logged against your account and permit will be mailed to you. You will have ten (10) business days to provide satisfactory evidence that your alarm activation did not meet the qualifications for a false alarm under the City of San Diego Municipal Code Chapter 3 Article 3 Division 37 (Burglary/Robbery) or Chapter 5 Article 5 Division 99 (Fire/Harmful Gas).

<http://docs.sandiego.gov/municode/MuniCodeChapter03/Ch03Art03Division37.pdf>

<http://docs.sandiego.gov/municode/MuniCodeChapter05/Ch05Art05Division99.pdf>

## How is a false alarm determined?

False alarm means an activation of an alarm system that results in a call for service where an emergency situation does not exist. It includes activations caused by mechanical or electrical failure, malfunction, improper installation, sensor sensitivity, accidental tripping, misuse or negligent maintenance by an alarm business, alarm agent or alarm user. It does not include activations caused by extreme weather conditions, telephone line problems, or any other extraordinary factors over which the alarm business, alarm agent or alarm user has no direct control.

A police false alarm **does not** include activations where the call for service is cancelled by the alarm user, authorized responder or alarm agent, and law enforcement, or emergency responders do not arrive at the site.

A fire false alarm **does** include activations where the call for service is cancelled by the alarm user, authorized responder or alarm agent, and law enforcement, or emergency responders do not arrive at the site.

If Fire-Rescue is dispatched and they leave the Fire Station, the activation is still considered a false alarm even if the call for service is cancelled. Not arriving at the site does not excuse the false alarm.

### **What are the penalties if I have too many false alarms?**

If the number of false alarms exceed the allowable amounts per calendar year (one (1) for Police or two (2) for Fire-Rescue), your permit is subject to revocation. You will receive written notification by mail to the address on. Excessive responses by San Diego Fire-Rescue or San Diego Police may result in a misdemeanor citation.

### **If I disagree with an assessed fine, can I appeal?**

Yes, you have the option to appeal the fines assessed in accordance with the San Diego Municipal Code.

To appeal a Police false alarm fee, you must send a letter of appeal within ten (10) calendar days of receiving an alarm permit revocation letter to:

**Administrative Hearing Coordinator**  
SAN DIEGO POLICE DEPARTMENT  
Vice, Permits and Licensing, MS 735  
1401 Broadway San Diego, California 92101

To appeal a Fire false alarm revocation, your request must be made in writing within ten (10) calendar days from the date you receive the notice and address it to:

Hearing Administrative Coordinator  
Fire Alarms Permit  
1010 Second Avenue, Suite 400  
San Diego, CA 92101

Refer to Chapter 3 Article 3 Division 5 of the San Diego Municipal Code for details on appeal rights and procedures.

<http://docs.sandiego.gov/municode/MuniCodeChapter03/Ch03Art03Division05.pdf>

### **Do I have to register my car alarm?**

No, car alarms do not need to be registered.

