

License Fees

Residential: \$45 per year
Commercial: \$70 per year

Penalties

No penalty shall be assessed for the first false alarm from a licensed alarm system during the calendar year. Thereafter, the alarm user shall pay a penalty for each subsequent false alarm from the same alarm system during the calendar year.

<u>Number of False Alarms</u>	<u>Penalty</u>
1	No penalty
2	\$100 per alarm
3	\$150 per alarm
4	\$200 per alarm
5 or more	\$250 per alarm

Operating a non-licensed alarm system (whether revoked, suspended or never licensed) is subject to a penalty of \$100, as well as a penalty of \$250 for each false alarm. If the user registers with the Office of the Treasurer & Tax Collector within ten (10) days of the violation, the first \$100 may be waived.

If a license fee or false alarm penalty is not paid within thirty (30) days, the Office of the Treasurer & Tax Collector shall add 50% to the amount of the fee or penalty, as a penalty for non-payment. Additional costs and interest charges will accrue thereafter.

Appeals

You may appeal the assessment of a penalty or license revocation by calling (415) 558-3822 to explain the basis for the contention that the City improperly assessed a fee or revoked a license. **For more information, please visit the DEM website at:**

- www.sfdem.org/
- City Programs
- Police Emergency Alarm Ordinance
- Can I appeal a fine?

How to Prevent False Alarms

- Lock all protected doors and windows.
- Keep pets, balloons, curtains, fans, heaters, plants, decorations, etc. away from motion sensor areas.
- Know how to cancel the alarm if the system activates.
- Educate alarm users (family, babysitters, caretakers, maids, realtors, etc.) on how to operate your alarm system.
- Have your alarm company check and service your system regularly.
- Contact your alarm company if you plan on remodeling, changing phone systems, installing ceiling fans, etc.

What Your Alarm Company Should Do for You

- Your alarm monitoring company must attempt to verify every alarm signal — except panic, duress or hold-up — **before** requesting response from law enforcement.
- If it is determined that an alarm signal is false, your alarm monitoring company **MUST** immediately attempt to cancel the police dispatch. **Do not let your alarm company tell you that this cannot be done.** You cannot personally cancel a police dispatch unless you initiated the call to your alarm monitoring company first.



Police Emergency Alarm Ordinance

City and County of San Francisco
Department of Emergency Management
Police Emergency Alarm Ordinance Program

(415) 558-3822

www.sfgov.org/dem

For additional information concerning the Alarm Ordinance, please contact the Department of Emergency Management

(415) 558-3822

Background

Alarms were designed to protect lives and property. When properly installed, maintained and operated, alarms can be a real asset. The San Francisco Police Department responded to over 55,000 alarm-related calls in 2002. However, over 90% of these alarm-related calls were false. When alarms are not properly installed, maintained and operated, they become a liability. Each year false alarms cost taxpayers millions of dollars and subject the public and police to needless danger when the police are called to respond to false alarms. False alarms in our community continue to increase every year with new alarm systems being installed by numerous companies doing business in San Francisco and residential users. In order to reduce the dangers and annoyances associated with false alarms, and to encourage alarm users to properly use and maintain their alarm systems in good working order, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed the *Police Emergency Alarm Ordinance*. For the full text of the Ordinance, please see the San Francisco Police Code, Article 37.

The Police Emergency Alarm Ordinance requires all alarm users to obtain a license from the City and County to lawfully operate an alarm within San Francisco, and provides for penalties if there is a false alarm. Law Enforcement would prefer that every alarm user experience zero false alarms. The alarm ordinance provides for one “free” false alarm for licensed users in a calendar year. On the second false alarm for a licensed user in a calendar year, the alarm user will be fined \$100. The penalties escalate upon each additional false alarm.

The purpose of this brochure is to highlight and understand the major points of the Police Emergency Alarm Ordinance.

What Is a False Alarm?

The Police Emergency Alarm Ordinance defines a false alarm as “an alarm dispatch request to a law enforcement agency, when the responding law enforcement officer finds no evidence of a criminal offense or attempted criminal offense after having completed a timely investigation of the alarm site” [*San Francisco Police Code Section 3702(o)*]. This simply means that if a law enforcement officer responds to an alarm signal and after investigating finds no evidence that criminal activity either had occurred or was occurring, the signal will be designated as a false alarm dispatch. A false alarm may be caused by factors such as human error, storm activity, or equipment malfunction.

How the Ordinance Works

The ordinance became effective March 31, 2003. *No alarm user shall operate or cause to be operated, an alarm system at its alarm site without a valid alarm license.* Alarm users may be subject to a penalty of \$100 for failure to obtain a license, as well as a penalty of \$250 for each false alarm when the alarm is not licensed in addition to the penalties for false alarms. The Office of the Treasurer & Tax Collector may waive the first \$100 penalty for failure to license the alarm if the user registers the alarm within ten (10) days of the violation.

Alarm User Registration

• New Alarm Systems or Self-Monitored Systems

Every emergency alarm system must be licensed with the Office of the Treasurer & Tax Collector **before** the system is placed into service. It is your alarm installation or monitoring company’s responsibility to collect the alarm license application and fee, and provide you with information about the Police Emergency Alarm Ordinance at the time of sale or installation of your alarm system.

If you do not use an alarm installation or monitoring company, it is your responsibility to file an alarm license application and pay the fee directly to the Office of the Treasurer & Tax Collector within five (5) days after the alarm system installation or alarm system takeover.

• Alarm Systems in Place as of March 31, 2003

The ordinance requires your alarm monitoring or installation company to bill you for the license.

Annual License Renewal

An alarm license shall expire at 12:01 a.m. on January 1 of each year, and must be renewed every year by submitting an updated application and a license renewal fee to the Office of the Treasurer & Tax Collector, directly or through an alarm company. Failure to renew will be classified as use of a non-licensed alarm system and citation and penalties shall be assessed without waiver.

If you change your mailing address, contact information, or make any changes that alter the original license information, you must immediately notify the Office of the Treasurer & Tax Collector of these changes in writing at:

Office of the Treasurer & Tax Collector
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
City Hall, Room 140
San Francisco, CA 94102-4639

You may obtain a license application or renewal form from the Office of the Treasurer & Tax Collector; via the Internet at www.sfgov.org/tax; or by calling (415) 554-5204.