

provides for three (3) “free” false alarms within a 12-month period for registered alarm systems. On the third false alarm, the alarm user must have the alarm system inspected by a licensed alarm business. The purpose of this inspection is to ensure that all mechanical components of the alarm system are in good operating condition and to provide the alarm business an opportunity to re-educate users of the system on proper use procedures.

False alarm response fees are imposed beginning with the fourth false alarm within a 12-month period, at a fee of \$50.00. Please refer to the detailed False Alarm Response Fee Schedule on the back panel of this brochure.

On the sixth false alarm within a 12-month period, the alarm user must have the alarm system upgraded to meet current County installation standards.

Non-permitted Alarm Systems, however, are subject to a \$150.00 citation and assessment penalty for each alarm dispatch request.

Alarm users are considered in violation of the alarm ordinance if they:

- fail to register their alarm system(s);
- fail to pay imposed false alarm response fees; or
- fail to upgrade the alarm system, as required.



For more information, visit the FARU at www.charlescounty.org/es/faru

FALSE ALARM RESPONSE FEE SCHEDULE

Below are fees charged to alarm users for emergency response to false alarm activations. Fees apply only if emergency personnel are dispatched to the alarm location and the alarm signal is false.

FALSE ALARM RESPONSE FEE SCHEDULE		
# of False Alarms	Action(s) Taken	Response Fee
1st	On-Site Written Notice + Letter of Notification from FARU	\$0.00
2nd	On-Site Written Notice + Letter of Notification from FARU	0.00
3rd	On-Site Written Notice + Letter of Notification from FARU + Inspection of System Required	0.00
4th	On-Site Written Notice + Letter of Notification from FARU	50.00
5th	On-Site Written Notice + Letter of Notification from FARU	150.00
6th	On-Site Written Notice + Letter of Notification from FARU + Modification/ Upgrade of System and/or Additional User Training Required	150.00
7th	On-Site Written Notice + Letter of Notification from FARU	150.00
8th	On-Site Written Notice + Letter of Notification of Suspension of Permit from FARU + Notification Made to Insurance Co.	200.00
9th	On-Site Written Notice + Letter of Notification of Suspension of Permit from FARU + Notification Made to Insurance Carrier	200.00
10th	On-Site Written Notice + Letter of Notification of Suspension of Permit from FARU + Notification Made to Insurance Carrier	200.00
11th & Up	More than 10 false alarms in a 12-month period may be cause for automatic revocation of CR.	300.00
Non-permitted Alarm Systems (whether expired, revoked, suspended or never acquired) will be subject to a citation and assessment penalty for <u>EACH</u> alarm dispatch request, in addition to any other penalties which may apply (Section 13.0 Fines, ©).		150.00

(Rev. April 2005)

CHARLES COUNTY FALSE ALARM ORDINANCE No. 98-48



FALSE ALARM REDUCTION UNIT

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Charles County Government
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www.charlescounty.org/es/faru
(REVISED 4/21/05)

BACKGROUND

Charles County police, fire and emergency medical services personnel respond to over 10,000 false alarms each year. It is estimated that Charles County's false alarm response rate has resulted in the waste of approximately 5,000 emergency personnel man hours and many thousands of dollars annually. These unfounded alarm calls reduce the effectiveness of emergency services and undermine their ability to respond to legitimate, critical calls. Alarm legislation was adopted to address this abuse and waste of emergency resources and to reduce unnecessary safety risks posed to County emergency response personnel and citizens during a false alarm response.

WHAT IS A FALSE ALARM?

Ordinance 98-48 defines a False Alarm as an *Alarm Dispatch Request to the police, fire or emergency medical services where emergency responders find no evidence of medical need, criminal offense or attempted criminal offense, or, after completion of a timely investigation of the Alarm Site, the senior fire officer determines there is no evidence to support activation of the fire alarm system.* This simply means that if emergency personnel respond to an alarm signal and, after investigation, find no evidence to support the alarm activation, the response personnel will designate the alarm signal as a false alarm.

FALSE ALARM REDUCTION UNIT

The False Alarm Reduction Unit (FARU) of the Charles County Department of Emergency Services was created to administer Ordinance No. 98-48. The FARU's main function is to reduce the number of false alarms to which police, fire and emergency medical services respond to each year. The FARU licenses alarm businesses, registers alarm users, sends notification of false alarms and levies civil monetary penalties for excessive false alarms to alarm users, provides advance notification to alarm users and alarm businesses of applicable renewal dates, ensures that appropriate inspections and upgrades of alarm systems occur, administers the False Alarm Appeals Process, develops and administers a public information program to educate alarm system users on provisions of the False Alarm Ordinance, proper maintenance and use of alarm systems, and assists in our goal to reduce false alarms in Charles County.

ALARM USER REGISTRATION

- Every alarm business conducting business in

Charles County must obtain an Alarm Business License (ABL) from the FARU at an annual fee of \$50.00. *An alarm business must ensure that an alarm user's system is registered before the system is activated or placed into service. An alarm business must collect from their alarm users the initial alarm registration form and fee and deliver to FARU prior to activating or placing system into service. Non-Compliance will result in the alarm business and/or alarm user being fined \$150 for every false alarm dispatch request.*

- An annual \$20.00 registration fee must be paid with each registration form and a separate registration must be obtained for each alarmed location, both residential and non-residential. (Registration does not apply to car alarm systems.) *Registration fees are waived for alarm owners 62 years of age or older and, on a case-by-case basis, for individuals with medical alert alarms, the infirm or physically challenged, and for County, State and municipal government facilities (proper documentation required). Registration fee waivers do not exempt individuals or entities from paying false alarm response fees.*
- Alarm Businesses must provide their ABL license number and the alarm user's registration number to 911 Police/Fire/EMS Communications when requesting dispatch to an alarm activation.
- If you do not have an alarm or alarm monitoring company, you may obtain registration information directly from the FARU.
- Alarm registrations are not transferable from one alarm user to another or from one location to another. If changes are made regarding the alarm company, mailing address, or contact person information, alarm users **are** required to advise the FARU in writing of change(s) but **are not** required to re-register their alarm system.
- Alarm users and/or alarm businesses must notify the FARU when there is a relocation or change in

ownership. The old registration must be canceled and a new one issued.

WHAT YOUR ALARM COMPANY SHOULD DO FOR YOU

In an effort to reduce false alarms, alarm companies are required, by law, to take certain proactive measures.

1. An alarm business must ensure that an alarm user's system is registered before the system is activated or placed into service. An alarm business must collect from their alarm users the initial alarm registration form and fee and deliver to FARU prior to activating or placing system into service. Non-Compliance will result in the alarm business and/or alarm user being fined \$150 for every false alarm dispatch request.
2. Alarm Businesses must attempt to verify every alarm signal **before** requesting emergency dispatch (with the exception of duress, hold-up, special medical or water flow signal alarms).
3. If it is determined that an alarm signal is false, alarm businesses **must** immediately attempt to cancel the emergency dispatch.
4. Alarm Businesses must notify alarm users in writing within 72 hours if they have requested an emergency dispatch to the alarm user's alarm location.
5. When a new alarm system is installed in a home or business, the alarm business must provide the alarm user with an Installation Certification, certifying that:
 - the system meets or exceeds installation standards;
 - all persons responsible for the operation of the system have been fully trained on its proper use;

HOW THE LAW WORKS

Charles County False Alarm Ordinance No. 98-48