



City of West Covina
Alarm System Program
Helpful Information

Approval: The Alarm System Program was approved by City Council at the February 20, 2018, City Council Meeting and requires alarm system owners to register an alarm permit (\$10 per year, per system). The fees and fines associated with the Alarm System Program are effective February 1, 2019 and apply to all owners of alarm systems within the City of West Covina.

Who needs an alarm permit? Alarm systems that summon a Police Department response, installed in either a commercial or residential property, are subject to the Alarm System Program and require an alarm permit (\$10 per year). Alarm systems that summon a Fire Department response, installed in a property that is required to have a monitored fire alarm system (per the California Fire Code), are subject to the Alarm System Program and require an alarm permit (\$10 per year). **Residential smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors do not require an alarm permit.** Alarm owners with an alarm system that summons both the Police and Fire Department are required to register an alarm permit for each system.

Why are alarm permits required? Each year, the Police and Fire Department respond to thousands of alarm calls where ~95% of the alarm calls result in a false alarm. Every alarm call is treated as a crime in progress or active fire. Responding personnel don't know the names of the occupants who reside at the location, the existence of a guard dog, or whether flammable and/or hazardous materials are located on-site. By registering an alarm permit, you'll ensure responding personnel are provided with critical information before arriving at the scene of the alarm call.

What is the goal of the Alarm System Program? Responding to false alarms prohibits the Police and Fire Department from responding to actual emergency incidents. Most false alarms are caused by technical and/or user error. The goal of the Alarm System Program is to create a balance between the use of Police and Fire Department resources while holding the alarm monitoring companies accountable for alarm system installations and alarm system owners accountable for the operation and maintenance of their alarm system.

What information is collected by the Alarm Permit? The following information is collected during the alarm permit process: alarm owner's contact information; contact information for responsible parties who can respond to the alarm site if the alarm owner is not available; special characteristics (existence of an onsite guard dog or the existence of flammable and/or hazardous materials).

Although the alarm owner may have provided the same information to their alarm monitoring company, the City requires the information during the alarm permit process to ensure the most updated information is available to responding personnel. Since there are over 10,000 alarm companies that operate in the United States, the sheer volume of alarm companies makes the verification of current information difficult. Once a permit is registered, all subsequent alarms that occur at the permit location are assigned to the permit.

What do Alarm System Program fees and fines pay for?

All fees and fines associated with the Alarm System Program provide a cost recovery mechanism for the reasonable costs of administering the system including responding to alarm calls, a hosted online portal (to apply and pay for annual alarm permits), tracking false alarm calls by locations, staffing dedicated toll-free numbers, software and billing infrastructure, the education of alarm system owners on how to prevent false alarms, and associated costs. The complete list of fees and fines associated with the Alarm System Program are assessible from www.westcovina.org/alarm (Section 9 - What do the Alarm Program fees and fines pay for?) As reference, here are the fine schedules:

Police False Alarm	# of False Alarms	Alarm Permit	No Alarm Permit
	1	\$50.00*	\$150.00
	2	\$75.00	\$175.00
	3	\$125.00	\$225.00
	4	\$175.00	\$275.00
	5	\$225.00	\$325.00
	6 or more	\$275.00/each	\$375.00/each

Fire False Alarm**	# of False Alarms	Alarm Permit	No Alarm Permit
	1	\$100.00*	\$200.00
	2	\$150.00	\$250.00
	3	\$250.00	\$350.00
	4	\$350.00	\$450.00
	5	\$450.00	\$550.00
	6 or more	\$550.00/each	\$650.00/each

* Permitted alarm systems will have the option to complete an alarm school after their first false alarm. The alarm school is designed to educate the alarm owner how to prevent a false alarm. Upon completion of the alarm school, the first false alarm fine will be waived.

** Fines associated with fire alarm systems are higher than the fines for police alarm systems because more Fire Department personnel respond to alarm calls.

Does the false alarm count reset every year?

Yes. False alarm counts are reset at the end of your 12-month alarm permit period (also referred as the “12-month registration period”). The alarm permit is valid from the date the alarm site is registered and is valid for 12 months (from the registration date).

Is there an option if I receive a false alarm fine (without a permit)?

For the first false alarm fine (only), an alarm system owner without an alarm permit will have 30 days from the false alarm invoice date to register an alarm permit to reduce the fine amount from the unregistered (“No Alarm Permit) fine schedule to the registered (“Alarm Permit”) fine schedule. The alarm system owner will then have an additional 30 days to complete the alarm school to have the first false alarm fine waived within the 12-month registration period.

Questions or Registration:

To ask questions or register an alarm permit, please call one of the toll-free numbers. For alarm systems that summon the Police Department: (888) 421-9155. For alarm systems that summon the Fire Department: (888) 339-5538. The normal operating hours are Monday – Friday, 6:30am to 3:30pm PST.