



November 2008

## False Alarm Ordinance

In 2003, Hillsborough County Sheriff's deputies responded to more than 60,000 false alarm calls, time that could have been spent responding to true emergency calls.

In 2004, the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners approved burglary/security alarm ordinance 04-16 that seeks to reduce the number of false alarms in our community so that Sheriff's deputies aren't delayed in responding to legitimate calls for help.

### Q. What is a false alarm?

A false alarm is the activation of an alarm system, which results in a response by a law enforcement agency where an emergency does not exist as determined by law enforcement. This definition includes signals activated intentionally in non-emergency situations and alarms for which the actual cause is unknown. It also includes alarms caused by conditions of nature that are normal for the area, including but not limited to rain, wind and lightning.

### Q. What is the fine for a false alarm?

Security system owners will be fined for repeated false alarms that occur within a one year period as follows:

- 1st and 2nd occurrence—warning notice
- 3rd occurrence—\$75 fine
- 4th occurrence—\$100 fine
- 5th occurrence—\$150 fine
- 6th occurrence—\$300 fine
- 7th occurrence and above—\$500 fine per incident

### Q. Is there a way to appeal a false alarm?

Yes. A burglar alarm user has 10 business days from the date of issuance of the written false alarm notice to submit a written appeal to the Alarm Administrator. This Administrator as the authority to dismiss or enforce a violation as outlined in Section 11 of Ordinance 04-16.

### Q. What will happen if I do not pay the false alarm fine?

Failure to pay the false alarm fine, after the appeal period, is a violation of the County Ordinance and you will be required to appear before the Special Magistrate. If a violation is found, the Special Magistrate has the authority to assess a fine per day until the false alarm fine is paid, and may record a lien against the owner's properties to enforce the fine.

### Q. The Sheriff Office did not show up, how can I be charged for a false alarm?

Ordinance 04-16 states that law enforcement response occurs when any law enforcement agency receives a request for response or otherwise learns of any activation of an alarm system and the call is entered into the dispatch system with intent to have a Law Enforcement Officer respond to investigate the alarm. For the purpose of this ordinance, a response occurs when the call is entered into the Law Enforcement Agency's dispatch system regardless of whether or not a Law Enforcement Officer physically responds to the scene. In other words, if an alarm is called in to the Sheriff's Office's dispatch system, and the alarm is determined to be false, the property owner would be charged a fine for that false alarm.

### Q. My alarm company called back and cancelled the alarm with the dispatcher, will I be charged?

Yes. The property owner would be charged for that false alarm even if its later cancelled by the alarm company. Remember, a law enforcement response occurs when the call is entered into the Law Enforcement Agency's dispatch system. Time and resources were used to enter the information into the system and to cancel the deputy who may have already been in route to the alarm site.

Sign-up to receive this e-newsletter or suggest topics by contacting

Kemly Green at [greenkj@hillsboroughcounty.org](mailto:greenkj@hillsboroughcounty.org)

Hillsborough County Code Enforcement Department

10119 Windhorst Rd., Tampa, FL 33619 | 813-274-6600 | [www.hillsboroughcounty.org/hcce](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/hcce)

