

ORDINANCE NO. 2021-06-15 ALARMS

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ELSA, TEXAS TO THE ELSA CODE OF ORDINANCES; PROVIDING RULES AND REGULATIONS RELATED TO ALARM USE IN THE CITY; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR REPEAL; PROVIDING A PENALTY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 51.001 of the Texas Local Government Code, the City Council of the City of Elsa may adopt or amend ordinances for the good government, peace, or order of the City or for trade and commerce of the City and that are necessary or proper for carrying out a power granted by law to the City or to an office or department of the City; and

WHEREAS, the number of false alarms responded to by the police department personnel is substantial; and

WHEREAS, the City Council desires to reduce the number of false alarm notifications by encouraging the proper operation and maintenance of alarm systems; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds it is necessary to add an ordinance regulating the use of alarms and requiring permitting of the same within the City limits and to provide for the safety and protection of the citizens of the City of Elsa.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ELSA, TEXAS:

Section 1. ALARM SYSTEMS

Purpose

- (A) The purpose of this ordinance is to encourage alarm users and alarm companies to properly use and maintain alarm systems in order to improve the reliability of alarm systems and to reduce or to eliminate false alarms.
- (B) This ordinance governs alarm systems intended to summon law enforcement response and requires permitting, establishes fees, provides penalties for violations, establishes a system of administration, and sets conditions for the suspension of police response or revocation of permits.

Section 2. DEFINITIONS

Definitions

In this ordinance the following terms and phrases shall have the following meaning:

Alarm Administrator. A person or persons designated by the City to administer, control, and review false alarm reduction efforts and to administer the provisions of this ordinance.

Alarm Dispatch Request. A notification to a law enforcement agency that an alarm, either manual or automatic, has been activated at a particular alarm site.

Alarm Installation Company. A person in the business of selling, providing, maintaining, servicing, repairing, altering, replacing, moving, or installing and alarm system in an alarm site. This definition shall also include individuals or firms installing and servicing the alarm systems that will be used in their private or proprietary facilities. This definition does not include persons doing installation or repair work where such work is performed without compensation of any kind.

Alarm Permit. Authorization granted by the alarm administrator to an alarm user to operate an alarm system.

Alarm Signals. Any of the following types of signals:

- (1) Duress Alarm. A silent alarm signal generated by the entry of a designated code into an arming station in order to signal that the alarm user is being forced to turn off the system and that law enforcement response is required.
- (2) False Alarm. A notification to law enforcement of possible criminal activity that:
 - (a) Is based solely on electronic information remotely received by an alarm systems company;
 - (b) Is uncorroborated by eyewitness, video, or photographic evidence that an emergency exists; and
 - (c) Following an onsite inspection of the alarm site, has been confirmed by the City to concern a situation where no emergency exists.
- (3) Holdup Alarm. A silent alarm signal generated by the manual activation of a device intended to signal a robbery in progress or that a robbery has just occurred.
- (4) Panic Alarm. An audible alarm system signal generated by the manual activation of a device intended to signal a life-threatening or emergency situation requiring a law enforcement response.

Alarm Site. A single fixed premises or location served by an alarm system or systems under the control of one owner or tenant. Each unit, if served by a separate alarm system in a multi-unit building or complex, shall be considered a separate alarm site. Alarm sites include the following categories:

- (1) Residential Site. A single-family residence or each residential unit of a multi-unit building or complex that is served by an alarm system.
- (2) Commercial Site. Each premises or location where any business activity is regularly conducted that is served by an alarm system. Each unit of said premises or location, if served by a separate alarm system in a multi-unit building or complex, shall be considered a separate commercial site.
- (3) Educational Site. Every nonresidential premises or location of a private or public school that provides academic instruction meeting the compulsory education requirements to students enrolled in Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade, or selected grades therein, or a

school administrative office of such school that is served by an alarm system. This term does not include private day care facilities, child care facilities, and facilities providing specialized training such as performing arts instruction, tutoring, fitness programs and the like.

- (4) Government Site. Every premises or location of any federal, state, county, or municipal government office or of Edcouch-Elsa Consolidated Independent School District that is served by an alarm system.

Alarm System. A device or system that transmits a signal intended to summon law enforcement in response to a criminal trespass or a burglary. The term includes an alarm that emits an audible signal on the exterior of the structure. The term does not include an alarm installed on a vehicle, unless the vehicle is used for a habitation at a permanent site, or an alarm designed to alert only the inhabitants within the premises.

Alarm System Company. A person or company who sells, installs, services, monitors, or responds to an alarm system or detection device.

Alarm User. Any person who owns or operates an alarm system or who has contracted for monitoring, repair, installation, or maintenance service from an alarm system company.

Alarm User Awareness Class. A class conducted for the purpose of educating alarm users about the responsible use, operation, and maintenance service from an alarm system company.

Arming Station. A device that allows for control of an alarm system.

Automatic Voice Dialer. Any electrical, electronic, mechanical, or other type of device capable of being programmed to send a prerecorded voice message, when activated, over a telephone line, radio, or other communication system to law enforcement, public safety, or emergency services agency requesting dispatch.

Cancellation. The process by which response is terminated by an alarm systems company after an alarm dispatch request notifies law enforcement that there is not an existing situation at the alarm site requiring a response by law enforcement.

City. City of Elsa.

Conversion. The transaction or process by which one alarm systems company begins servicing and/or monitoring of a previously unmonitored alarm system or of an alarm system previously serviced and/or monitored by another alarm system company.

Law Enforcement. The chief of police or another authorized representative of a law enforcement agency.

License. A license as prescribed in Chapter 1702, Occupations Code.

Person. An individual, corporation, partnership, association, organization, or similar entity.

Responder. An individual who is capable of reaching the alarm site within thirty (30) minutes and who has access to the alarm site, the code to the alarm system, and the authority to approve repairs to the alarm system.

SIA Control Panel Standard CP-01. The American National Standard Institute-approved Security Industry Association Control Panel Standard (“ANSI/SIA CP-01”), as may be updated from time to time, that details recommended design features for security system control panels and their associated arming and disarming devices to reduce the incidence of false alarms. Control panels built and tested to this standard by Underwriters Laboratory or other nationally recognized testing organizations will be marked to state: “Design evaluated in accordance with SIA CP-01 Control Panel Standard Features for False Alarm Reduction.”

Takeover. The transaction or process by which an alarm user assumes control of an existing alarm system that was previously controlled by another alarm user.

Verify. Attempts by the alarm systems company or its representative to contact the alarm site and/or alarm user by telephone, whether or not actual contact with a person is made, to determine whether an alarm signal is valid before requesting law enforcement dispatch, involving a minimum of two (2) calls to the alarm site and/or to one or more alternate phone numbers before an alarm dispatch request is made.

Section 3. PERMIT; APPLICATION; FEE; TRANSFERABILITY; FALSE STATEMENT

Permit; Application; Fee; Transferability; False Statements

- (A) No alarm user shall operate or allow others to operate on the alarm user’s behalf an alarm system that is intended to summon law enforcement response to its alarm site unless a valid alarm permit has been issued for the alarm system. A separate alarm is required for each alarm site. An alarm permit is not valid if it has been denied or revoked.
- (B) Any alarm user must submit the alarm permit application to the alarm administrator no later than fifteen (15) days after the day the alarm system is installed or the day an alarm system conversion or takeover occurs.
- (C) Law enforcement is not required to respond to an alarm dispatch request from an alarm site that does not have a valid alarm permit. The alarm administrator may provide notice to the alarm user and/or custodian of an unpermitted alarm site informing the user or custodian of the alarm site of the duty to permit the alarm system at the alarm site as required by this section. If the alarm user or custodian of the alarm site fails to submit a permit application within fifteen (15) days of receipt of such notice, the City may suspend future responses as described in section 8. After fifteen (15) days, each day that the alarm user or custodian of the alarm site fails to submit a permit application constitutes a separate offense.
- (D) Upon receipt of a completed alarm permit application and payment of the alarm permit fee as provided in appendix A of this ordinance, the alarm administrator shall permit the alarm system unless the applicant has:
 - (1) Failed to pay any required fees or resolve outstanding charges issued pursuant to this ordinance; or
 - (2) Had an alarm permit for the alarm site suspended or revoked, and the violation causing the suspension or revocation has not been corrected.
- (E) Each alarm permit application must include the following information:

- (1) The name, complete address (including the apartment or suite number, if applicable), and telephone numbers of the person who will hold the permit and be responsible for the proper maintenance and operation of the alarm system and payment of fees assessed under this ordinance.
 - (2) The classification of the alarm site as either residential, commercial, educational, or government; and
 - (3) For each alarm system located at the alarm site, the classification of the alarm system and whether it is audible or silent; and
 - (4) The alarm user's mailing address, if different from the address of the alarm site; and
 - (5) Any dangerous or special conditions present at the alarm site; and
 - (6) The names and telephone numbers of at least two (2) responders; and
 - (7) The type of business conducted at the alarm site, if the alarm site is commercial; and
 - (8) A signed certification from the alarm user stating:
 - (a) The date of the installation, conversion, or takeover of the alarm system; and
 - (b) The name, address, telephone number, and number of any license or:
 - (i) The alarm systems company performing the alarm system installation, conversion, or takeover; and
 - (ii) The alarm installation company responsible for providing repair service to the alarm system; and
 - (c) The name, address, telephone number, and number of any license of the alarm systems company that is responsible for monitoring the alarm site, if different from the alarm installation company; and
 - (d) Confirmation of receipt by the applicant of a set of written operating instructions for the alarm system, including written guidelines on how to avoid false alarms, by the alarm systems company; and
 - (e) Confirmation that the alarm systems company has trained the applicant in proper use of the alarm system, including instructions on how to avoid false alarms; and
 - (9) A disclaimer that law enforcement response may be affected by factors including, but not limited to, the availability of police units, the priority of calls, weather conditions, traffic conditions, emergency conditions, and staffing levels.
- (F) Once issued, an alarm permit shall be valid for the alarm site as long as the site remains in control of the alarm user, unless such alarm permit is revoked or suspended in accordance with this ordinance.
- (G) Any false statement of material fact made by an applicant for the purpose of obtaining an alarm permit shall be sufficient cause for refusal to issue a permit.
- (H) An alarm permit cannot be transferred to another person or alarm site. An alarm user shall inform the alarm administrator of any change that alters any of the information listed on the alarm permit application within five (5) business days of such change. A fee shall not be assessed on timely changes to permit applications pursuant to this subsection, except for changes implicating a takeover or conversion.
- (I) All applicable fees owed by an applicant must be paid before an alarm permit be issued, renewed or revised. No refunds of alarm permit fees will be made.

Section 4. DUTIES OF THE ALARM USER

- (A) An alarm user shall:
- (1) Maintain the alarm site and the alarm system in a manner that will minimize or eliminate false alarms; and
 - (2) Make every reasonable effort to procure a response by a responder upon an alarm activation; and
 - (3) Refrain from activating an alarm system for any reason other than an occurrence of an event that the alarm system was designed to report.
- (B) An alarm user shall adjust the alarm system or cause the alarm system to be adjusted so that an alarm signal audible on the exterior of an alarm site will sound for no longer than ten (10) minutes after being activated.
- (C) An alarm user shall not use automatic dialers.
- (D) At the alarm site, an alarm user shall maintain a set of written operating instructions for each alarm system.
- (E) Individuals who have installed their own systems and firms that have installed proprietary systems shall comply with all of the requirements for alarm users in this article.

Section 5. DUTIES OF ALARM SYSTEMS COMPANIES

- (A) Upon installation or activation of an alarm system, an alarm system company shall distribute to alarm user's information summarizing:
- (1) The applicable laws relating to false alarms, including the potential for penalties and revocation or suspension of an alarm permit; and
 - (2) The prevention of false alarms; and
 - (3) The operation of the alarm system.
- (B) An alarm company installing or activating an alarm system shall notify the City of said installation or activation not later than the fifteen (15) day after the date the alarm system is installed or activated, whichever is later.
- (C) Upon the installation or activation of an alarm system, the alarm installation company responsible for the installation or activation shall provide the City:
- (1) The name and license number of the applicable alarm system company;
 - (2) The name of the alarm user at the alarm site;
 - (3) The address of the alarm site; and
 - (4) The date of installation or activation of the alarm system.

- (D) The duties imposed by this section on an alarm systems company do not apply to the installation or activation of a personal emergency response system, as defined under Section 1702.331, Occupations Code.
- (E) Upon the effective date of this ordinance, an alarm systems company shall not install a device that is not a single-action, non-recessed button to activate holdup alarms.
- (F) Upon the effective date of this ordinance, an alarm systems company may not install any alarm system, that includes a detection device control panel, unless the control panel is listed to meet at a minimum the EIS CP-01 Control Panel Standard Features for False Alarm Reduction.
- (G) An alarm systems company or an alarm installation company may not install or activate automatic voice dialers.
- (H) For all alarm signals, an alarm systems company shall:
 - (1) Verify every burglar alarm signal, except those involved with duress or holdup alarm activations, before requesting a law enforcement response to an alarm site; and
 - (2) Report alarm signals and dispatch requests to alarm users by using telephone numbers designated by the alarm administrator; and
 - (3) Communicate cancellations to the City in a manner and form determined by the alarm administrator; and
 - (4) Communicate to law enforcement available pertinent information about the alarm site; and
 - (5) Communicate to law enforcement the type of alarm activation; and
 - (6) After an alarm dispatch request, promptly advise the law enforcement agency if the alarm systems company knows whether the alarm user or responder is enroute to the alarm site.
- (I) Information provided to the City under this section is confidential and may not be disclosed to the public except as required by law.
- (J) All arms systems companies shall maintain licenses as required by Chapter 1702, Occupations Code.

Section 6. DUTIES AND AUTHORITY OF THE ALARM ADMINISTRATOR

- (A) The alarm administrator shall;
 - (1) Designate a manner and form for the communication of alarm dispatch requests;
 - (2) Designate telephone numbers for communication of alarm dispatch requests; and
 - (3) Establish procedure to accept cancellations of alarm dispatch requests.
- (B) The alarm administrator may establish a procedure for the notice to the alarm user of a false alarm. The notice may include:

- (1) The date and time of law enforcement response to the false alarm;
 - (2) The identification number of the responding law enforcement officer; and
 - (3) A statement urging the alarm user to ensure that the alarm system is properly operated, inspected, and serviced in order to avoid false alarms and any resulting fees.
- (C) The alarm administrator may create and implement an alarm user awareness class. The alarm administrator may request assistance of associations, alarm systems companies, law enforcement agencies, and other entities that alarm administrator deems appropriate to develop and implement the class. Should the alarm administrator choose to create and implement a class, the class shall inform alarm users of the problems created by false alarms and teach alarm users how to avoid generating false alarms.

Section 7. FEES FOR FALSE ALARMS

- (A) An alarm user of a permitted alarm system which signals more than three (3) false alarms at the same alarm site during the preceding twelve (12) month period shall be required to pay false alarm fees as provided in Appendix A of this Code.
- (B) The City shall determine from an inspection of the interior and/or exterior of the premises whether the signal was a false alarm. The City may not consider a false alarm to have occurred if the City takes longer than thirty (30) minutes to respond to the alarm dispatch request.
- (C) An alarm user shall be required to pay an unpermitted alarm system fee as provided in Appendix A of this Code for each alarm dispatch request response by an unpermitted alarm system.
- (D) Within thirty (30) days of each false alarm, the alarm administrator shall notify the alarm user in writing of the following:
- (1) The amount of the fee assessed for the false alarm;
 - (2) Notice that law enforcement response will be suspended after nine (9) reports of a false alarm, excluding reports for false duress, holdup, and panic alarms; and
 - (3) A description of the procedure available to the alarm user to appeal the fee.
- (E) If law enforcement response is to be suspended at an alarm system location, the alarm administrator shall notify the alarm user and the alarm systems company in writing thirty (30) days before alarm response is to be suspended. The notice shall include the amount of the fee for each false alarm and the description of the process to the alarm user and the alarm systems company to appeal the suspension.
- (F) The alarm administrator or a law enforcement agent may strike a report of a false alarm based on evidence that:
- (1) The false alarm was caused by an act of God;
 - (2) The false alarm was caused by an action of the telephone company;

- (3) The false alarm was caused by a power outage lasting longer than four (4) hours; or
- (4) The law enforcement response was not completed within thirty (30) minutes of the alarm dispatch request.

(G) Multiple false alarms occurring within a twenty-four (24) hour period shall be counted as one false alarm.

Section 8. REVOCATION OF PERMIT

The alarm administrator may suspend law enforcement response to an alarm site by revoking that alarm permit if:

- (1) The alarm user has reported more than eight (8) false alarms during the preceding twelve (12) month period;
- (2) There is a false statement of a material fact in the application for a permit;
- (3) The alarm user has failed to make timely payment of any fees assessed under sections 3 or 7 of this ordinance; or
- (4) The permit application is otherwise incomplete.

Section 9. ENFORCEMENT; VIOLATION; PENALTY

(A) The City may enforce this ordinance through civil enforcement action as provided in Subchapter B, Chapter 54, Local Government Code and/or through criminal enforcement action.

(B) Any person who violates or who causes, allows or permits another to violate any provision of this section, upon conviction, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor. Each day such violation shall be permitted to exist shall constitute a separate offense. The owner, occupant or resident of the premises or part thereof where anything in violation of this section shall be placed or shall exist, or any lessee, tenant, employee, agent or corporation employed in connection therewith who may have assisted in the commission of such violation shall be guilty of a separate offense and, upon conviction, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor.

Section 10. EXCLUSION OF CERTAIN ALARM SYSTEMS BY OWNER

A property owner may elect to exclude the City from receiving an alarm signal by an alarm system located on the owner's property. The owner must notify the City in writing of such election and must take action to ensure that alarm system does not generate a law enforcement dispatch signal. If such an election is made, the City may not impose a fee to obtain a permit to use the alarm system. The City may impose an unpermitted alarm system response fee on the property owner or agent, as provided in Appendix A of this Code, for each law enforcement response to an alarm dispatch request from an unpermitted alarm system.

Section 11. APPEALS

(A) If the alarm administrator assesses a fee, revokes an alarm permit, or denies the issuance, revision, or reinstatement of an alarm permit, the alarm administrator shall send to the applicant or alarm user and the alarm user's alarm systems company

written notice of the fee, revocation, or denial of the issuance, revision, or reinstatement of an alarm permit along with information regarding the right to appeal the decision.

- (B) The alarm user and/or the alarm systems company may appeal an assessment of a fee, the revocation of an alarm permit, or denial of the issuance, revision, or reinstatement of an alarm permit to the alarm administrator by setting forth in writing the reasons for the appeal within fifteen (15) business days after receipt of the notice. The appellant must pay an appeal fee as provided in appendix A of this ordinance along with the written appeal. If the alarm administrator's decision is reversed, the appeal fee will be refunded to the appellant.
- (C) A hearings official, as designated by the City Manager or the City Manger's agent, shall conduct and preside over a formal hearing on an appeal described in this section within thirty (3) days of receipt of the request for an appeal. The hearing official shall not be a member of law enforcement. The hearings official will decide to grant or deny the appeal based on the preponderance of evidence presented at the hearing. The hearings official must render a decision within fifteen (15) days after the date of the hearing either affirming or reversing the decision of the alarm administrator.
- (D) Filing a request for appeal shall stay any action by the alarm administrator as described in subsection (A) of this section until the appeal process described in subsection (C) of this section is complete.

Section 12. REINSTATEMENT

- (A) A person whose alarm permit has been revoked may, at the discretion of the alarm administrator, have the applicable alarm permit reinstated if the person:
 - (1) Submits a new application and pays a permit reinstatement fee as provided in appendix A of this code; and
 - (2) Pays or resolves all outstanding charges and fees; and
 - (3) Submits a certification from the person's alarm systems company stating that the alarm system has been repaired or adjusted in an attempt to eliminate false alarms and/or that the alarm user has been made aware of behavioral issues that might cause false alarms; and
 - (4) Attends an alarm user awareness class, if one is provided.
- (B) No refunds of permit reinstatement fees will be made under this section.

Section 13. SEVERABILITY

If any clause or provision of this ordinance shall be deemed to be in unenforceable for any reason, such unenforceable clause or provision shall be severed from the remaining portion of the ordinance, which shall continue to have full force and effect.

Section 14. REPEAL

All ordinances, parts of ordinances, or resolutions in conflict herewith are expressly repealed.

Section 15. PENALTY

Any person who violates or any person who causes or allows another person to violate any provision of this Ordinance shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by a fine not to exceed five hundred dollars (\$500.00). Each occurrence of any violation of this Ordinance shall constitute a separate offense. Each day in which any violation of this ordinance occurs shall constitute a separate offense.

Section 16. EFFECTIVE DATE

The City Secretary of the City of Elsa, Texas is hereby authorized and directed to cause a true and correct copy of the caption of this ordinance to be published in a newspaper having general circulation in the City of Elsa, Hidalgo County, Texas.

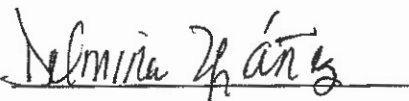
PASSED AND APPROVED, on this first and final reading on the 15th day of June, 2021

CITY OF ELSA



Alonzo Perez, Mayor

ATTEST:



Delmira Yanez, City Secretary

Delmira Yanez, City Secretary

APPENDIX A FEE SCHEDULE

(a) Alarm permit fee: (includes permit fees conversions and takeovers)	
(1) Residential Alarm Permit:	\$25.00
(2) Commercial Alarm Permit:	\$50.00
(3) Governmental (including school district, day cares) Alarm Permit:	\$ 0.00
(4) Educational Alarm Permit:	\$ 0.00
(b) Alarm Permit Reinstatement Fee:	\$50.00
(c) Appeal Fee:	\$25.00
(d) False Alarm Fees:	
(1) \$50.00, if the alarm site has more than three (3) but fewer than six (6) false alarms in the preceding 12-month period.	
(2) \$75.00, if the alarm site has more than five (5) but fewer than eight (8) false alarms in the preceding 12-month period.	
(e) Unpermitted Alarm System Response Fee:	\$250.00
