



# **Proposed Ordinance Changes: Burglar Alarms, Panic Alarms and Similar Alarm Systems**

*Regulation and Neighborhood Affairs Committee*

February 21, 2019



# Current State and City Law

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- City of Houston alarm systems are governed by:
  - Local Government Code (LGC) 214 Subchapter F
  - Chapter 11, Article III Burglar Alarms, Panic Alarms and Other Similar Alarm Systems
  
- City and State laws regulate and establish responsibilities for people who:
  - Purchase, rent, operate or use an alarm system.
  - Sell, lease, rent, install, maintain, or monitor an alarm system.
  
- Alarm system means an alarm device or equipment designed to or that emits or transmits an alarm signal that is designed or intended to produce an alarm notification.
  - Mechanical
  - Electrical
  - Electronic
  - Radio-controlled
  
- Alarm systems include but not limited to:
  - Audible
  - Burglar
  - Panic
  - Holdup
  - Silent



# Burglar Alarm Facts

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Permit Type	Number	%
Residential Burglar and Panic*	73,946	62.1%
Residential Burglar*	18,500	15.5%
Non-Residential Burglar and Panic	13,553	11.4%
Non-Residential Burglar	11,723	9.8%
Non-Residential Panic	890	0.7%
Exempt	557	0.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>119,169</b>	<b>100%</b>

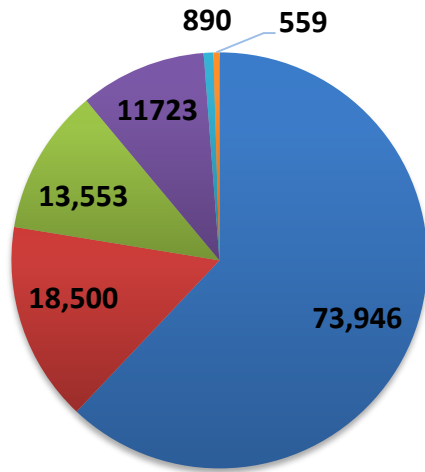
\* Effective February 1, 2019 the Residential Burglar & Panic Permit was renamed Residential Burglar Alarm Permit (no panic) and the existing Residential Burglar Alarm permit expired per Ordinance 2017-960.



# Burglar Alarm Quick Facts

## (No Fees Are Being Increased)

### Permit Types



- Residential Burglar and Panic
- Residential Burglar
- Non-Residential Burglar and Panic
- Non-Residential Burglar
- Non-Residential Panic
- Exempt

### Permit Fees

#### □ Residential

- \$40.86 Burglar
- \$50.00 Burglar and Panic

#### □ Non-Residential

- \$116.75 Burglar
- \$116.75 Panic
- \$233.50 Burglar and Panic

### Permit Fees *effective 2/1/2019*

#### □ Residential

- \$40.86 Burglar (*Expired*)
- \$50.00 Burglar (*Renamed*)



# Legislative Background

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- ❑ Prior to September 2015
  - ❑ Local Government Code (LGC) 214 Municipal Regulation of Housing and Other Structures, Subchapter F governed burglar alarm systems.
  
- ❑ In September 2015
  - ❑ State legislators approved HB 2162 which created the new Subchapter F-1.
    - ❑ Subchapter F remains and applies to municipalities whose population is less than 100,000 located entirely in a county with a population of less than 500,000.
    - ❑ Subchapter F-1 applies to larger municipalities like Houston located entirely or partially in large counties.



# Proposed Amendments to Implement 2015 State Law Changes

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## **Update False Alarm Definition**

- HPD responds to an alarm notification within a “reasonable” amount of time and determines the alarm was false.

## **Exclude Alarm Signal/Impose Penalty for Response\***

- Allow alarm system owners to exclude HPD from receiving an alarm signal – i.e. if a subdivision is paying for constable patrol, they may not want HPD response
- This would allow residents to forego purchasing a permit.
- \$250 penalty will be assessed if HPD response is requested from an excluded alarm location

\*Implement January 1, 2020

## **Require Alarm Company Responsibilities**

- Distribute information:
  - Alarm permit requirement
  - Alarm system operation
  - False alarm penalty and revocation
- Train alarm system owners:
  - Proper use of the alarm system including burglar and panic alarms
  - Prevent false alarms



# Additional Proposed Amendments

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- Include Video within definition of alarm system**
  - Many of today's alarm systems include video images as part of their technology.
  
- Remove from Alarm Application**
  - Social Security Number
  - Occupant list
  
- Revise Alarm Hearing Submissions**
  - Appeal of a false alarm or non-permitted penalty requires timely submission of hearing request and supporting documentation.
  - Failure to submit timely request will result in notice and imposed penalty as final.
  
- Remove False Alarm Penalty from City Fee Ordinance**
  - The Fee Ordinance requires annual increases. Penalties should not be in the fee ordinance. Instead we will move penalty fees to the Burglar Alarm Ordinance and remove them from the City Fee Schedule. It will also stop the annual increases from occurring.
  - Payment arrangement must be made within 30 days of invoice date unless a hearing has been timely requested.



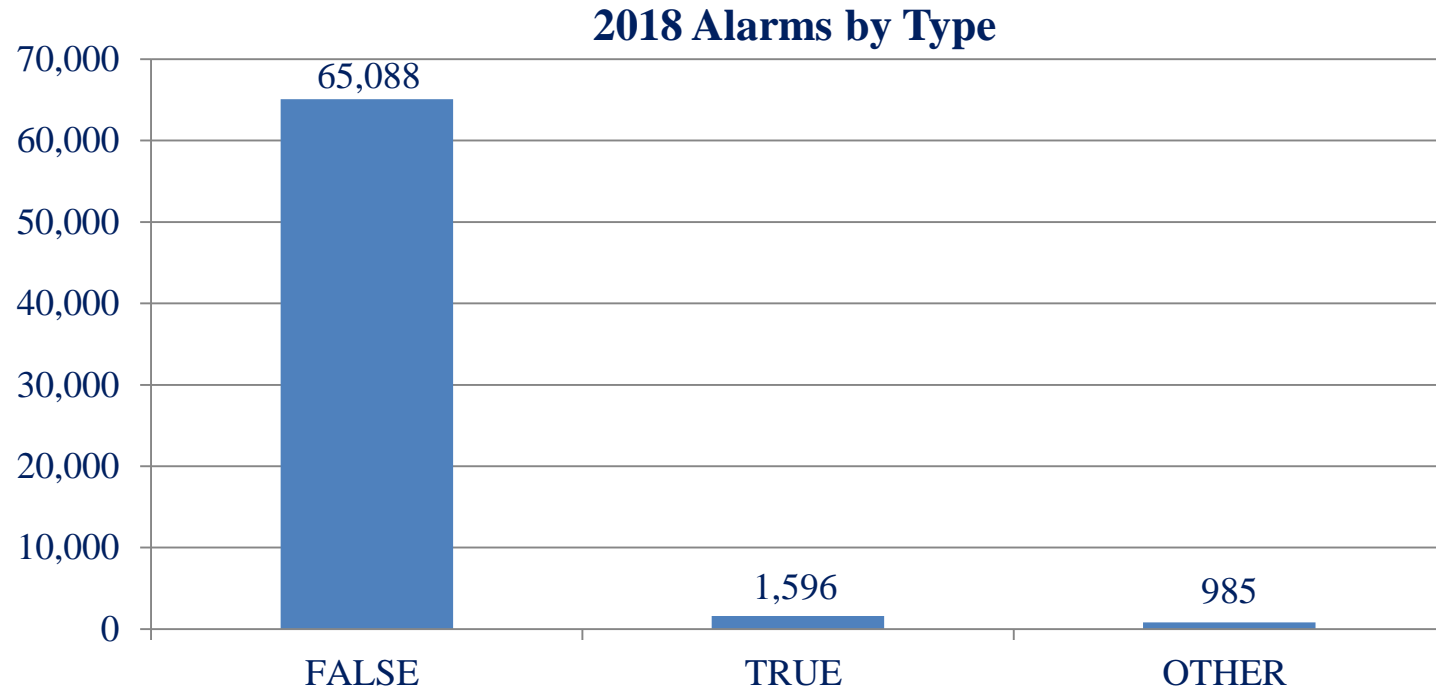
# Burglar Alarm Revenue

REVENUE	FY 2018	FY 2019
PERMITS	\$8,766,464.11	\$9,178,958.02
FALSE ALARM PENALTIES	\$1,673,329.65	\$1,972,817.63
ADMINISTRATION FEES	\$718,252.96	\$714,846.17
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$11,158,046.72</b>	<b>\$11,866,621.82</b>





# Burglar Alarm Quick Facts



**Based on 2018 data, HPD responded to 67,669 alarm incidents.**

- **96% were FALSE**
- **2% were TRUE**

## **Most Common Causes of False Alarms**

- User error
- Improper alarm system installation or activation
- Alarm system malfunction
- Accidental
- Weather



# 2019 False Alarm Penalties (No Change in Penalty Charges)

ALARM TYPE	INCIDENT #	RESIDENTIAL	NON-RESIDENTIAL
<b>BURGLAR</b>	1st	<b>FREE</b>	<b>FREE</b>
	2nd	<b>FREE</b>	<b>FREE</b>
	3rd	<b>FREE</b>	<b>FREE</b>
	4th	\$50.00	\$50.00
	5th	\$50.00	\$50.00
	6th	\$75.00	\$75.00
	7th	\$75.00	\$75.00
	8 <sup>th</sup> +	\$100.00	\$100.00
<b>Non-Permitted Burglar</b>	Each Incident	\$116.75	\$233.50
<b>PANIC</b>	1st	<b>FREE</b>	<b>FREE</b>
	2nd	\$140.09	\$280.20
	3rd	\$280.20	\$560.39
	4th	\$420.29	\$700.50
	5 <sup>th</sup> +	\$560.39	\$700.50
<b>Non-Permitted Panic</b>	Each Incident	\$308.21	\$490.34



# Stakeholder Input

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- Houston Police Department, HPD
- Houston Gulf Coast Alarm Association-HGCAA
- Houston Apartment Association-HAA
- Houston Association of Realtors-HAR
- Building Owners and Management Association-BOMA



Questions?



# Texas Cities

	HOUSTON	SAN ANTONIO	DALLAS	AUSTIN	FORT WORTH	EL PASO
<b>Population</b>	2,303,428	1,492,510	1,317,929	947,890	854,113	683,080
<b>Square Miles</b>	627	465	386	272	473	256
<b>Permit Holders</b>	119,161	56,294	69,773	7,977	6,468	Not available
<b>Discount/Exempt/Waiver on Permit Fee</b>	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No*
<b>Alarm Penalty Exception</b>	No	No	No	No	No	No*
<b>Reinstatement Fee</b>	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
<b>Payment Plan</b>	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
<b>% of False Alarms</b>	96%	91% *	Not available	98%	98%	99%

\* 2015 data