

False Alarm Cost Recovery Option #2 – Alarm Permit Ordinance

Description of Option

An ordinance would be established requiring owners of an alarm to pay a fee and register the alarm with the County. Registering an alarm would allow an owner a certain level of false alarm responses, after which a fine would be imposed for each subsequent false alarm over an established timeframe. Fines would be imposed beginning on the first false alarm response for unregistered alarms.

Steps to Implement

- Ordinance Development and Fee Study
- Request for Proposals, if administration of program to be contracted out
- Systems development, if administration to be done in-house, for collections and permit tracking.
- Identify staffing needs, either to oversee vendor, or oversee internal program.
- Work with contract cities on implementation and enforcement of program within their jurisdictions
- Conduct internal education and training, as well as outreach to public and contract cities.
- Implement and track results

Cost Analysis

| | One-time | Ongoing |
|---------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Cost to Implement | \$155,000 | |
| Cost to Administer | | \$88,000 |
| Potential Revenue | | Unable to Estimate |
| Total | \$155,000 | \$88,000 |

Description of Costs

The costs above are estimates of the value of the staff time spent implementing and administering an Alarm Permit Ordinance. Existing staff would be utilized for implementation, so no incremental costs would be incurred, but administration of the program, either in-house or outsourced, could require additional resources. Substantive implementation costs include development of an ordinance, analysis to determine level of fees and fines, work on an RFP and contract with a vendor, coordination with contract cities, and staff training. Ongoing costs include contract monitoring, data tracking, and occasional fee and fine updates.

While revenue could be generated to offset some, if not all, of the ongoing costs of administration, there are too many variable factors to include a useful estimate here. These variables include the fee for the annual permit (Santa Maria charges \$14.40 and Santa Barbara charges \$40), the number of registered alarms, the fine set for false alarms and number of false alarms per year, and the revenue sharing agreement between the selected vendor (if used) and the County. A detailed analysis would be conducted to develop the fees and fines, if the ordinance option is selected.

Pros and Cons

Pros

-Registered contact information for each alarm location

Cons

-Heavier staff commitment, both implementation and administration, than verified response

Pros

- Potentially significant reduction in staff time spent on false alarms
- Vendors available to provide registration and fee collections service
- Some revenue generation

Cons

- Public concern about additional fees and regulations
- Complicated implementation within contract cities
- Compliance with requirement to register
- Time to implement
- Collection challenges
- Need for 3rd party vendor contract administration or additional County staff
- Additional resources needed to administer