



Pierce County

Sheriff's Department

930 Tacoma Avenue South  
Tacoma, Washington 98402

**Re: Revised Alarm Ordinance for Unincorporated Areas of Pierce County, WA  
Effective January 1, 2008**

Dear Alarm Customer:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you about Pierce County's revised alarm program. If you have received this letter, but your alarm system is not located in unincorporated Pierce County, this information does not apply to you. If you only have a fire alarm system installed, then this information does not apply to you either. Notify your alarm company so they can correct their records.

On November 27, 2007 the Pierce County Council approved a new alarm ordinance. That became effective January 1, 2008.

Pierce County adopted the alarm ordinance to encourage alarm users to regularly maintain their alarm systems and ensure that anyone allowed to use the alarm system has been properly trained on its operation. The alarm ordinance is based on an alarm model that was developed by the national alarm industry in conjunction with the National Sheriff's Association and the International Association of Chiefs of Police. **To view a copy of the revised ordinance, please visit the website [www.atbservices.com/piercecounty](http://www.atbservices.com/piercecounty).**

**The Pierce County unincorporated area has more than 22,000 alarm sites to track and 170 alarm companies and monitoring centers that they must coordinate and interact with on alarms. The Pierce County Sheriff's Office responds to more than 5,000 alarm calls a year and 98% of them are false.**

**1) Annual Alarm Registrations**

All alarm users must apply for an alarm registration on an annual basis. The annual registration fees are:

- \$24 Residential and Commercial sites
- \$12 Senior Citizens 65 or older and persons with a certified disability (residential sites only). Proof of permanent disability may be required.

The annual alarm registration fee is used primarily to pay for the administration infrastructure costs of the Pierce County alarm program. The alarm program structure that is established to track false alarms, bill alarm service fees, provide online services and the availability of personnel to answer your questions via a phone call is an on going yearly function.

Whether or not you have a false alarm, this service function is necessary for all alarm users.

**The County and its administrator, ATB Services, will be coordinating with your alarm company and will be contacting you directly via US Mail to register your alarm system by July 2008.**

**2) Change to False Alarm Fees**

As of January 1, 2008, false alarm fees will be billed directly to the alarm user per the new fee schedule listed below, or to the alarm company if determined they caused the alarm. False burglar alarm fees have been reduced and cancellations accepted. All false alarms occurring as of January 1, 2008 will be tracked and billed beginning July 2008.

The following table shows all the current fees and the new fees.

	<b>Old Ordinance</b> in effect until December 31, 2007	<b>New Ordinance</b> effective January 1, 2008
All False Burglar Alarms	\$250	\$100
All Panic or Duress Alarms	\$125	\$200
Cancellations	\$50	\$0 - if cancelled prior to Deputy arriving at the alarm site

For each false alarm you have under the new ordinance, you will have 20 business days from notification to appeal your false alarm. An appeal fee of \$50 is required and if your appeal is successful, your appeal fee will be refunded. With each false alarm notice and fee you will receive a statement of your right to file an appeal.

**3) Potential Suspension of law enforcement response to alarm calls**

All alarm sites are subject to suspension of Sheriff's response based on some of the reasons outlined below:

- Failure of an alarm user to pay an alarm registration fee or any other assessed fee
- Failure of an alarm company to comply with the new ordinance – all of the alarm companies customers may be suspended from law enforcement response
- Excessive false burglar alarms – 3 or more within your one year registration period

You will be notified via US Mail if your registration is going to be suspended and you will be given clear instructions on how to apply for reinstatement of your alarm registration. The reinstatement fee is \$50.

If your alarm registration is suspended, your alarm company will be notified not to make any alarm request for the suspended site. Alarm companies requesting an alarm dispatch on a suspended alarm site shall be assessed a \$200 fee per incident and the user will be billed the general false alarm fee and an additional \$100 fee for operating an unregistered alarm system per incident.

#### **4) The ordinance requires Enhanced Call Verification (ECV)**

The new Pierce County alarm ordinance mandates Enhanced Call Verification. The alarm industry developed Enhanced Call Verification (ECV) as an effective way to avoid sending law enforcement to a false alarm. It requires that your alarm company make at least two separate calls in verifying your alarm systems activation signal prior to contacting the Sheriff's Office. Your alarm company will first call your home or business where your alarm is occurring and if they fail to contact a responsible party, they will then call a second number that you have provided them, such as a cell phone number. The whole process usually takes less than 60 to 90 seconds.

As the alarm user, you are familiar with any type of activity occurring at the alarm site such as guests, home repairs, cleaning crews, employees opening or closing times, etc. This gives you two or more opportunities to cancel accidental alarm activations before requesting response.

**Note: This is not a request for you to respond and check on the alarm site prior to the Sheriff's response.**

Pierce County would like to thank you for your cooperation in working with us to reduce false alarms! The goal of the Pierce County Sheriff's Office is to notify all alarm users in regards to the new ordinance and to encourage alarm companies and their alarm customers to be responsible for the installed alarm system, and the alarm users be held accountable for the alarm systems operation. Working together we can continue to reduce the number of false alarms, keep your alarm system as an effective crime deterrent and provide you with peace of mind.

**If your alarm system requires maintenance or you need training on how to properly operate it, now is an excellent time to contact your alarm company for this assistance, and for information on upgrading your alarm system.**

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions. We are looking forward to working with you. Thank your alarm company for sending you this letter. Your alarm company plays an important role in assisting you with your alarm system.