

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WASHOE COUNTY ALARM ORDINANCE

Is there a value to owning an alarm system?

Yes, an alarm system can bring you a sense of security and peace of mind and is effective with proper installation, adequate training and regular maintenance.

Are false alarms a problem?

Yes they are. Across the nation, the growth of alarm system ownership has resulted in a tremendous amount of false alarms. The response to false alarms has created an additional burden on our law enforcement agencies. Nationwide, approximately 98% or more of all the burglar alarms law enforcement respond on are false. The false alarm rate for Washoe County is approximately the same.

False alarms divert deputies from places where they're genuinely needed. They can delay responses to calls that may be real and can remove our deputies from proactive crime prevention activities.

Why did the County revise the false alarm ordinance?

The County is handling more than 2,000 false alarm calls a year. If the Sheriff's Office continued with the same alarm response policy over the next three years, deputies would respond to more than 6,000 alarm calls, of which more than 98% are false. This is very costly to all the County taxpayers.

A number of jurisdictions in Nevada have also adopted false alarm ordinances and permitting as a way to reduce their false alarms.

What does the County hope to accomplish by enforcing the false alarm ordinance?

The County wants to substantially reduce the number of false alarms that the Sheriff's Office handles. Results from other communities that hold the

alarm user accountable for the maintenance and operation of their alarm systems have successfully reduced the number of false alarm calls.

An effective alarm ordinance will help maintain the crime deterrent effect of alarm systems and continue the level of deputy response that citizens expect, while reducing false alarms and recovering part of the associated response costs.

If I have just one or two false alarms a year is that a problem?

As an individual alarm user, if the Washoe County Sheriff's Office responds to your home or business just once or twice a year on a false alarm, it doesn't seem like a major problem, but it is. The use of our deputies has a value attached to it. We all count on our Sheriff's Office to be there when we need them. If every alarm user believed that it is okay to just have a few false alarms each year, then that would result in thousands of additional unnecessary calls for our Sheriff's Office. That is a burden placed on all taxpayers in the County.

Who is required to have an alarm permit?

Anyone operating an alarm system whether monitored or local is required to obtain an alarm permit. A separate alarm registration is required for each alarm site having a distinct address or business. Alarm Systems **not required** to obtain a registration include those installed on an auto, on one's person or an alarm system which will not emit a signal either audible or visible from the outside of the building or residence but is designed solely to alert the occupants of a building or residence.

How do I register my alarm system?

Your alarm company will notify the Alarm Administrator who will mail you a permit application. The ordinance requires alarm users to register and pay the permit fee for their alarm system. You will receive a notice from the Alarm Administrator to renew your alarm permit prior to its expiration. It is your responsibility to have a valid permit.

Alarm users with a local alarm system (not monitored) are required to notify the Alarm Administration of their alarm system and will be notified by mail to register and renew their alarm permit. You can also access an online site to download alarm permit forms or renewal online.

www.atbservices.com/Washoe County

New alarm systems are required to have a valid alarm permit prior to activation. Alarm companies are required to notify the alarm administrator prior to activation of a newly installed alarm system. Washoe County has granted a ten day grace period to the installation company to notify the Alarm Administrator and a thirty day grace period is provide to the alarm user to register their alarm system.

What is the cost to register my alarm system?

An Alarm Permit is valid for one year.

Permit – Residential \$24.00

– **Commercial \$24.00**

– **Senior 65+ \$12.00** (Residential only, proof of age, owner or lessee)

No refund of a permit fee

Permit renewal fees are the same. The renewal registration fee may be waived for alarm sites that did not record a false alarm and if no changes to the alarm user registration information per 54.050 were made during the registration period.

If I plan to cancel my alarm service in the next couple of months do I still need to register my alarm?

If your alarm service will not be cancelled within thirty days of receiving the notice to register your alarm system, then you are required to have a valid alarm permit to operate your alarm system.

Where do all the registration fees and alarm service fees go?

All monies generated from the ordinance are dedicated to the County to cover the cost of administrating the alarm program and to recovery some of the cost of the Sheriff's services lost to false alarm response. There is no "profit" for the County.

Why permit fees and renewals?

Permit fees pay for the administration of the alarm program. The alarm program structure that is established to educate alarm users about reducing false alarms, tracking false alarm calls, billing alarm service fees, providing online services, free online alarm school and the availability 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. Washoe County has approximately 3,000 to 4,000 alarm sites to track and 80 alarm companies and monitoring centers, both in and out of State that they must coordinate and interact with on alarms.

The ordinance requires Enhanced Call Verification (ECV), what's that?

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. This is for **burglar alarms only**. 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, real estate agents, employees opening or closing times etc. This gives you two or more opportunities to cancel accidental alarm activations before requesting a Police response.

Many alarm companies and monitoring centers have voluntarily implemented ECV on their own since it has proven to reduce false alarms and help their customers avoid false alarm fees. You can contact your alarm

company to request ECV and provide additional contact phone numbers for responsible parties.

(ECV PROCEDURE IS FOR BURGLAR ALARMS ONLY – NOT ROBBERY, PANIC, MEDICAL OR FIRE)

What is the service fee amount for a false alarm?

Burglar False Alarm Service Fee:

False Alarms	Fee
1 st	\$100
2 nd	\$125
3 rd	\$150
4 th	\$175
5 th +	\$200

Robbery/panic false alarm - \$200

Each alarm user is responsible for paying service fees when deputies respond to false alarms at their alarm site.

Can my alarm monitoring center cancel a burglar/intrusion alarm that they have called into the communications center?

Yes they can. You will not be charged for a false alarm if the cancellation notice is received **prior to the deputy's arrival** at the alarm site. Only your alarm monitoring center can cancel an alarm burglar/intrusion call. **DO NOT CALL 911** to cancel your alarm, call your alarm monitoring company.

Can my alarm permit be suspended?

Yes it can be suspended along with Sheriff response. Several of the reasons for suspension are failure to keep a valid alarm permit or failure to pay false alarm service fees. An alarm user will be provided a thirty (30) day period to be reinstated prior to the actual suspension.

How is my alarm company involved in this matter?

Your alarm company plays a very important role in helping to reduce false alarms. They are there to assist you with any questions you may have about your alarm system's operation and its maintenance. To prevent having any false alarms, check with your alarm company for suggestions on how to avoid the most common alarm user errors or go to our link at www.atbservices.com/Washoe County.

Why was ATB Services contracted to administer the alarm program?

ATB Service is a national professional service company which provides a comprehensive service to exclusively administer alarm programs for other cities and counties nationwide. Rarely is it cost effective for a community to create and maintain their own system of tracking and billing false alarm violations, as it requires new computer software, hiring and training additional administrative staff.

ATB Services leverages their expertise, systems, people and processes to administer false alarm programs for many jurisdictions, thus spreading the infrastructure cost to make it affordable for all communities.

Washoe County must track more than 2,000 false alarm calls a year, coordinate and interact with 80 alarm installation and monitoring centers both in state and out of state. The County has an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 alarm users to register, track their alarm calls, billings, suspensions and reinstatements. The alarm administrator will also provide an on-line alarm users school and a web-site for alarm users, alarm companies, County officials and all the necessary software.

They will provide trained customer service personnel to assist citizens with any questions about any alarm billings or alarm equipment operations. Their compliance services staff will assist alarm companies and alarm users with appeals and suspension reinstatements.

What is the effective date for the ordinance?

The ordinance became effective on October 13, 2009. The ordinance was again reviewed and modified to its current format August 10, 2010

Where can I read or obtain a copy of the ordinance?

The alarm ordinance is posted online at [www.atbservices.com/Washoe County](http://www.atbservices.com/WashoeCounty) or call 1-866-950-9907.

Where can I learn more about the ordinance and how to reduce false alarms?

A free online alarm school is available at [www.atbservices.com/Washoe County](http://www.atbservices.com/WashoeCounty).

Everyone who will use your alarm system is encouraged to take the 15 to 20 minute online class.

Who can I call if I have additional questions or comments?

Call 1-866-950-9907, Monday through Friday, 7 am – 5 pm.