

SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA



ITEM: 3.2
(ID # 10999)

MEETING DATE:
Tuesday, December 15, 2020

FROM : EXECUTIVE OFFICE:

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE OFFICE: Introduction of Ordinance No. 957, Regulating Alarm Systems and Declaring Repeated False Alarms a Public Nuisance, All Districts. [\$0]

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Introduce, read title and waive further reading of, and adopt on successive weeks Ordinance No. 957, an Ordinance of the County of Riverside regulating alarm systems and declaring repeated false alarms a public nuisance.

ACTION: Policy

Jeff Van Wageningen, Assistant CEO / Public Safety 12/10/2020

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

On motion of Supervisor Spiegel, seconded by Supervisor Jeffries and duly carried by unanimous vote, IT WAS ORDERED that the above matter is approved as recommended and that Ordinance 957 is approved as introduced with a waiver of reading.

Ayes: Jeffries, Spiegel, Washington, Perez and Hewitt
Nays: None
Absent: None
Date: December 15, 2020
xc: E.O., COB

Kecia R. Harper
Clerk of the Board

By:
Deputy

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FINANCIAL DATA	Current Fiscal Year:	Next Fiscal Year:	Total Cost:	Ongoing Cost
COST	\$	\$	\$	\$
NET COUNTY COST	\$	\$	\$	\$
SOURCE OF FUNDS: N/A			Budget Adjustment:	No
			For Fiscal Year:	20/21

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: Approve

BACKGROUND:

Summary

Each year, the Sheriff's Department and the Fire Department respond to thousands of alarm calls in our unincorporated communities, the vast majority of which are false alarms. By way of example, in 2016, the Sheriff's Department had 15,172 alarm calls in unincorporated areas, of which only 37 were determined to be legitimate and 13,461 were responded to but found to be false. The other 1674 were cancelled before any officers arrived on the scene. In 2017, the Fire Department reports responding to 2,662 false alarms in 2017.

Many cities in Riverside County, including the Cities of Riverside, Corona, Moreno Valley, Murrieta, Lake Elsinore, and Palm Springs have false alarm ordinances, which vary in their approach, from the number of false alarms allowed before being assessed a fee, to the amount charged per violation.

Riverside County passed Ordinance 753 in May of 1996 to bill alarm companies for every call (even the valid ones) to the Sheriff, and then impose fines for false alarms, but it was repealed in August of 1997 after being challenged in court by an association of alarm companies. Ordinances passed in other jurisdictions (that did not charge for valid calls) have withstood legal scrutiny.

On December 4, 2012, the Board of Supervisors voted to initiate an ordinance regulating false fire alarms, but the ordinance apparently never returned to the Board for approval.

On June 15, 2018, agenda item 3.2, the Board of Supervisors directed the Executive Office to coordinate with the Sheriff's Department, Riverside County Fire and other relevant agencies to develop a false alarm ordinance for unincorporated areas of Riverside County. The Executive Office, Sheriff's Department, Fire Department and County Counsel subsequently worked collaboratively and conducted extensive research into various other governmental agency false alarm ordinances and applicable state and federal laws. In order to reduce the amount of time spent responding to false alarm calls, a false alarm prevention fine was created to charge users who have had three or more false alarms within a twelve-month period, starting at \$50 for the 3rd call and increasing to \$200 for each additional call after the 6th false alarm call. Such fines are imposed on Alarm Users. Under Business and Professions Code section 7592, alarm companies cannot be liable for any fines and penalties imposed for false alarms unless due to improper installation or a defect in the alarm system.

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Alarm verification language is also incorporated into the ordinance. An alarm business shall make two phone calls to the responsible party before requesting a Sheriff dispatch. The ordinance also ensures that alarm systems that are installed are adhering to current federal and state regulations.

Impact on Residents and Businesses

False alarms consume public safety resources and can increase response times for legitimate emergencies. A false alarm ordinance could reduce the number of false alarms and the time spent responding to them.

ATTACHMENT:

- A. Ordinance No. 957



Gregory V. Priamos, Director County Counsel 12/10/2020