

# Agenda Report

**TO:** City Council

**DATE:** December 16, 2002

**THROUGH:** Public Safety Committee

**FROM:** City Manager

**SUBJECT:** An ordinance that will require business and homeowners with alarm (burglar) system to verify that a crime has been committed, prior to a police response.

**Recommendation:**

Direct the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance that will require business and homeowners with alarm (burglar) systems to verify that a crime has been committed, prior to a police response.

**Background:**

Unnecessary calls for service due to false burglar alarms have grown into a tremendous problem. Burglar alarms serve as useful deterrents to crime; however, the amount of resources the Pasadena Police Department spends responding to false alarm calls every year has become intolerable. The department has struggled with the problem of false alarms for the past several years as false alarm calls are draining patrol resources and often create a significant backlog of calls.

- Taxpayers without alarm systems are subsidizing the cost for police response to alarms.
- Alarm owners want a quick response to their alarm and want to minimize costs incurred from false alarm fines.
- Police resources are not available to address other public needs. City government must balance citizen welfare with consumption of municipal resources.
- The police department must conserve resources by not responding to so many false alarms and in ensuring that alarmed properties are adequately protected from burglaries.

Over the past three years, the police department has responded to the following number of burglar alarms:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Average Minutes</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>
2002*	8050	20:36	2731
2001	7208	19:43	2343
2000	7864	21:02	2755

*\*2002 data is from January 1<sup>st</sup> through November 30<sup>th</sup>*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Calls for Service</b>	<b>% False Alarms</b>	<b>Cost</b>
2002	67,880	11.9	\$220,391
2001	74,927	9.6	\$182,938
2000	75,803	10.3	\$199,351

Several years ago, City Council recognized that preventive measures were needed to reduce false alarms. The City adopted a false alarm ordinance that required a permit and established fines for false alarms. The following fines were collected over the past three years:

2002 - \$162,714  
 2001 - \$168,454  
 2000 - \$216,211

The ordinance was only marginally effective. The ordinance helped manage, but did not solve the false alarm problem. The warnings, fines and permits had no significant long-term effect and only minimal short-term effect on the overall reduction of alarm activations or the percentage of false alarms. Nearly all alarm activations were false and the current system is yielding slow police response times that were of little value to either the police or alarm owners.

The police department has concluded that police response to an alarm should only be made if an eyewitness can first verify that the alarm may indeed be valid. Consequently, the police department would like to explore the feasibility of shifting the primary responsibility for verifying alarms from the police to the private alarm and security companies. This practice would be referred to as "Verified Response."

The verified response could be a response from a private security firm, or a video monitoring system which allowed someone to monitor what was taking place at the location of a burglar alarm. Once there was verification of an entry point, the police department would be notified and they would respond to this call as a crime in progress.


The police department has contacted several armed security companies in the area regarding their estimated response time. The majority of the companies quoted an average response time ranging from five to fifteen minutes.

The same companies estimated their price for providing such service at an average of \$25-30 per month for residential and \$30-55 per month for commercial establishments. Most of the estimates were for unlimited responses.


**Fiscal Impact:**

There is no fiscal impact to the City as a result of this action.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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