

Chapter 4

Regulation of Alarm Systems

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Sec. 5-4-1 Title.

This Chapter shall be known as the City of Onalaska Alarm Systems Ordinance.

Sec. 5-4-2 Declaration of Purpose.

The purpose of this Chapter is to provide minimum standards and regulations applicable to burglar, fire and holdup alarm systems, alarm business and alarm users. Both society in general and public safety in particular will be aided by providing a useful and usable system of private security which properly balances quick response by law enforcement with minimization of law enforcement time spent on alarms which are false or otherwise not the intended function of private security systems.

Sec. 5-4-3 Definitions.

Within this Chapter, the following terms, phrases and words and their derivations have the means given herein.

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- (a) **Alarm Business.** Any business in which the owners or employees engage in the activity of altering, installing, leasing, maintaining, repairing, replacing, selling, or servicing alarm systems.
- (b) **Alarm System.** An assembly of equipment and devices or single device such as a solid state unit which plugs directly into 110-volt AC line or otherwise receives electrical energy arranged to signal the presence of a hazard requiring urgent attention and to which the Police or Fire Department is expected to respond. In this Chapter, the term "alarm system" shall include the terms "automatic holdup alarm systems," "burglar alarm systems," "holdup alarm systems" and "manual holdup alarm systems" as those terms are hereinafter defined, and fire alarm systems which monitor temperature, humidity or any other condition directly related to the detection of fire. Excluded from this definition and from the coverage of this Chapter are alarm systems used to alert or signal persons within the premises in which the alarm system is located of an attempted, unauthorized intrusion or holdup attempt or fire.
- (c) **Annunciator.** The instrumentation of an alarm console at the receiving terminal of a signal line through which both visual and audible signals show when an alarm device at a particular location has been activated or which, in the event of malfunction, may also indicate line trouble.
- (d) **Answering Service.** A telephone answering service providing among its services the service of receiving on a continuous basis through trained employees emergency signals from alarm systems, and thereafter immediately relaying the message by live voice to the dispatch center of the Police or Fire Department.
- (e) **Automatic Dialing Device.** An alarm system which automatically sends over regular telephone lines by direct connection or otherwise a prerecorded voice message or coded signal indicating the existence of the emergency situation that the alarm system is designed to detect.
- (f) **Automatic Holdup Alarm System.** An alarm system in which the signal transmission is initiated by the action of the robber.
- (g) **Manual Holdup Alarm System.** An alarm system in which the signal transmission is initiated by the direct action of the person attached or by an observer thereof.
- (h) **Burglar Alarm System.** An alarm system which signals an entry or attempted entry into the area protected by the system.
- (i) **Direct Connect.** An alarm system which has the capability of transmitting system signals to the Police or Fire Department.
- (j) **False Alarm.** The activation of an alarm system through mechanical failure, malfunction, improper installation or the negligence of the owner or lessee of an alarm system or of his employees or agents or other undetermined cause. False alarm does not include alarms caused by tornadoes or other violent climatic conditions.
- (k) **Interconnect.** To connect an alarm system to a voice grade telephone line, either directly or through a mechanical device that utilizes a standard telephone, for the purpose of using the telephone line to transmit an emergency message upon the activation of the alarm system.

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- (l) **Central Station.** An office to which remote alarm and supervisory signaling devices are connected, where operators supervise the circuits.
- (m) **Primary Trunk Line.** A telephone line leading directly into the dispatch center of the Police or Fire Department that is for the purpose of handling emergency calls on a person-to-person basis and which is identified as such by a specific number included among the emergency numbers listed in the telephone directory or numbers in sequence therewith.
- (n) **Subscriber.** A person who buys or leases or otherwise obtains an alarm system and thereafter contracts with or hires an alarm business to monitor and/or service the alarm system.

Sec. 5-4-4 Administrative Rules.

The Chief of Police shall promulgate such rules as may be necessary for the implementation of this Chapter. Such rules shall require the approval of the Common Council and shall be open to inspection by the public.

Sec. 5-4-5 Automatic Dialing Devices.

No person shall interconnect any automatic dialing device to a Police or Fire Department primary trunk line. No person shall permit such devices, which were installed prior to the effective date of this Chapter, to remain interconnected from any property owned or controlled by that person. Such devices may be connected to a central station or an answering service. Relaying messages so received to the Police or Fire Department shall only be done person to person on the telephone line.

Sec. 5-4-6 Direct Connections to the Police Department.

Direct connections to the Police or Fire Department are prohibited, but may be authorized pursuant to the direct connection policies of each Department, a copy of which is on file with the Chief of Police and Fire Chief.

Sec. 5-4-7 Testing.

- (a) No alarm business or alarm system designed to transmit emergency messages to the Police Department shall be tested or demonstrated without prior notification and approval of the Police Department dispatcher. Alarm businesses or alarm system owners or lessors will be advised on proper test procedure.

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- (b) No alarm system relayed through intermediate services to the Police Department will be tested to determine the Police Department's response without first notifying the appropriate authority. However, the Police Department may inspect or test on-site alarm systems authorized under this Chapter.
- (c) Alarm systems shall be in compliance with all pertinent response policies of the Police Department.

Sec. 5-4-8 Notification.

When the service provided by an alarm business to its subscribers is disrupted for any reason by the alarm business or the alarm business becomes aware of such disruption, it shall promptly notify its subscribers by telephone that protection is no longer being provided. If, however, the alarm business has written instructions from its subscriber not to make such notification by telephone during certain hours, the alarm business may comply with such instructions.

Sec. 5-4-9 Fee for Answering Alarms.

- (a) **Generally.** Each false alarm requires response of public safety personnel, involves unnecessary expense to the City, increases the risk of injury to persons or damage to property and dilutes the overall public safety protection to the City. Such false alarms constitute a public nuisance and must be abated.
- (b) **Intentional.** No person shall intentionally cause the activation of a burglar/fire alarm device knowing that no criminal activity, fire or other emergency exists.
- (c) **False Alarms; Administrative Charges.** Any person, business, corporation or other entity having permissible alarm system with alarm device(s) at one or more locations in accordance with this Chapter shall pay to the City a charge for false alarms responded to by the Police or Fire Department according to the following schedule for each calendar year for each location connected, separate accounts to be kept for false alarms as to criminal activity and false alarms for fire or other emergencies:
 - (1) Responded to by Police Department:

a. First two (2) false alarms for a location	No Charge
b. Third (3rd) false alarm per location	\$25.00
c. Fourth (4th) false alarm per location	\$35.00
d. Fifth (5th) false alarm per location	\$45.00
e. Sixth (6th) and subsequent false alarm per location	\$65.00
 - (2) All false alarms responded to by Fire Department firefighting personnel and apparatus, in addition to a police response:

a. First two (2) false alarms for a location	No Charge
b. Third (3rd) and subsequent false alarm per location.	\$100.00

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This Subsection is intended to impose a strict liability on the person, business, corporation or other entity responsible for alarm connection to either the police alarm panel or to alarm receiving firm to which the Police or Fire Department have responded and shall be applied regardless of the cause of the false alarm excepting those alarms excluded from the definition of "False Alarm." Failure to pay such administrative charge(s) in and of itself shall constitute a violation of this Section, and such charge(s) shall be collectible as a forfeiture upon prosecution and conviction thereof, together with an additional forfeiture(s) which may be imposed under the next Subsection (d) hereof for violation of this Section for allowing or maintaining condition(s) or act(s) violative of the intent of this Section of eliminating and minimizing the occurrence of false alarms, together with costs of prosecution.

- (d) **Other Violations.** Any person, corporation or other entity violating this Chapter in any manner, other than for collection of unpaid administrative charges treated in the preceding Subsection (a) of this Section, shall be subject to forfeiture as provided in Section 1-1-7 of this Code. When any premises located in the City is owned, leased or occupied by two (2) or more persons as joint tenants, tenants in common, joint lessees, or in any other manner, each person shall see that the provisions of this Chapter are complied with, and each person may be subjected to a penalty on violation of this Section.
- (e) **Default of Payment for Forfeiture and/or Costs.** On default of payment of forfeiture and/or costs under the immediately preceding Subsections (c) and/or (d), such person or responsible officer of the violating corporation or other entity shall be confined in the county jail until the same be paid but not to exceed a length of time specified by the court which length of time shall not exceed six (6) months. Upon nonpayment of the fee, the amount due may be placed on the tax roll as a special charge pursuant to Sec. 66.0627, Wis. Stats.

Sec. 5-4-10 City Liability.

The City of Onalaska shall be under no duty or obligation to a subscriber or to any other person concerning any provision of this Chapter, including, but not limited to, any defects in an alarm system or any delays in transmission or response to any alarm; however, this in no way shall be construed that it is not the proper function of law enforcement to respond to alarms.

Sec. 5-4-11 Permits for Private Alarm Systems.

- (a) **Permit Required.** A permit is required for each private alarm system on premises within the City. There shall be a Forty Dollar (\$40.00) permit fee.
- (b) **Interior Alarms.** A permit under this Chapter is not required for an alarm system which gives a signal, visual or audible or both, solely within the interior of the building in which it is located.

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- (c) **Issuing Authority.** The Chief of Police shall issue the permits and collect the fees.
- (d) **Application.** Application for permit required under this Chapter shall be filed with the Chief of Police. The Chief of Police shall prescribe the form of the application and request such information as is necessary to evaluate and act upon the permit application. The Chief of Police shall deny a permit if the alarm system for which it is sought does not comply with this Chapter.
- (e) **Appeal.** Any person required by this Chapter to have a permit who has been denied such a permit by the Chief of Police shall have a right to appeal that decision to the Common Council. The procedure for this appeal shall be as set forth in Section 5-4-12.

Sec. 5-4-12 Revocation of Permits.

- (a) **Hearing.** Before a permit issued pursuant to this Chapter may be revoked, a hearing shall be held before the Chief of Police. Notice setting forth the time, place and nature of the hearing shall be sent by mail or delivered to the permittee at the address shown on the permit application not less than seven (7) days prior to the hearing.
- (b) **Grounds for Revocation.** The Chief of Police may revoke a permit on the following grounds:
 - (1) The application for a permit contains a false statement of a material fact.
 - (2) A licensee has repeatedly failed to comply with the provisions of this Chapter.
 - (3) An alarm system repeatedly actuates false alarms.
- (c) **Appeals.** Any permittee may appeal the decision of the Chief of Police by filing a written notice of appeal with the City Clerk within ten (10) days after the decision. Such appeal shall be heard by the Common Council within thirty (30) days after filing the appeal. The Common Council may affirm, amend or reverse the decision or take other action deemed appropriate. An appeal timely taken suspends the revocation until the Council gives its decision. The City Clerk shall give written notice of the time and place of the hearing to the appellant by certified mail or personal delivery not less than seven (7) days before the hearing. In conducting the hearing, the Common Council shall not be limited by the technical rules of evidence.