



November 30, 2016

## INFORMATION FOR CALGARY POLICE SERVICE PERMIT HOLDERS

### **RE: Phased-In Changes to City of Calgary Alarm Bylaw 31M95 and CPS Dispatch Criteria**

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In early 2016, the Calgary Police Service (CPS) approved a phased-in approach to reduce the number of false alarm calls and improve police service. The phased-in approach includes revising the current Alarm Services Bylaw (31M95), changing how officers are dispatched and introducing paid annual alarm permitting.

Did you know?

- Before the first phase of changes beginning in May 2016, the Calgary Police Service responded to approximately 45 alarm calls each day.
- Of the 45 alarm calls received each day, 96 per cent were deemed to be false alarms.
- From May 15 to November 15, 2016, the number of total alarm calls decreased 54 per cent, compared to the same timeframe in 2015.
- A false alarm requires about 20 minutes of police attendance (from dispatch to clearing the scene).
- Currently, the false alarm penalty is \$75 for each false alarm.

***Please note: police will continue to respond to residential, commercial and financial panic, hold up and duress alarm calls, confirmed criminal activity, public safety concerns, and verified alarm activations.***

#### **Alarm system permits**

Effective January 1, 2017, the Calgary Police Service will begin charging for permits, which will require an annual renewal.

The information collected each year through the permitting process will ensure permit holder information is accurate and up to date. Having accurate information will allow police to respond to alarm calls more efficiently.

Permit fees for alarm systems (new or renewal):

- \$15 for a residential location
- \$20 for a commercial or financial location

Annual renewals will be due the month of the issue date of the initial approved permit. A renewal notification will be issued to the premise owner two months in advance of the renewal date. Any permits that are not renewed within that timeframe will expire upon the renewal date and a new permit application will be required. Locations with an existing alarm system permit, prior to this change, will have their annual renewals start as of July 2017, on the month of the issue date.

All residences and businesses will require a valid alarm permit in order for police to respond to alarm calls. To obtain a permit, visit [calgary.ca](http://calgary.ca) and follow the application process or call the Alarm Bylaw Unit customer service line at 403-428-8336.

## **Changes to police dispatch criteria**

During the first phase of the alarm service changes, alterations were made to how and when officers respond to calls. Since May 15, 2016, when these changes came into effect, there has already been a 54 per cent reduction in total alarm calls dispatched this year, compared to the same time period in 2015.

- Starting in the second quarter of 2017, police will no longer be dispatched to premises where no valid alarm permit exists, if the permit is suspended, or if the call is within 14 days of alarm system installation.
- Alarm agencies must also be licensed in order for police to attend their customer's locations.
- Currently our policy is a standardized response to alarms at commercial premises, which is outdated. We are tailoring our response based on individual business hours to improve our service to Calgary's businesses. Accurate business hours will be captured through the registered alarm permitting process for all commercial locations.
- CPS will be modifying the current policy so that police are only dispatched to alarm calls for commercial premises when businesses are closed. The alarm agency must also attempt to contact a minimum of two key holders prior to requesting police attendance.
- It is important to note that police will continue to attend alarm calls for residential and commercial premises for any confirmed valid activations, panic, hold-up or duress alarms.

***All alarm permit holders will receive further notification when an official date has been determined for the second phase of these changes.***

## **New false alarm penalty fees**

To reduce the number of false alarms and to hold permit holders and alarm agencies more accountable to properly manage their alarm systems, a new false alarm penalty structure will also be implemented.

- The proposed bylaw amendment recommends an escalating penalty scale with the first false alarm free.
- False alarm penalties will continue to be charged to the licensed alarm agency requesting police attendance to an alarm activation.
- The false alarm penalty fee structure will be based on a 12-month period.

These recommendations are currently pending approval by Calgary City Council. These measures will recover costs associated with alarm bylaw administration and align with practices in other major jurisdictions.

Without having to respond to false alarms, members of the Calgary Police Service will be available to respond to other calls. We anticipate Calgary will see improved call response times by focusing on responses to valid alarm activations and priority calls, with no increased risk to the public.

If you have any questions regarding these changes please contact the Calgary Police Service Alarm Bylaw Unit at [alarmbylaw@calgarypolice.ca](mailto:alarmbylaw@calgarypolice.ca) or 403-428-8336.