

ORDINANCE NO.: 2015-100

Amending the 1998 Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia, South Carolina,
Chapter 10, Law Enforcement, Article I, In General

BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and Council this 5th day of January, 2016, that the 1998 Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia, South Carolina, Chapter 10, Law Enforcement, Article I, In General is amended to read as follows:

Article I. False Security Alarms

Sec. 10-1. Definitions.

The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this article, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:

False alarm means the activation of an alarm system when, upon inspection by the Police Department, there is no evidence of unauthorized entry, robbery, or other such crime attempted in or on the premises which would have activated a properly functioning alarm. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a false alarm does not include an alarm which can reasonably be determined to have been caused or activated by unusually violent conditions of nature.

Security alarm system means any assembly of equipment, mechanical or electrical, installed by a security alarm business, arranged to signal the occurrence of a criminal act, emergency, or other condition to which the Columbia Police Department may be expected to respond.

Security alarm user means a person who is in control of any building, structure or facility where a security alarm system is present.

Year means a 12-month period beginning with July 1 and ending on June 30 of each year.

Sec. 10-2. False alarm procedure and user fee.

(a) Whenever Columbia Police Department personnel respond to an activated security alarm system, the Columbia Police Department official in charge of the incident shall determine if the response was caused by a false alarm and shall indicate that fact upon the incident report.

(b) The Columbia Police Department shall regularly review incident reports to monitor the accumulation of false alarms at any one location. When two false alarms have occurred at the same location within one year, and the location is within the incorporated area of the city, the Columbia Police Department shall notify the security alarm user by letter, citing the location and date of each false alarm. The letter shall recommend that appropriate action be taken on the part of the security alarm user to alleviate the causes of false alarms and shall include a statement that an accumulation of any further false alarms within a year shall result in a charge for services.

(c) Upon a third false alarms occurring at one location within a year, a user fee of \$25.00 for service for false alarm response shall be billed to the property owner. Each additional false alarm within the year shall require the billing of an additional fee of \$100.00. However, no security alarm user shall be charged with accumulating more than one false alarm in any 24-hour period. The fee established by this section affords only partial recovery of the expenses incurred in responding to the false alarm. If payment of the fee, in full, has not been received within 30 days of billing, the fee shall increase to \$300.00.

If more than 5 false alarms occur at one location within a year, the Columbia Police Department will not respond to that location unless dispatched as a result of an emergency call to 911.

Sec. 10-3. Evidence of repair accepted in lieu of fee.

An alarm user may submit evidence that a malfunctioning system has been repaired in lieu of paying a user fee within ten days of the date of notification of the fee. Evidence such as a receipt from a licensed alarm business with a statement of repairs made to the system is acceptable. For a repeated problem with a system after a repair is alleged to have been made, the city manager or his designee may decide not to accept an alternative to paying the fee.

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Sec. 10-4. Appeals.

Any person may appeal the imposition of a false alarm user fee to the city manager or his designee. Such appeal shall be in writing and shall be made to the City Manager within ten days of the date of notification of the fee.

Requested by:

City Manager _____



Mayor

Approved by:



City Manager

Approved as to form:



City Attorney

ATTEST:



City Clerk

Introduced: 12/15/2015

Final Reading: 1/5/2016