



# False Alarm Reduction Program FAQs

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Who manages the False Alarm Reduction Program?

The False Alarm Reduction Program is managed by OPD's Fiscal Services Division. OPD contracted with PMAM Corporation to assist with the administration of the program.

### Who is required to have an alarm permit registration?

Anyone operating an alarm system, whether monitored or local, is required to obtain an alarm permit. A separate alarm registration is required for each alarm site having a distinct address or business. Alarm systems **not required** to obtain a registration include those installed on an auto vehicle, on one's person, or an alarm system which will not emit a signal (either audible or visible) from the outside of the building or residence, but is designed solely to alert the occupants of a building or residence.

### How do I register my alarm?

The Burglar Alarm Systems ordinance requires alarm/monitoring companies to register and collect the permit fee of newly installed alarm systems. New alarm systems are required to have a valid alarm permit prior to activation. **Alarm permits are valid for one year.** In coordination with their alarm/monitoring company, the alarm user also has the option to register and simultaneously pay online at [www.famspermit.com/oakland](http://www.famspermit.com/oakland). Both the permit registration application and payment have to be received together to process an alarm user's registration.

### What is the cost to register my alarm system?

Alarm Permit Cost/Renewal Fees are:

- Residential - \$25
- Commercial - \$35
- Low-income Seniors - \$15 (must meet the senior discount requirements)

### How do I qualify for the Low-Income Senior Discount?

Discounted low-income senior alarm permits are available for residential alarm sites only and seniors must show proof of the following criteria:

- Age (65 or older);
- Listed as the property owner or lessee;
- Alarm Agreement in his/her name; and
- Be a member of a qualified low income program.

The following programs will be considered as qualified low income programs:

- City of Oakland ASSETS Program (submit your program participant letter)
- CARE program offered by the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) (submit your latest PG&E bill noting you are a CARE program participant)

### **How do I renew my registration?**

After the first year of service and each year thereafter, the alarm user will receive an invoice to renew the alarm permit fee from PMAM Corporation (OPD's contracted alarm administrator). No refund of a new permit or renewal permit fee will be made.

### **If I plan to cancel my alarm service in the next couple of months, do I still need to register my alarm?**

If your alarm services will not be cancelled within thirty (30) days of receiving the permit renewal invoice, then you are required to pay the fee to have a valid alarm permit to operate your alarm system.

### **What are the service fee amounts for false alarms?**

Alarm users are responsible for paying service fees when police respond to false alarms at their alarm site, and the fees are:

#### Registered False Alarm Fees

- General False Alarm Service Fee (Burglar/Intrusion) - **\$84**
- Robbery/Panic False Alarm - **\$156**

#### Unregistered Alarm Fees

- General False Alarm- additional \$70 (\$154 total)
- Robbery/Panic or Manually Activated Alarm- additional \$70 (\$226 total)
- General Alarm- \$70

#### Notes

- The invalid (unregistered or expired) permit fee can be waived if you register your alarm within 10 days of being billed.
- In the case of an unregistered alarm, your alarm company will also be billed \$260 for requesting police dispatch to an unregistered alarm site.
- If you do not pay your total service fee invoice within 30 days of being billed, you will be assessed an additional \$30 late fee.
- Robbery False Alarm fees are more costly, because two officers must respond to any Robbery alarm.
- To avoid general false alarm fees associated with registered alarms, immediately contact your monitoring company to cancel the **false** alarm by requesting that police not be dispatched to your site.

All fees can be paid via the False Alarm Reduction Program website  
([www.famspermit.com/oakland](http://www.famspermit.com/oakland))

Fees can also be paid by mail by making your check payable to: "City of Oakland-False Alarm" and mailing it to:

City of Oakland-False Alarm  
P.O. Box 101513  
Pasadena, CA 91189-0005

### **Can my alarm company cancel a burglar/intrusion alarm that they have called into the 911 Communications Center?**

Yes, your alarm company can cancel general false alarm calls, but normally not panic or manually activated calls. **You should explicitly request that your monitoring company cancel police dispatch.** You will not be charged for false alarms if the cancellation notice is received **prior to the officer's arrival** at the alarm site. **Only your alarm company can cancel an alarm burglar/intrusion call. The alarm user should not directly call 911 to cancel a false alarm call.**

### **What is Enhanced Call Verification (ECV) which is referenced in the ordinance?**

The alarm industry developed Enhanced Call Verification (ECV) as an effective way to avoid sending law enforcement to a false alarm. It requires that your alarm company make at least two separate calls in verifying your alarm system activation signal prior to contacting the police. This is for **burglar alarms only**. Your alarm company will first call your home or business where your alarm is occurring, and if they fail to contact a responsible party, they will then call a second number that you have provided them, such as a cell phone number. The whole process usually takes less than 90 seconds.

As the alarm user, you are familiar with any type of activity occurring at the alarm site, such as guests, home repairs, cleaning crews, real estate agents, employees opening or closing times, etc. This gives you the opportunity to contact your monitoring company to cancel accidental alarm activation(s) prior to police arrival. The alarm company must cancel police dispatch prior to their arrival at the alarm site in order for the alarm user to not incur a false alarm fee. Panic or manually activated alarms usually cannot be cancelled due to its high priority status, and because police must ensure that the alarm user is not under duress.

Many alarm companies have voluntarily implemented ECV on their own since it has proven to reduce false alarms and helps their customers avoid false alarm fees. You can contact your alarm company to request ECV and provide additional contact phone numbers for responsible parties. **(THE ECV PROCEDURE IS FOR BURGLAR ALARMS ONLY-NOT ROBBERY, PANIC, MEDICAL OR FIRE ALARMS)**

**Can my alarm permit be suspended?**

Yes, your permit can be suspended, along with police response to the alarm site. Reasons for suspension are failure to keep a valid alarm permit or failure to pay false alarm service fees. An alarm user will be provided a thirty (30) day period to be reinstated prior to the actual suspension.

**If my alarm company contacts me while I am away from my home or business to let me know that my alarm is activated, am I required to respond as well?**

Yes, an alarm user is responsible for providing the Police Department with access to the structure or premises so that the alarm may be verified. Access may be granted by the alarm user or designated responder. The alarm user should give their monitoring company at least three (3) trusted contact names and phone numbers who can meet with the police in their absence.

**Where do funds collected from the False Alarm Reduction Program go?**

Funds generated from the program are used to cover the costs to administer the program and to recover some of the costs associated with police officers response to false alarms.

**How is my alarm company involved in this matter?**

Your alarm company plays a very important role in helping to reduce false alarms. They are there to assist you with any question you may have about your alarm systems operation and its maintenance. The alarm user is responsible for knowing how to operate their alarm system, its maintenance, and ensuring that it is adequately located. To prevent having any false alarms, check with your alarm company for suggestions on how to avoid the most common alarm user errors.

**Why was PMAM Corporation contracted to administer the alarm program?**

PMAM was selected and contracted through a request for proposals process. It is a national professional service company which provides a comprehensive service to exclusively administer alarm programs for other cities nationwide. It is rarely cost-effective for a community to create and maintain their own system of tracking and billing false alarm violations, suspensions, and reinstatements, as it requires new computer software and hiring and training additional administrative staff.

PMAM leverages their expertise, systems, people, and processes to administer false alarm programs for many jurisdictions, thus spreading the infrastructure cost to make it affordable to all communities. PMAM also provides all necessary software, online alarm users training, and online access for alarm users, alarm companies and City officials.

**What is the effective date for the ordinance and how is it used for appeals?**

The Oakland City Council passed the Burglar Alarm Systems ordinance on July 28, 2009, and the ordinance became effective on the same date. The ordinance is used as the basis to judge an appeal that can be made by an alarm user who wants to have his case or false alarm fee assessed.

**What is the appeals process?**

An alarm system user who receives a false alarm notice/invoice and believes that it was improperly issued, may appeal it in writing within 30 days of its receipt. The appeal processing fee is \$25, and the appeal can be coordinated through PMAM. Along with the request for appeal, the alarm user can submit factual information to support their assertion that their false alarm charge should not be assessed. The burden of proving that an alarm was not false shall rest with the alarm user. If the alarm user notices any damage/loss of property/signs of a crime or attempted break-in after the police have left the alarm site premises, they can make a police report and submit the copy of their numbered police report to PMAM as part of their appeal.

PMAM submits the appeal documents to OPD's designated Alarm Administrator who reviews the case and decides if the false alarm is chargeable or non-chargeable. Upon receipt of the appeal documents, the Alarm Administrator has 60 days to determine if the false alarm is chargeable or non-chargeable. If the false alarm is determined to be chargeable, the appeal processing fee is not returned, and the false alarm service fee shall be paid in full within 30 days of the date of the decision. If the false alarm is determined to be non-chargeable, no payment will be required, and it will be removed from the alarm user's false alarm record. Also, if the appeal is non-chargeable, the appeal processing fee will be waived and can be credited to the alarm user's account or returned.

**Where can I read or obtain a copy of the ordinance?**

The alarm ordinance is posted online at [www.famspermit.com/oakland](http://www.famspermit.com/oakland) or call 1-866-950-9902.

**Where can I learn more about the ordinance and how to reduce false alarms?**

Customers can sign up at [www.famspermit.com/oakland](http://www.famspermit.com/oakland) for free online alarm training (15-20 minute classes). Everyone who will use your alarm system is encouraged to take the training.

**Who can I call if I have additional questions or comments?**

Customers can call PMAM Corporation at 1-866-950-9902, Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (PST). Customers can also contact the OPD False Alarm Reduction Unit Administrator at 510-238-3525 or email [alarm@oaklandnet.com](mailto:alarm@oaklandnet.com).