

Proposed change to Boulder Revised Code 4-16; Police Alarm Systems:

One of the recommendations in the Police Department's Master Plan, approved by Council in 2013, was to implement changes to the department's policy to reduce the amount of time spent responding to false alarms. All alarms in the City of Boulder are installed and monitored by private alarm companies; the police department does not directly monitor alarms. During the two year period from 2014 through 2015 the police department responded to 4,915 alarms. Only ten alarms were determined to be legitimate, resulting in a false alarm rate of 99.79%. A response to an alarm usually requires two officers. Given that the vast majority of alarms are false, a large amount of officer time, in addition to dispatch time, could be spent on other duties and responsibilities.

The police department worked with the local alarm business community as well as the national non-profit Security Industry Alarm Coalition (SIAC) to address the problem. The alarm companies recommended instituting annual alarm permit fees as a method of insuring alarms are installed and maintained properly. They also recommended implementing fines for repeated false alarms and eventual suspension of police response to chronic alarms.

The goal of the ordinance change is to reduce false alarms through education, progressive fines, and suspension of response. The police department will not suspend response to panic or robbery alarms. The ordinance does not affect fire, carbon monoxide or medical alarms.