

## BURGLAR ALARM FAQ

### **I have had my burglar alarm for years, why do I have to get a permit now?**

On March 1<sup>st</sup> of 2006, the City of Lansing updated it's out dated alarm Ordinance. Any burglar alarm installed on or after that date, the user needs to obtain an alarm Permit within 30 days of installation. All burglar alarms installed prior to that date were grandfathered into the old Ordinance. However, if your alarm was called into the Lansing Police Department on or after March 1<sup>st</sup> 2006, your alarm was brought into the new Ordinance and requires a user Permit.

### **Do I have to renew this permit and pay another \$25.00?**

No. Once you have obtained the permit you will not need to renew as long as you keep the same alarm company and stay at the same address. You may be asked to update your information but you will not be charged an additional fee.

### **The Permit letter says that if I also have a monitored Fire alarm with my Burglar alarm, I need to show proof and the fee will be waived. What constitutes a monitored Fire alarm and what do I need to have the fee waived?**

First, a monitored Fire alarm is a smoke detector, water flow system or any other type of alarm that detects heat, smoke or fire and is monitored by an alarm company.

To have the fee waived, contact your alarm company and have them provide you a document that states that they monitor your burglar and fire alarm. Send that document in to the provided address with the completed alarm Permit.

**The \$25.00 fee seems like just another way for the City to make money. What is it for?**

It is understandable to feel this way. However, after very thorough analysis of alarm responses and costs related to them, we have found we are spending a significant amount of money going to calls that never even require our presence.

The false alarm rate is nearly 98%. The cost of responding to these alarms is 7 times as much as we recover in alarm fee's for response to these false alarms. Permitting alarm users allows the Police Department to ensure that users have State Licensed Alarm companies and that the alarm systems were installed by professionals.

The actual \$25.00 fee does not even cover the amount of time the Community Service Officer spends monitoring the individual account. As all major Cities in Michigan either have been or are beginning to Permit alarm users, Lansing is actually the only Municipality to NOT require the Permit to be renewed. The reason? We are not trying to make money. We are trying to stop expending the original resources.

Basically, the alarm permit is an attempt to drastically reduce the number of false alarm responses. Since the Ordinance went into effect, we have reduced our false alarm responses by 10%. This is the largest reduction EVER in single year for Lansing. Your \$25.00 permit fee is saving you several hundred tax dollars down the road that would have been spent in those alarm responses.

**The Permit asks me to sign my name that I agree to the Lansing Alarm Ordinance. I have not seen it, so why should I sign?**

The Ordinance is available for viewing on the City's main web page.  
<http://cityoflansingmi.com/>

Or to go directly to Municode  
<http://www.municode.com/resources/gateway.asp?sid=22&pid=13231>

This takes you to the business code. Open the business code and open Title 2. Then scroll down for 804.01, which is the beginning of the alarm Ordinance

However, we understand most people are not going to read the entire City Ordinance or maybe even understand it all when they do read it. The purpose for signing the form is for you to agree the information on the Permit is correct, and that you agree to obey the alarm ordinance. If there comes a time where your alarm is not in compliance with the Ordinance, you will be advised and given time to correct it. We do not hand out fines when an issue arises. We prefer the citizen have the opportunity to correct the matter at hand.

**What if I have a question or dispute over an alarm, who do I go to?**

The Lansing Police Department Community Services Officer handles all burglar alarm issues for the entire City. All questions should be forwarded to them.

**Mail**

LANSING POLICE DEPARTMENT  
740 MAY ST  
LANSING, MI 48906  
ATTN: COMMUNITY SERVICES OFFICER

**E-Mail**

[LPDCSU@ci.lansing.mi.us](mailto:LPDCSU@ci.lansing.mi.us)

**FAX**

FAX 377-0035

**Phone**

517-483-4469

**I moved into a new house and it has a burglar alarm system. The owner stated he already has a permit. Is that permit valid for me?**

No. Permits must be obtained by the current property owner or resident and they are non transferable.

If you are selling the house and are told you need a permit, please contact the LPDCSU Officer. They may be able to help arrange a workable situation until the house is sold. The new owners will be required to obtain the permit if they wish to continue service.

**What happens if I refuse to get a permit or refuse to comply with other sections of the alarm Ordinance?**

You will most likely be cited for the violation and face up to a \$500 fine. Your Police response will most likely be terminated as well. This is not a good decision.

**I am having a lot of problems with my alarm company and I don't know what to do. Who can I go to for help?**

Feel free to contact the LPDCSU Officer. They should be able to provide sound advice or even more. We can come out and look at your existing system to get a feel for whether or not you are over alarmed or motions detectors were put in improper places. The Police Department is here for you and will help you with problems with your alarm company as best we can.

**What is the best advice if you are considering an alarm?**

First things first. All alarm companies use all the same equipment. There are a handful of manufacturers throughout the country ( or abroad ) supplying all the alarm companies with equipment. So they all use the same stuff.

Second, and the most important piece of information to know is what is MOST important to you when buying an alarm. CUSTOMER SERVICE. Find a local company for your servicing needs. Some place you can go in person if you have a problem. Since these companies tend to be smaller than the National account companies, their customer service is a primary selling point.

Third, get at least 3-4 estimates prior to buying a system.

Fourth, ask how familiar they are with Lansing's alarm Ordinance. All local companies attended a presentation by the CSU and have definitely shown an interest in making sure they are operating within our Ordinance.

**What is the difference between a permit fee and false alarm fee?**

The permit fee is a fee to obtain a user permit.

A False alarm fee is assessed after your 3<sup>rd</sup> false alarm in a 12 month period. Increments gradually increase with each false alarm. These fees are an attempt to recover the amount we have spent on an unnecessary Police response.

**Why are alarms in one calendar year held against me in the next calendar year?**

The alarms are not managed by the "calendar year" method. Each alarm must go through its own 365 day period. Once an alarm reaches that point, it automatically falls off of your alarm count. This method is used to better control problem alarm sites.

## **What can I do to prevent false alarms?**

Most false alarms are caused by user error. Make sure you and all those that use the alarm are familiar with its use and how to arm and disarm the system. Also make sure they know how to contact the alarm company in case of an error to halt Police response if not needed.

Make sure if you have pets, the alarm is not being set off by normal movements through the house when the system is armed. Your system can be adjusted to prevent this. Your alarm company should test this for you.

If you have motion sensors make sure there is nothing in the room that can move. Such as curtains by an open window or air/heat duct. Plants and balloons are other common culprits.

With window and doors sensors, your windows and doors need to be properly maintained. If they are beginning to age and are getting loose or rattle in the wind, you are at a higher risk of false alarms.

Check to see if you are “over alarmed”. Meaning, you have more alarm components on your system than you need. If you are unsure, you can contact the Lansing Police Community Services Unit and have them come out and look at your system.

Make sure you have a service plan with your alarm company. If you are required to have the system inspected or equipment replaced, it can get very expensive.

Make sure your alarm company has up to date contacts. This way if an alarm goes off and the alarm company is trying to contact a key holder to verify an alarm prior to sending the Police, they can get a hold of someone quickly. Again, most false alarms are user error during entry or exit. This is a good way to prevent unnecessary Police Response.

## **How much are false alarm fee's?**

These are number of FALSE alarms received in a 365 day period.

1st alarm – Free

2nd alarm - Free

3<sup>rd</sup> alarm - \$35.00

4<sup>th</sup> alarm – \$65.00

5<sup>th</sup> alarm - \$100.00

6<sup>th</sup> alarm - \$150.00

7<sup>th</sup> and above - \$200.00

You can be required to have your alarm system inspected after your 3<sup>rd</sup> False alarm. Police response can be terminated after your 5<sup>th</sup> false alarm.