



ALARM PERMIT INFORMATION

PLEASE READ COMPLETELY. Questions? Call the **Alarm Program** at (360) 336-6271.

In November of 2003, the City of Mount Vernon adopted an ordinance regarding false burglary alarms. This ordinance requires alarm users to register with the city. It also allows three false alarms per calendar year without any fee or penalties. This letter provides basic information and is intended only as a summary of the ordinance. If you would like a complete copy of the ordinance you can request one through the Alarm Program at (360) 336-6271 or view Mount Vernon Municipal Code Chapter 8.36 available at www.mountvernonwa.gov.

Why does Mount Vernon have a false alarm ordinance? To reduce the number of false alarms. Approximately 98 percent of all alarm calls made to law enforcement are false or unfounded. The Mount Vernon Alarm Program gives the Police Department a means of measuring the number of alarm systems in the area, tracking chronic problem addresses, and educating the public about the problem. The Police Department is not an alarm company. If you need general information on alarm systems, call the Electronic Security Association of Washington at 360-739-7772.

Why an alarm permit? It is required by City of Mount Vernon ordinance. Anyone operating a burglary alarm system (whether monitored or unmonitored) within the City of Mount Vernon jurisdiction is required to have an alarm permit. **NOTE:** This is not the same as an electrical or installation permit.

Who needs to apply? If your burglary alarm system is located inside the city limits of Mount Vernon, you need an Alarm Permit. To find out if your address requires a Mount Vernon permit, call the Alarm Program at (360) 336-6271.

How to apply:

By Mail: Enclosed is a copy of the application. Fill out the application in full and return it with a one-time payment of \$10. Annual renewals are not required. **Make Checks payable to:** City of Mount Vernon. Mail application and a \$10 check to:

**ATTN: Alarm Program
Mount Vernon Police Department
1805 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA 98273**

A permit sticker will be sent to you by return mail.

In Person: Go to the Mount Vernon Police Department at 1805 Continental Place to fill out an application form. Give the completed form and your \$10 payment to office staff, and you will receive a permit sticker.

NOTE: If a locked gate surrounds your single residence or business or you have multiple main entrances, call the Alarm Program at (360) 336-6271 for special instructions. (This does not apply to gated communities.)

Where does the alarm permit sticker go? Put the sticker **on or near the front entrance** where it is **clearly visible** to officers responding to alarm calls (numbers on the alarm permit sticker should face outside).

What if I move? The permit sticker is not valid at any other address. Call the Alarm Program at (360) 336-6271 when you move or sell the property or business. Cancel your permit so you are not held responsible for others using the alarm. Remove and destroy the permit sticker. The new owner/alarm user needs to apply for their own permit.

What is a “false alarm”? An alarm is presumed to be false if the officer cannot find any physical evidence of criminal activity. The following **do not** constitute criminal activity: faulty equipment, low batteries, pets, forgetting the code, mistakes made by relatives, housekeepers, and others, floating mylar balloons, spiders building webs across motion detectors; etc.

What causes false alarms? The largest single cause of false alarms is human error. Ensure that everyone who uses the alarm system knows how it works, how to turn it on and off, and what to do when it alarms. Call your alarm company for equipment servicing.

What happens when my alarm goes off? No alarm system rings directly to the Mount Vernon Police Department. For monitored systems, when your alarm sounds your monitoring company is notified. Make sure you have given them clear instructions and accurate information on names and phone numbers to call. If the monitoring company has followed your instructions and is unable to verify the alarm is false, they call 911 and request a response to your alarm address. The 911 Center then contacts an officer who responds to the scene of the alarm. If the officer does not find evidence of criminal activity, the response is determined to be a false alarm response. Unmonitored systems usually rely on neighbors reporting the alarm to the 911 Center. You may want to set up procedures with your neighbors.

What if I accidentally set off my alarm? Reset your alarm. **Follow the procedures you have set up with your monitoring company to cancel officer response.** The 911 Center will only take cancellation calls from monitoring companies. Do not assume that officers were not notified even if your alarm went off for only a few seconds. Your **second** call should be to 911 to confirm your alarm is in error.

What happens if an Officer responds to a false alarm? The officer will generate a report and a case number will be generated regarding your false alarm. Information will be listed with that case number pertaining to what the officer found at the alarm site location.

Are there charges for false alarms? Yes (per calendar year). For any alarm activations that occur between January 1st and December 31st, the user is charged as follows:

One, two or three false alarms per calendar year	-- no charge
Four, five or six false alarms per calendar year	-- \$50 each
Seven or more false alarms per calendar year	-- \$100 each

(Example: If a user had a false alarm in February 2016 and two false alarms in March 2016, they would be billed for any additional false alarms that occurred through December 31 of that same year. The user would then start over for any false alarm activations occurring in the next calendar year.)

Multiple alarms on the same day only count as one false alarm. More than ten false alarm responses or failure to take necessary corrective action may result in the Chief of Police suspending police response to the alarm site.

What happens if I do not apply for an alarm permit or pay a false alarm charge? Alarm owners without permits or those with overdue false alarm charges will be notified that unless they apply for their alarm permit or pay their charges the Police Department may stop responding to alarms that occur at their address.

If you have any questions concerning false alarm response methods for avoiding false alarms please feel free to call Sergeant Brent Thompson at (360) 336-6226.

Sincerely,

Jerry L. Dodd
Chief of Police

Sergeant Brent Thompson
False Alarms