

# LEGAL-EASE

## Amended L.A. Ordinance Places Permit Burden on Alarm Companies

Cities continue to fight the cost of responding to false alarms (and are also attempting to raise additional revenue) in every way possible. We have all followed the wave of cities and other jurisdictions that have significantly raised false alarm fees in recent years. Next came a slew of ordinances requiring visual verification of a break-in before dispatching the police.

The City of Los Angeles has now taken the next step by amending its ordinance to put the burden of obtaining an alarm permit on the Alarm Company.

Here are some essentials of the L.A. Ordinance, as amended (eff. 3/7/2009) – the first two provisions are the new ones:

- An alarm company may not install an alarm system at a premises unless the customer has **already obtained** an alarm system permit, or the alarm company collects a completed permit application and fee from the customer at the time of installation and files it on behalf of the customer.
- The alarm company is required to turn in all permit applications and fees to the City Office of Finance not later than the last day of each month.
- The alarm company (monitoring station) may not call in an “unverified” alarm to the L.A. Police Department for a period of seven days after the system has been installed. Verification must be by actual, visual confirmation of unauthorized entry or attempted unauthorized entry, based on “physical observation or inspection of the premises, or by remote visual inspection of the premises.”
- An alarm company or monitoring station may not call in any alarm to the L.A. Police Department until it has made at least two attempts to verify the need for service by telephone.
- If a subscriber has experienced two false alarms in any one-year period (on a rolling, 365-day basis), then visual verification will also be required before calling in an alarm to the L.A. Police Department or to 9-1-1 emergency service. (This provision does not, however, apply to panic or hold-up alarm activations, or the like.)
- False alarms continue to trigger a fee **and** a hefty penalty that increases substantially for each additional false alarm within a one-year period (again, on a rolling basis). If the customer does not possess a valid alarm permit, the penalty is double, and starts with the first false alarm.
- Violation of any of these provisions (other than non-payment of a fee or penalty) is a misdemeanor.