

**TO:** Mayor and City Council  
**THROUGH:** Matt Fulton, City Manager  
**FROM:** Manila Shaver, Chief of Police  
**DATE:** July 25, 2016  
**SUBJECT:** Requested Data – False Alarm Response



*City of West St. Paul*

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

At the Council July 11, 2016 Open Council Work Session (OCWS) the Council was discussing the City’s fee schedule and had inquired how many false alarms has the police responded to. Specifically, the Council was concerned about an excessive number of false alarms and the unnecessary consumption of police services. A few Council members thought the false alarm fees for an excessive number of false alarms should be increased to help offset this expense and encourage those individuals to better manage their alarm systems.

The below chart depicts false alarm response data for the last three years. The majority of false alarms occur in the 0-3 alarm category, which by City Code have no fee. Fees start in the 4-6 false alarm range and continue to the 10+ category.

**False Alarms**

	0-3 Alarms		4-6 Alarms		7-10 Alarms		>10 Alarms	
	Residential	Business	Residential	Business	Residential	Business	Residential	Business
2015	119	90	2	18	1	8	0	2
2014	87	95	2	17	0	6	0	2
2013	98	88	2	15	0	8	0	1

Excessive alarms are caused by a number or combination of factors to include:

- New systems;
- Over sensitive or faulty systems;
- Changes in the alarm monitoring environment such as balloons on display setting off a motion sensor when the HVAC system turns on and the balloons move about;
- Employees not understanding how the alarm systems functions. This occurs most frequently in those establishments where there is a turnover in employees

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Some of the estimated cost associated with responding to a false alarm include: (\$28) dispatching the officer; (\$75) officer response, building check, waiting for a key holder and documenting the incident; (\$10) police staff time to collect and monitor false alarm data; and (\$10) for finance time to invoice, collect and record false alarm fees. These estimated cost include staff time, software and computer systems and other costs associated in municipal operations.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

The Council may set and reasonable fee to recover expenses for a specific activity. While the number of individuals having an excessive number of false alarms significantly decreases as the number of false alarms increases, the police department may also use the Public Nuisance Code to help deal with specific situations.