



City Council of Fort Walton Beach

POLICE

MEMORANDUM

To: Jason Davis, City Manager

From: Robert Bage, Police Chief

Date: August 25, 2026

Subject: 2224 Ordinance Amending COO Section 8.02 Alarm Systems

1. **BACKGROUND:**

- 1.1. In 2025 the Police Department responded to 568 false alarms.
- 1.2. Through the first seven months of 2026, the Police Department has responded to 291 false alarms.
- 1.3. False alarms are treated as possible crimes in progress requiring two officers to respond. On average, each alarm call takes about 30 minutes to resolve.
- 1.4. False alarms divert public safety resources from being able to handle other calls and proactive initiatives.
- 1.5. The False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA) updated their model ordinance for Cities and Counties in 2024; the Security Industry Alarm Coalition (SIAC) also recently updated their model ordinance. These associations provide guidance to both the industry and public safety on how to best implement alarm programs and mitigate false alarms.

2. **DISCUSSION:**

- 2.1. The vast majority of false alarms are caused by errors in use. These errors divert critical public safety resources.
- 2.2. Several studies have shown that alarm management programs can greatly reduce false alarms. Research compiled by Arizona State University's Center for Problem-Oriented Policing showed up to a 40% reduction in false alarms from a well-managed program across several cities. Salt Lake City had an 87% reduction after implementing an Alarm Program.
- 2.3. The amended ordinance holds both the user and the alarm company accountable for proper usage.
- 2.4. The amended ordinance removes outdated and unneeded sections to make it user friendly and easier to read.
 - 2.4.1. In particular, the permit display/decal requirement was never realistically enforced, so it was removed.
- 2.5. The amended ordinance uses both FARA and SIAC concepts to reduce false alarms within the City of Fort Walton Beach. The current ordinance's "Non-Response" definition would have been hard to implement.
- 2.6. The fine structure, enforcement methods and appeal structure have been updated and clarified.

3. **FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

- 3.1. These changes have no effect on budget expenditures.

4. **RECOMMENDATION:**

- 4.1. Staff respectfully recommends City Council approval of Ordinance 2224, amending Code of Ordinances Section 8.02, Alarms.

SIGNATURE BLOCK:

Robert Bage	Completed	07/31/2026 6:43 PM
City Attorney	Completed	08/03/2026 10:48 AM
Thearon Shipman	Completed	08/17/2026 5:04 PM
Robert Bage	Completed	08/18/2026 1:34 PM
City Clerk	Completed	08/18/2026 3:17 PM
City Attorney	Completed	08/19/2026 7:47 PM
City Manager	Completed	08/20/2026 6:27 AM
Finance	Completed	08/20/2026 8:39 AM
City Council	Pending	08/25/2026 6:00 PM
City Council	Pending	09/15/2026 6:00 PM

ORDINANCE 2224

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FORT WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA, AMENDING CODE OF ORDINANCES SECTION 8.02 ALARM SYSTEMS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY ; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

WHEREAS, the Legislature of the State of Florida has, in Chapter 166, Florida Statutes, conferred upon local governments the authority to adopt regulations designed to promote the

public health, safety, and general welfare of its citizenry;

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Walton Beach has adopted Section 8.02 of the Code of Ordinances to regulate alarm systems within the City; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that excessive false alarms place an undue burden on the limited law enforcement and fire resources of the City, divert public safety personnel from responding to actual emergencies, and impose unnecessary costs on the City; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that clarifying the administration of alarm permits, streamlining the enforcement provisions of Section 8.02, and incorporating the alarm verification requirements of Section 489.529, Florida Statutes, will reduce the incidence of false alarms and the resulting burden on the City's public safety resources; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that this Ordinance serves a legitimate public purpose and promotes the public health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens of the City of Fort Walton Beach, Florida;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Fort Walton Beach, Florida as follows:

SECTION 1: AUTHORITY. The authority for enactment of this Ordinance is Section 166.021, Florida Statutes, and the City Charter.

SECTION 2. FINDINGS OF FACT.

SECTION 3. RECITALS. The foregoing recitals are hereby ratified and confirmed as being true and correct and are hereby made a part of this Ordinance.

SECTION 4. CODE OF ORDINANCES. Chapter 8.02 and 3.20, Code of Ordinances is hereby amended to read as follows with additions underlined and deletions ~~struck through~~:

8.02. ALARM SYSTEMS

8.02.00. Definitions.

Alarm businesses: A business for which any individual, partnership, corporation or other entity engaged in selling, leasing, installing, servicing, or monitoring alarm systems, either privately or publicly owned.

Alarm monitoring company: A person or business engaged in monitoring alarm systems and notifying the Police Department or Fire Department of an alarm signal. Alarm monitoring companies are subject to the alarm verification requirements of F.S. § 489.529.

Alarm system: A system of devices which includes a control panel that emits, transmits or relays a signal intended to summon, or that would reasonably be expected to summon, police, emergency medical services or fire services of the city, including local alarms. Alarm system does not include:

- (1) An alarm installed on a vehicle, unless the vehicle is permanently located at a site; or
- (2) An alarm designed to alert only the inhabitants of a premise within the interior of that premises.

Alarm user or user: Any person or business on whose premises alarm systems are maintained within the city, except for alarms on motor vehicles or property systems.

Automatic dialing device: An alarm system which automatically sends over regular telephone lines, by direct connection, or otherwise, a prerecorded voice message or coded signal indicating the existence of an emergency situation that the alarm system is designed to detect.

Central station: A location to which remote alarm or signaling devices are connected, where operators supervise circuits or where employees are maintained continuously to investigate signals.

Communications console: The instrumentation on an alarm console at the receiving terminal of a signal line which, through visual or audible signals, indicates activation of an alarm system at a particular location, or which indicates line trouble.

Direct connect: An alarm system which has the capability of transmitting system signals to and receiving them at the police communication center.

False alarm: ~~shall mean:~~

(1) The activation of an alarm system through mechanical failure, system malfunction, improper installation or negligence of the user of an alarm system or the user's employees or agents; or

(2) Any signal or oral communications requesting, requiring or resulting in a response on the part of the police department or fire department when in fact, there has been no unauthorized intrusion or attempted intrusion into a premises or no robbery, attempted robbery, products of combustion or emergency medical response.

(3) ~~Excluded from this definition are activations of alarms systems caused by power outages, weather conditions, or any other conditions determined not to be a result of equipment failure or neglect of the user.~~

Fire Alarm System: A signal initiated by a fire alarm-initiating device such as a manual fire alarm box, automatic fire detector, water flow switch or other devices which activation is indicative of a fire or fire signature and transmits signal to strobe and horn devices to evacuate the premises. Also transmits or relays a signal intended to summon fire services, including local alarms.

Fire Chief: ~~shall mean~~ the Fire Chief of the City or their designated representative.

Fire Department: ~~shall mean~~ the City Fire Department or any authorized agent.

Key holder/emergency contact: The person(s) designated in writing by the alarm user as authorized to respond to an activated alarm.

Police Chief: ~~shall mean~~ the Chief of Police of the City or their designated representative.

Police Department: ~~shall mean~~ the City of Fort Walton Beach Police Department or any authorized agent.

Public nuisance: ~~shall mean~~ a Anything which annoys, injures or endangers the comfort, repose, health or safety of a considerable number of persons or of any community or neighborhood.

Non-Response: ~~shall mean~~ that a Police Officer shall not be dispatched to an alarm location based solely on an alarm system signal, unless it has been verified by an independent secondary source that a criminal act or attempted criminal act is in progress or has occurred.

Utility Company: ~~shall mean~~ a Any public service company authorized to work on telephone, TV cable, or power lines, including but not limited to the telephone, TV cable, or power companies.

8.02.01. Alarm Permit Required.

All alarm users in the City, whether connected directly to the Police Communications Center, ~~or~~ to a private alarm monitoring company, or emits an audible signal, shall be required to maintain an alarm permit. The cost of such annual permit shall be in such amount as is established from time to time by resolution of the City Council.

All alarm users in the City, ~~whether connected directly to the Police Communications Center or to a private alarm monitoring company,~~ shall be required to maintain an alarm permit. ~~There shall be no charge. The fee~~ for first time registration and the annual renewal fee shall be in such amount as established from time to time by resolution of the City Council in the City's Comprehensive Fee Schedule. Such permit shall expire at the end of the calendar year, ~~and the fee shall be prorated on a quarterly basis beginning from the date of purchase.~~

Any alarm user not in possession of a current permit shall be notified by the Police Department that a permit is required. The alarm user shall obtain a permit and pay the appropriate fee within ten (10) working days after notification, unless an appeal is filed pursuant to the provisions of this chapter. Any alarm user who refuses to secure an alarm permit shall be subject to the provisions of chapter 1-5, of the Code of Ordinances.

~~8.02.02. Display Required.~~

~~Alarm permits shall be visibly displayed in all businesses in conjunction with any other City or State permit. Alarm permits for residential users shall be presented upon demand of a Police Officer or Firefighter.~~

~~8.02.03. Failure to Present.~~

~~Failure to present an alarm permit will be prima facie evidence that the user is not in possession of a current permit.~~

~~8.02.04. Reserved.~~

~~8.02.1002. Operational Reliability Requirements.~~

The purpose of this chapter is to require alarm users and alarm businesses (sales, installation, customer service and/or monitoring) to maintain the operational reliability and the proper use of alarm systems in limiting unnecessary police or fire emergency responses to false alarms/alarm malfunctions. This chapter governs all burglary, robbery, medical, and fire alarm systems requiring permits, establishes authority for fees, establishes a system for administration, and sets forth conditions for suspension or loss of permits and non-response to activations.

The city, its officers, employees and agents shall not assume any duty or responsibility for the installation, maintenance, operation, repair or effectiveness of any privately owned alarm system, those duties and responsibilities being solely those of the owner of the premises. Additionally, it shall be the responsibility of the owner of the premises to silence an activated alarm and thereafter reset the same. The city shall not provide, nor make available, the services of its police department or fire department to be an emergency communications center for use by owners as a central location for alarm system receiving equipment.

~~8.02.1103. Rules for Use.~~

The Police Chief and Fire Chief may promulgate such rules as may be necessary for the implementation of this chapter. Each alarm user and any fire alarm contractor, sprinkler

contractor, employee of such contractors, or entity licensed to perform maintenance or testing of an alarm system will abide by this chapter and any instructions as required by the City.

(1) ~~All automatic dialing devices shall be prohibited from calling or dialing the Police Department ninety (90) days after adoption of this ordinance. Automatic dialing devices are prohibited from calling or dialing the Police Department.~~

(2) ~~All alarm systems transmitting signals to the Communications Console in the Police Department shall be disconnected/removed from the Police Department ninety (90) days after adoption of this ordinance. Alarm systems shall not transmit signals to the Communications Console in the Police Department.~~

(3) The provisions of this section shall apply to all alarm users except the various departments of the City.

(4) Every alarm user shall submit to the Chief of Police or designee the names and telephone numbers of at least two (2) persons who can be reached at any time, day or night, who are authorized to respond to an emergency signal transmitted by an alarm system, and who can open the premises wherein the alarm system is installed.

(5) All alarm systems installed after the effective date of this ordinance, that use an audible horn, bell, or other signaling device, shall be equipped with a device that will shutoff such horn or bell within ten (10) minutes after activation of the alarm system. This shall not apply to fire alarm systems.

(6) ~~Any alarm system emitting a continuous and uninterrupted signal for more than twenty (20) minutes from the time the Police or Fire Department is notified, which cannot be shut off or otherwise curtailed due to the absence or unavailability of the alarm user or those persons designated by the alarm user, and which disturbs the peace, comfort, or repose of a community, neighborhood, or considerable number of inhabitants of the area where the alarm system is located, shall constitute a public nuisance. Any alarm system emitting a continuous, uninterrupted signal for more than twenty (20) minutes after the Police Department or Fire Department is notified, which cannot be curtailed due to the unavailability of the alarm user or a designated contact, and which disturbs the peace of the surrounding area, constitutes a public nuisance.~~

~~Upon receiving complaints regarding such a continuous and uninterrupted signal, the Police Chief shall endeavor to contact the alarm user or those persons designated by the alarm user in an effort to abate the nuisance. The Police Chief shall record the name and addresses of all complainants and the time each complaint was made. If the Police Chief or Fire Chief is unable to contact the alarm user or those persons designated by the alarm user, or if such person cannot or will not curtail the audible signal being emitted by the alarm system and if the Police Chief is otherwise unable to abate the nuisance, they shall direct a Police Officer, Firefighter, or a qualified alarm technician to enter upon the property or premises and take any reasonable action necessary to abate the nuisance. Upon receiving complaints of such a signal, the Police Department shall attempt to contact the alarm user, or a designated contact, to abate the nuisance and shall record each complainant's name and the time of the complaint. If contact cannot be made, or the~~

signal cannot otherwise be abated, the Police Department or Fire Department may direct a Police Officer, Firefighter, or qualified alarm technician to enter the property and take reasonable action to abate the nuisance.

If entry upon the property or premises in which the alarm system is located is made in accordance with this subsection, the person so entering upon such property: shall not conduct, engage in, or undertake any unwarranted search, seizure, inspection, or investigation while upon the property; shall not cause any unnecessary damage to the alarm system or to any part of the premises; and shall leave the property as soon as practical after the audible signal has ceased. A person entering the property under this subsection shall not conduct any unwarranted search, seizure, or investigation; shall avoid unnecessary damage; and shall leave as soon as practical once the signal has ceased.

(7) After an entry upon property has been made in accordance with this section, the Police Chief or Fire Chief shall have the property secured, if necessary. The Fire Department may have a key box or lock box installed in accordance with NFPA 1.3-6 at the expense of the alarm user. The reasonable costs and expenses of abating a nuisance in accordance with this section shall be assessed to the alarm user. After entry, the Police or Fire Department shall have the property secured, if necessary. The Fire Department may require a key box installed under NFPA 1.3-6 at the alarm user's expense. The reasonable costs of abatement shall be assessed to the alarm user.

Within ten (10) days after abatement of a nuisance in accordance with this section, the alarm user may request a hearing before the Police Chief or Fire Chief and may present evidence showing that the signal emitted by their alarm system was not a public nuisance at the time of the abatement, that unnecessary damage was caused to their property in the course of the abatement, that the cost of the abatement should not be assessed to him, or that the requirements of this section were not fulfilled. Within ten (10) days after abatement, the alarm user may request a hearing before the Special Magistrate to contest the nuisance determination, the cost assessed, damage caused, or compliance with this section.

The Police Chief or Fire Chief shall hear all interested parties and may, at their discretion, reimburse the alarm user for the repairs to their property necessitated by the abatement or excuse the alarm user from paying the cost of abatement. The Special Magistrate shall hear all interested parties and may, in their discretion, reimburse repair costs or waive the abatement cost.

(8) Any fire alarm contractor, sprinkler contractor, employee of such contractors, or entity licensed to perform maintenance or testing of an alarm system, shall contact the Okaloosa County Emergency Dispatch System and the Fort Walton Beach Fire Department to inform them that maintenance or testing will be conducted on any system in the city prior to the beginning of any maintenance or testing. A fire alarm or sprinkler contractor, or other entity licensed to test or maintain an alarm system, shall notify Okaloosa County Emergency Dispatch, the Fort Walton Beach Fire Department

and Fort Walton Beach Police Department before performing maintenance or testing on any system in the city.

(9) Each alarm monitoring company shall comply with the alarm verification requirements of F.S. § 489.529 before requesting a Police Department response to an alarm signal.

(10) Each alarm monitoring company shall furnish the responding department the following information when requesting dispatch:

- a. The name of the alarm monitoring company;
- b. The name or identification number of the reporting operator;
- c. A callback telephone number for the alarm monitoring company;
- d. The name of the business or homeowner and the address of the activated alarm;
- e. If a keyholder has been contacted, the keyholder's name and estimated time of arrival; and
- f. Any other information reasonably requested by the responding department.

(11) Each alarm business shall furnish the most current copy of this chapter to new alarm users at the time of installation, and to existing customers within sixty (60) days of the effective date of this ordinance.

8.02.1204. False Alarms.

When the Police Department or Fire Department responds to an emergency messages or signal of a burglary, robbery, medical, or fire alarm, and the responding department determines that the message or signal was a false alarm, the following procedures shall apply.

~~8.02.121.(1) False Alarm Report and Citation.~~ The Police Department or Fire Department, upon receiving notification of an alarm activation, shall dispatch personnel to the scene of the activation. If the activation is determined to be false, the Officer shall complete a false alarm report ~~and citation report and leave a copy of the report and citation with the~~ and notice will be sent to the user or designated person on the property. ~~In the event the user or the designee is not present, the Officer shall leave a copy of the report and citation in a conspicuous place on the premises and mail a copy of the report and citation to the permit holder at the address on file for the alarm permit.~~

~~8.02.122.(2)~~ Record of Activations. The Police Department and Fire Department shall keep a record of all false alarm activations for the past two (2) calendar years, in addition to a list of all alarmed premises, users and designated contacts.

~~8.02.123.(3)~~ Violations, Police Department Responses. If the Police Department records more than ~~three (3)~~ two (2) false alarms in a calendar year, from an alarm system or alarm monitoring company who monitors an alarm system, the user shall be fined; per false alarm; ~~as follows;~~ as set forth in the City's Comprehensive Fee Schedule.

a. ~~For the first three (3) violations within any twelve (12) month period, there is no charge.~~

b. ~~For the third, fourth, fifth and sixth violation within any twelve (12) month period, the fine is twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) per violation.~~

c. ~~For the seventh, eighth and ninth violation within any twelve (12) month period, the fine is two hundred fifty dollars (\$250.00) per violation.~~

d. ~~For the tenth and each subsequent violation within any twelve (12) month period, the fine is seventy-five dollars (\$75.00) per violation.~~

e. ~~Alarm activations exceeding twelve (12) false alarms shall be cause for the alarm permit to be revoked by the Police Chief.~~

Alarm activations exceeding twelve (12) false alarms shall be cause for the alarm permit to be revoked by the Police Chief and the location be designated as no response for alarms unless secondary verification is received.

8.02.124.(4) Violations, Fire Department Responses. If the fire department issues a false alarm report and citation, the user shall be fined, per false alarm, as follows:as set forth in the City's Comprehensive Fee Schedule.

a. ~~For the first violation within any twelve (12) month period, there is no charge.~~

b. ~~For the second violation within any twelve (12) month period, the fine is fifty dollars (\$50.00).~~

c. ~~For the third violation within any twelve (12) month period, the fine is one hundred dollars (\$100.00).~~

d. ~~For the fourth and each subsequent violation within any twelve (12) month period, the fine may be up to five hundred dollars (\$500.00) per violation, at the discretion of the Fire Chief and based upon the user's history of false alarms, compliance with this ordinance, and efforts to remedy the cause of the false alarms.~~

(2)(5) If any false alarm is the result of any fire alarm contractor, sprinkler contractor, employee of such contractors, or entity licensed to perform maintenance or testing of an alarm system who has not provided maintenance and testing notice as required in section 8.02.1403(8), the contractor or entity shall be fined, per false alarm, as follows:as set forth in the City's Comprehensive Fee Schedule.

a. ~~For the first violation within any twelve (12) month period, the fine is one hundred dollars (\$100.00).~~

b. ~~For the second violation within any twelve (12) month period, the fine is two hundred dollars (\$200.00).~~

c. ~~For the third violation within any twelve (12) month period, the fine is three hundred dollars (\$300.00) per violation.~~

~~d. For the fourth and each subsequent violation within any twelve-month period, the fine may be up to five hundred dollars (\$500.00) per violation, at the discretion of the Fire Chief and based upon the contractor's or licensed entity's history of false alarms, compliance with this ordinance, and efforts to remedy the cause of the false alarms.~~

~~8.02.125.(6) User Responsibility of Proof. The burden of proof shall be with the alarm user to show that a false alarm was not through mechanical failure, malfunction, improper installation, or maintenance or negligence of the user or other persons authorized to be on the premises. Alarm users are responsible for the training of persons authorized to be on the premises to ensure proper operation of the alarm system, the proper maintenance of the system, and the overall operations of the alarm system. User may contest a civil penalty assessed under this Section by showing that the false alarm resulted from an alarm monitoring company's failure to comply with the verification requirements of F.S. § 489.529. The alarm user bears the burden of providing this evidence, which may include monitoring records, call logs, or other documentation from the alarm monitoring company. If the alarm user makes this showing, the civil penalty shall be issued to the alarm monitoring company in lieu of the alarm user.~~

~~8.02.126.(7) Continuous Malfunctions. Any burglar or robbery alarm system that continuously malfunctions or otherwise causes false alarms may be ordered disconnected by the Chief of Police. Any alarm user who fails or refuses to disconnect their alarm system after being notified by the Chief of Police to do so shall be notified by certified mail that there shall be a "non-response" to any future activations. Upon satisfaction of all unpaid charges, renewal of the alarm permit, and repairs and certified by a licensed alarm installation company to the alarm system as required to bring the system back into proper working order have been completed, the Chief of Police shall rescind the "nonresponse" order.~~

~~(8) For any other violation of this Section not otherwise addressed, the fine shall be as set forth in the City's Comprehensive Fee Schedule as other violations,~~

~~(9) If a hearing is not requested, or an assessed civil penalty is not paid, the City may seek injunctive relief to enjoin and restrain any person from violating this Section, and any other relief available at law.~~

~~8.02.13. Alarm Citation Appeals.~~

~~The Board of Adjustment Special Magistrate shall hear, pursuant to the rules and procedures provided by the City's Codes for administrative appeals, all appeals regarding fines imposed by the Police Department or Fire Department pursuant to this chapter.~~

~~8.02.1305. Citation Appeals.~~

~~The Board of Adjustment Special Magistrate shall hear, all appeals regarding fines imposed by the Police Department or Fire Department pursuant to this chapter.~~

SECTION 5. SEVERABILITY. In the event any provision of this Ordinance or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, it is the intent of City Council that such invalidity shall not affect any other provisions of the Ordinance which may be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and, to this end, the provisions of this Ordinance are declared severable.

SECTION 6. CODIFICATION. It is the intention of the Fort Walton Beach City Council that the provisions of this Ordinance shall become a part of the City's Code of Ordinances; and that sections of this Ordinance may be renumbered or re-lettered and the word "ordinance" may be changed to "chapter", "section", "article", or such other appropriate word or phrase in order to accomplish such intentions; and regardless of whether such inclusion in the Code is accomplished, sections of this Ordinance may be renumbered or re-lettered and the correction of typographical errors which do not affect the intent may be authorized by the City Manager, without need of public hearing, by filing a corrected or recodified copy of the same with the City Clerk.

SECTION 7. EFFECTIVE DATE. This ordinance shall take effect immediately upon approval on second reading by the City Council and signature of the Mayor.

Adopted: _____

Nic Allegretto, Mayor

Attest:

Approved as to legal form and sufficiency
for the City of Fort Walton Beach, only.

Kim M. Barnes, City Clerk

Jeffrey L. Burns, City Attorney

Additions are underlined; deletions are stricken.