

Code Enforcement and You: Emergency Alarms Ordinance

By: Robert C. Solera, Code Enforcement Director / Code Services Inc. President

As the New Year begins the Code Enforcement Department wants to remind you of the Town's guidelines related to False Alarms. The Town of Southwest Ranches passed an ordinance related to "emergency alarms" back in the year 2010. The purpose of this ordinance was to mitigate and reduce the amount of false alarms that were generated in the Town creating a big strain on police resources. Basically, when an alarm goes off (either silent or audible), the police department is notified and sent to the scene. This action takes away from the ability of the police department to respond to other issues. Many times the alarms are malfunctioning or the police department is dispatched when it is not necessary.

The "emergency alarm" ordinance provides for the possibility of residents and businesses to have up to a maximum of 2 (two) false alarms per calendar year. A false alarm is one where the police department or the Fire Department are dispatched to the location and no proper code or cancel order is provided by the alarm company. At the end of a month the police department and the Fire Department provide the Code Enforcement Department with a detailed report of the previous month's activity. The report includes the location, the time and date of the false alarm and any pertinent information relates to the interaction between the agency and the resident/renter. The report is logged, and the Code Enforcement Department keeps track of it. On the second false alarm the Department issues a notice of violation alerting the resident/renter that they have reached the maximum amount of false alarms for the calendar year. The Department does take into consideration the weather that was present at the time of the false alarms. Many times during the summer months, large storms roll through the Town creating lightning strikes which produce false alarms. These types of alarms are not taken into consideration when determining the amount of false alarms per calendar year.

Once the maximum amount allowed per calendar year has been reached, a fine of \$50.00 is issued if a third false alarm occurs during the calendar year. In addition, if other false alarms do occur after the third one, a \$250.00 citation per occurrence will be issued (no other warnings or notices are provided). If a fine is issued the property owner has the right to request a hearing within 10 calendar days of the issuance of the civil violation or pay the violation. If the violation is not paid, the resident/renter may incur in a 10% interest of the original amount.

Once again our Department is ready to answer any questions that you may have related to this issue. You may call (954) 434-0008 to reach us.