

**Department of Fiscal Services**  
Maryland General Assembly

**FISCAL NOTE**  
**Revised**

House Bill 1296 (Charles County Delegation)  
Commerce & Government Matters      Referred to Economic & Environmental Affairs

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**Charles County - Public Safety False Alarms - Fines**

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This amended bill authorizes the Charles County Commissioners to prohibit, by ordinance, persons from making repeated false alarms or other unnecessary or abusive use of emergency and public safety services in the county. An ordinance must provide for the licensing of alarm system contractors; and establish a license fee, a schedule of fines, and procedures for public hearings for offenders. An ordinance must also allow the county to revoke or suspend a license of an alarm system contractor. Before such an action, the county must give the licensee an opportunity for a hearing. The designated county enforcement agency is authorized to maintain records of contractors, monitor service entities, and manufacturers of security systems. Any fines collected must be directed toward the county's response and communications system.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None.

**Local Effect:** Indeterminate effect on Charles County finances as discussed below.

**Small Business Effect:** Potential minimal effect on small businesses as discussed below.

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**Fiscal Analysis**

**Local Effect:** In 1995 there were more than 10,000 false alarms reported in Charles County, primarily by home and business security systems. The bill allows the county to establish a licensee fee for alarm system contractors and impose a monetary penalty for repeated false alarms or other abusive uses of emergency services. To the extent that the county establishes a license fee and imposes fines, revenues could increase depending upon the number of licensees, the number of false alarms or abuses, and the amount of the fees and fines. The number of licensees and the amount of the license fees cannot be reliably estimated at this

time. All fines are dedicated to the county's response and communications system. The increase cannot be reliably estimated.

The costs of holding public hearings for violators would be minimal and could be handled with the county's existing resources. Similarly, enforcement could be handled with existing personnel. It is assumed that any costs associated with licensing of alarm system contractors would be covered by the license fees.

If the imposition of fines decreases the number of false alarms in the county, expenditures could decrease due to fewer responses by the sheriff's office. Fewer responses could translate into lower operating costs for the sheriff's vehicles.

**Small Business Effect:** In 1995 there were more than 10,000 false alarms reported in Charles County, primarily from home and business security systems. The number of these made by small businesses is unknown. To the extent that the county establishes monetary fines for false alarms, small businesses with security systems that report false alarms could experience an increase in costs. The increase would depend upon the amount of the fines and the frequency of false alarms.

Alarm system contractors in Charles County would experience an increase in costs due to the license fee. Their operators could also be impacted depending upon the requirements for licensure specified in the ordinance established by the county.

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**Information Source(s):** Charles County, Department of Fiscal Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 3, 1997  
nrd Revised - House Third Reader - March 28, 1997

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