

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 951 (Calvert County Delegation)

Economic Matters

Calvert County - Alarm System Regulation

The bill grants Calvert County the authority to regulate “alarm system contractors” and users.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Minimal decrease in general fund revenue from transferring to Calvert County the authority to levy and collect fines for false alarm violations.

Local Effect: Potential minimal increase in revenues due to the bill’s penalty provisions. Administration and enforcement could be handled with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The Calvert County Commissioners have the authority to regulate alarm system contractors and users in the county. These regulations may include requiring alarm system contractors and alarm system users to register with the appropriate county authority. The commissioners are also authorized to impose civil citations and penalties for those failing to register or for causing a false alarm.

A false alarm is defined as any request for immediate assistance from an emergency aid authority that is not an actual or impending emergency or any alarm that is activated due to negligence or improper installation.

The bill also allows the county to notify the manufacturer and any appropriate state or national entities if a pattern of false alarms attributable to a particular alarm model emerges.

The bill exempts Calvert County from the State provisions regarding state false alarm penalties.

Current Law: Calvert County does not have the authority to regulate alarm system contractors and users. A law enforcement agency or fire department may issue a civil citation to an alarm user for responding to a false alarm under specified circumstances. The civil citation fine is \$30 for each initial false alarm and \$30 for each additional false alarm.

Background: Calvert County had approximately 6,000 false alarms in 1999. Each false alarm is responded to by the appropriate emergency personnel and ties up resources for which the county is not reimbursed. At this time, Anne Arundel, Charles, and Montgomery counties have local alarm system regulations as well as the authority to levy and collect fines for false alarms.

Calvert County advises that there were no successful false alarm prosecutions in 1999 because in each case that was brought to court it was determined that the false alarm was a installation problem and the fault was with the manufacturer and/or installer. State law does not address installation problems and thus the county did not prevail in any case.

Local Fiscal Effect: Calvert County may have a small increase in administrative costs to oversee the program and may experience an increase in revenues from the penalty authority it now has. Calvert County officials advise that the civil penalties will range from \$50 to \$500 depending on severity and circumstances.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Calvert County Department of Public Safety, Department of Legislative Services

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