

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1516
Economic Matters

(Delegates Hubbard and Conroy)

Burglary and Robbery Alarm Systems - Response Verification - Requirements

This bill requires an alarm system contractor to attempt to verify, in a specified manner, that an activated signal from a burglary or robbery alarm system requires a law enforcement response to an emergency situation. The contractor is required to call the alarm user at the site of the system with the activated signal and then, if no contact is made with the alarm user at the site, call the telephone number of the backup individual authorized by the user to cancel a response.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: This bill could have a beneficial effect on local law enforcement units to the extent that it may reduce the incidence of false alarms. Any additional responsibilities for local law enforcement units could be handled with existing budgeted resources. Any additional revenue resulting from the issuance of civil citations is not expected to be significant.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: An alarm system contractor is not required to contact an alarm user who has obtained a written exemption from the local chief law enforcement officer. Each local law enforcement unit must: (1) establish exemption standards; (2) issue a written exemption, signed by the local chief law enforcement officer, to each alarm user who

meets the established standards; and (3) maintain a list of the alarm users to whom an exemption is issued.

A law enforcement unit is authorized to issue a civil citation to a contractor for the failure to attempt to make the required verification. A civil citation must assess a penalty of up to \$500 for each such failure. The law enforcement unit must take into consideration a contractor's attempts to comply with these provisions when determining the amount of the penalty issued.

These provisions do not apply to activated signals from the following alarm systems:

- duress alarms;
- hold-up alarms;
- fire alarms; or
- personal emergency response systems that do not require a law enforcement response.

Current Law: An alarm system that is activated more than once within a 12-hour period when a premises with an alarm system is unoccupied and that is not in response to an actual emergency situation or threatened suggested criminal activity constitutes one false alarm if access to the building is provided to the alarm system contractor and an alarm system contractor or an employee of an alarm system contractor responds to the activated alarm system.

A law enforcement unit or fire department may issue a civil citation to an alarm user for the negligent or accidental activation of an alarm system as a result of faulty, malfunctioning, or improperly installed or maintained equipment or for a false alarm if the number of activations or false alarms to which the law enforcement unit or fire department responds exceeds 3 responses within a 30-day period or 8 responses within a 12-month period. A civil citation must assess a penalty of \$30 for each negligent or accidental activation or false alarm.

These provisions do not apply to alarm systems activated by weather conditions or causes beyond the control of the alarm user. Three counties are allowed an exemption if, by regulation, the county provides for the registration of alarm system contractors and alarm users, the issuance of civil citations, and penalties for a violation of a regulation. Frederick County and Calvert County have such provisions. Washington County, also eligible for the exemption, has draft regulations under review which are expected to be promulgated in the near future. However, the Washington County provisions will be separate from the county code, and the Department of Permits and Inspections says it will

provide that a master electrician may install such an alarm system. The Washington County provision is also expected to allow installation by someone holding a low voltage electrical license, which also covers the installation of intercom systems and stereo systems.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Montgomery County, Caroline County, Howard County, Judiciary (District Court), Department of State Police, Department of Legislative Services

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mll/jr

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