

Capitola has a New Security Alarm System Ordinance
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In 2005 the Capitola Police Department responded to 738 alarm calls in the City. Only 7 of these were valid alarms requiring police action. In other words, 99% of all building alarms in Capitola were false, caused by employee error, malfunctioning systems, or acts of nature. A vast majority of these alarms were from commercial businesses in the City. These false alarms equate to over 120 hours of police patrol time and over \$18,000 in personnel costs last year, which officers could have devoted to other projects such as directed patrols and community policing projects.

In Santa Cruz County, both the Santa Cruz Police Department and the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office have security alarm registration programs which help to alleviate the problem of officers and deputies responding to false alarms. The City of Watsonville is currently establishing their own program. In order to reduce the number of false alarms occurring in Capitola, the City has adopted a new Ordinance which will regulate all commercial alarms in the City. The Ordinance goes into effect on July 8, 2006. This program would require all security alarm system owners of commercial businesses to register their alarms through the Police Department. The alarm registration number would be kept on file by the Police Department with the owner and contact information for each alarm system. By having a registration system, the police would have a much easier time contacting alarm owners or their agent in case of any alarm, whether valid or false. Although not mandated by the Ordinance, owners of residential security alarm systems are encouraged to register their systems with the Police Department.

The new City Ordinance will also integrate a fine system for commercial business alarm owners who fail to properly train employees on how to shut off their alarms or who fail to repair malfunctioning systems. Commercial security alarm system owners will be allowed two free false alarms in a calendar year. A fine of \$100.00 would result for every third or subsequent false alarm during the same calendar year. Security alarm registration is mandatory for all commercial security alarm systems and free of charge for all systems in the City. Registration renewal would be on an annual basis.

With false alarms becoming an ever increasing nuisance for all who live and work in Capitola, the new Ordinance should help to encourage all alarm owners to maintain their systems and properly train their employees. The City believes the implementation of such a program will reduce the number of false alarm calls received annually, thus allowing officers to spend more time on other crime prevention programs.

If anyone has any questions regarding the new Ordinance you can call me at 475-4242 extension 503 or email me at bmartin@ci.capitola.ca.us.