



**FALSE ALARM and NON-PERMITTED ALARM HEARING PROCESS**  
**RESIDENTIAL and NON-RESIDENTIAL ALARM CUSTOMERS**  
**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**I received an invoice with a false alarm penalty. Why did I receive this penalty?**

A false alarm incident was identified from your alarm system.

**I received an invoice with a non-permitted penalty. Why did I receive this penalty?**

An alarm incident was identified from your non-permitted alarm system.

**How can I apply for an alarm permit?**

To apply for a permit and learn more about the City of Houston's Burglar Alarm Administration (BAA), visit: [www.houstonburglaralarmpermits.org](http://www.houstonburglaralarmpermits.org) or apply in person at the Houston Permitting Center, 1002 Washington Avenue, Houston 77002.

**What will happen if I do not pay my penalty?**

Failure to pay penalties will result in the continued revocation or denial of permit. The alarm system will become a non-permitted system and subject to all penalties, fees and punishments authorized by the City of Houston Code of Ordinances, Chapter 11, Article III.

**I did not know I was required to have an alarm permit since my alarm company did not tell me. Can my penalty charges be waived or reduced since this was my first time?**

No. The City of Houston is working with alarm companies and their installation teams as well as monitoring companies to educate their customers about the City's permitting requirements. Ultimately, however, it is the system owners' responsibility to obtain required permits for their alarm systems and comply with the City's Ordinance.

**Can I dispute the false alarm or non-permitted penalty charge(s)? How?**

Yes. You can mail or deliver a written statement or fill out the convenient, fillable, PDF Alarm Hearing Request Form to the Director of the Administration and Regulatory Affairs Department requesting a hearing no later than the 30<sup>th</sup> day following the date that the City of Houston places the false or non-permitted alarm notice in the mail. Your written statement or the completed PDF Alarm Hearing Request Form must specify facts and include documentation and records that prove the alarm was true or that the alarm was generated by a permitted alarm system.

**If the false alarm resulted from faulty, defective or malfunctioning equipment, can I request an alarm hearing?**

No. A false alarm hearing will not be granted if the false alarm is a result of:

- A caretaker overseeing a residential or non-residential site while owners were away
- A individual mistakenly or playing with alarm controls
- An occurrence where no evidence of criminal activity is present
- An alarm activated while alarm technicians were repairing or servicing the alarm system
- Any noise and/or sound other than actual glass breaking which caused glass break detectors to activate
- Any door(s) or window(s) becoming opened, unlocked, loose and causing a loss of contact
- Apartment management employees
- Defective, faulty, or malfunctioning equipment
- Improper installation or maintenance by the alarm system company
- Improper monitoring by alarm system company
- Mistake made by private contractors, housekeeper, cleaning crew, etc.
- Movement caused by items such as, but not limited to: balloons, curtains, home or party décor, plants, signs, window, etc. within a residential or non-residential site which activated the motion sensor
- Pets, rodents, wildlife, etc.

**How long will I have to wait for a hearing to be scheduled?**

Every effort will be made to schedule your hearing as soon as possible.

**What can I expect during the hearing?**

You will be allotted 10-15 minutes for the alarm hearing at which time you may present any relevant information specific to the status of your alarm permit. Please arrive to the hearing prepared to present your case. All alarm hearings shall be informal. It is your responsibility to demonstrate “by a preponderance of the evidence” (your “burden of proof”) that the alarm was not false or generated by a permitted alarm system.

**What do I need to bring to the hearing?**

You will need to bring facts, documents, and/or records to prove:

- a. Alarm was true and not false
  - i. Copy of the police report confirming a break-in or robbery
- b. Alarm was generated by a permitted alarm system (bring a copy of the active and valid permit for the alarm site)
- c. Alarm did not occur at your location, :
  - i. Copy of a police report
  - ii. Alarm company activity report showing no alarms occurred on the incident date
  - iii. Letter from your alarm company indicating no request was issued to dispatch the Houston Police Department (HPD)
- d. You were not the owner of the property at the time of the false alarms
- e. Residential or non-residential site is not within the Houston city limits and the Code of Ordinances do not apply to the site

**Can I receive a municipal court citation?**

Yes.

**How soon will I find out the results of my hearing?**

At the conclusion of the alarm hearing, a final decision will be made and announced verbally. A written decision will be given to you. The decision of the hearing officer is final.

Any penalty and fee(s) associated with an alarm determined to have been false or an alarm determined to have been generated by a non-permitted alarm system, must be paid within 15 days following the date the final decision is mailed or hand-delivered to you.

The hearing process and definitions related to false alarms, denied permits and permit revocations can be found in the City of Houston Code of Ordinances, Chapter 11, Article III.

\*Please note that a collection fee of 30% will be added to the false alarm penalty if the false alarm penalty is not paid by the 61<sup>st</sup> day after it is due. All collection fees are due on the date they are added to the false alarm penalty.

Visit [www.houstonburglaralarmpermits.org](http://www.houstonburglaralarmpermits.org) for additional information. Click the HOW TO tab to view the How to Request an Alarm Hearing document. For the convenient, fillable, PDF Alarm Hearing Request Form, click the FORMS tab to download the form.

**Contact:**

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