

# City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia  
Office of the Chief Clerk  
Room 402, City Hall  
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 080263)

## RESOLUTION

Authorizing the Committee on Licenses and Inspections to hold hearings to investigate the causes of the large number of false burglar alarm activations in Philadelphia, to examine the fiscal impact of these false activations and to propose solutions to reduce the number false activations and their negative impact on the City's financial resources and policing capabilities.

WHEREAS, In 2007 and 2006 there were 92,281 and 90,373 burglar alarm activations in Philadelphia, respectively; and,

WHEREAS, In Philadelphia, 97% to 99% of all burglar alarm activations are false activations, typically the result of the alarm system owner accidentally tripping the system; and,

WHEREAS, A 1995 study found that it costs the Philadelphia Police Department \$29.89 to respond to each activation, with the cost rising on an annual basis to an estimated \$45 per activation for 2007. A 2000 study found that nationally, the cost ranged from \$30 to \$95 per activation; and,

WHEREAS, The City requires alarm users to pay an annual registration fee of \$35 to register their alarm system with the Department of Licenses and Inspections. In return, the Philadelphia Police Department provides "procedural response" to the activation of an alarm system; and,

WHEREAS, In addition to the \$35 annual fee, the City, through the Department of Licenses and Inspections, charges alarm users a \$25 fine for the fourth and any additional false alarm activations in a year, essentially allowing alarm owners three "free" false activations. The \$25 dollar fine does not cover the City's actual cost for Police response to the alarm; and,

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WHEREAS, In 2007, the City collected \$1,050,395 in false alarm fines and \$2,050,613 in annual registration fees, totaling \$3,101,008. However, the cost of Police procedural responses to alarm activations is estimated at \$4,152,645, a deficit of over one million dollars; and,

WHEREAS, Alarm companies charge consumers an average of \$29 a month to notify the Police when an alarm system is activated; the alarm companies do not reimburse the Police department when the Police are dispatched to a false alarm activation. Philadelphia tax payers are subsidizing the cost of responding to false alarms, which diverts police resources from potential emergency situations to non-emergency situations; and,

WHEREAS, Other American cities have dealt with their false alarm problems through education programs or by increasing registration fees or fines or by requiring the alarm companies to verify the validity of activations before notifying the police; and,

WHEREAS, City Council recognizes the security concerns and fear of crime held by many of its citizens and wishes to ensure the safety of its residents; to that end, City Council must explore solutions to reduce the voluminous number of false burglar alarm activations in order to maximize our limited and valuable police resources.

*RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA,*

That the Committee on Licenses and Inspections is authorized to hold hearings to investigate the causes of the large number of false burglar alarm activations in the City of Philadelphia and to examine the fiscal impact of these false activations and propose solutions to reduce the number false activations and their negative impact on the City's limited financial resources and policing capabilities.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the sixth of March, 2008.

Anna C. Verna  
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Patricia Rafferty  
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmembers Green, Jones and Rizzo

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Green, Jones, Rizzo, Greenlee, Goode, Miller, Tasco, DiCicco, Reynolds Brown and Blackwell