



**CENTERVILLE POLICE
DEPARTMENT**
500 HOUSTON LAKE BLVD
CENTERVILLE, GEORGIA 31028



December 4, 2008

To: All Businesses and Residence Utilizing Alarms

From: Anthony B. Cooper, Chief of Police

Re: New Centerville City Ordinance #2008-10

The purpose of this letter is to notify all commercial and residential owners of alarm systems located within the City limits of a new City Ordinance governing alarms and how that new ordinance works. Since reporting as your new Chief of Police, I have learned that the Centerville Police Department responds to an exorbitant number of false alarm calls received by the 911 Center. Many, many times the Centerville police officer, who was appropriately dispatched by the 911 Center in response to the alarm, arrives at the scene only to find that the alarm is unfounded, literally, a false alarm.

Obviously, an officer responding to the false alarm call is unavailable for dispatch by the 911 Center until the alarm call has been cleared. As a result, the officer is out of service, cannot be dispatched elsewhere, and is waiting at the scene of a false alarm, while a genuine emergency call waits. The problem is compounded when the responsible party cannot be reached or simply doesn't show up to unlock the building for the police officer. When this happens, the officer is unable to determine whether an intruder is inside the building or what else may have activated the alarm system. Failure of the responsible party to respond quickly and provide access to the building is completely unacceptable. Determining the cause of the alarm is one of the keys in eliminating future false alarm calls at an individual location.

The new ordinance was adopted by the Mayor and Council on December 2, 2008 and goes into on January 1, 2009. Section 19-8 of the ordinance requires owners of alarm systems to acquire a permit within sixty days of activating such a system at their home or business. The fees associated with the permit process will not begin to be charged until January 1, 2010.

As your Chief of Police, I need your help. I would like to ask all homeowners and business owners with existing alarm systems that have malfunctioned in the past to contact your alarm service provider and have your systems checked.

No one enjoys being called out to their place of business late at night or called away from work to their home because of a false alarm. I also think that anyone with an alarm call to their property expects the responding officer to take the matter seriously. Nevertheless, it is understandable how an officer might become frustrated when called out to the same location over and over again for "just another false alarm call." This can be very dangerous for an unwary and frustrated officer when the fifth call of his shift to that same location turns out to be a legitimate crime in progress. Please help resolve these false alarm calls for the safety of your fellow citizens and for our officers.

Another aspect of the problem is the cost involved in responding to false alarms. As Police Chief, I have a responsibility to see that the tax dollars of Centerville citizens are not wasted. I believe the following statistics will convince each of you that the false alarms are more than just an inconvenience for our officers. The 911 Center records of alarm calls for the Centerville Police Department from January 2008 through October 2008 show:

- 438 alarms calls (263 business alarms and 175 residential alarms) within the City of Centerville;
- One location alone had 32 alarm calls;
- The average time spent on an Alarm call is approximately 25 minutes per call for a total of 10,950 minutes, which equals 182.5 hours
- Generally, two officers respond to all alarms, doubling the hours spent to 365
- The lowest paid Police Officer with the Centerville Police Department is paid \$12.52 per hour
- The salary cost for two officers to respond to each alarm call is \$25.04 per hour;
- When multiplied by 365 hours, Centerville paid \$9,139.60 in salary alone to respond to false alarms; and
- These numbers do not account for fuel cost for police vehicles and maintenance cost for those vehicles ;

In closing, an important portion of the Centerville Police Department's Mission Statement says, "Proudly Serving Our Community." With your assistance the Centerville Police Department will continue to do just that. I want to personally thank you for your support of the Centerville Police Department. I truly look forward to working with each of you as we work to make sure Centerville continues to be a wonderful place to live and work.

Respectfully,



Anthony B. Cooper
Chief of Police