

# TOWN OF WASHINGTON

## ORDINANCE REGULATING AUTOMATIC ALARMS

### Section 1: PURPOSE OF ORDINANCE

The purpose of this ordinance is to provide for the public's safety and welfare by reducing the number of false alarms, providing for the effective deployment of fire department and police personnel, reducing the hazard to the public and members of the fire and police departments which occurs during response to false alarms, and promoting the responsible use of fire and burglary alarm devices. (C.G.S. 7-148 (c) (7)(H) (xiv).

### Section 2: DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 "ALARM SYSTEM" shall mean any device which, when activated by fire, heat, smoke or forced entry, automatically transmits a telephone signal to the Litchfield County Dispatch headquarters to dispatch the Washington Fire Department **ADD: "and or Ambulance Personnel"** or transmit a signal to the Connecticut State Police.
- 2.2 "ALARM USER" shall mean that person whose name appears on the registration form as the "USER"; or if such registration form has not been filed, the owner, occupant, or lessee of the premises upon which the alarm system is located.
- 2.3 "AUTOMATIC DIALING DEVICE" refers to an alarm system which automatically sends over regular telephone lines, by direct connection or otherwise, a pre-recorded voice message indicating the existence of the emergency situation that the alarm system is designed to detect. Dialing devices shall be programmed to a central station and shall not terminate at either the Resident Trooper's office in Washington or at the Litchfield County Dispatch headquarters. (CGS 7-282b).
- 2.4 "FALSE ALARM" shall mean the activation of an alarm system through mechanical failure, malfunction, improper installation, or negligence by the owner, a lessee, a guest or an employee. False alarms do not include alarms caused by thunderstorms, earthquakes, other violent conditions or alarms transmitted with criminal, malicious or mischievous intent.
- 2.5 "KEYHOLDER" shall mean the person or persons made responsible by the homeowner to go to the house with the automatic alarm within a IS-minute time span to allow access to the house.

#### **ADD:**

2.6: "KEY LOCK BOX" means an underwriter's Laboratory type secure box or vault of a size and style approved by the Fire Marshal or Fire Marshal Designee which contains key(s) for the exclusive use of the fire department and ambulance personnel to access the premise in an emergency.

### Section 3: REGISTRATION

- 3.1 Alarm systems shall be installed in accordance with the Connecticut State Building Code and pursuant to a permit issued by the Building Official.
- 3.2 No person shall install, connect or operate an alarm system within the Town of Washington until a permit has been issued by the Building Department of the Town. A registration form shall be completed and include the name, telephone number and address of the alarm user (2.2) and at least one other person who shall have access to the alarm system *within a time*

*period of 15 minutes* in order to reset or disconnect the system when necessary (2.5).

- 3.3 Said registration form may require additional information as requested by the Town and shall be submitted to the Building Official at least 10 days prior to such installation, connection or operation.
- 3.4 Alarm users having existing alarms shall have 60 days from the effective date of this ordinance to register their alarm systems with the Building Official.
- 3.5 Property street numbers must be included on registration forms and prominently displayed at roadside.

#### **Section 4: MAINTENANCE AND TESTING**

- 4.1 Alarm owners shall be responsible for maintaining their alarm in good working condition.
- 4.2 No alarm system shall be tested, repaired, or adjusted if such action would result in a false alarm without prior notification to the alarm monitoring service or fire department.

#### **Section 5: AUDIBLE SIGNAL**

All alarm systems that are audible outside of the protected premises shall be equipped with a device limiting the duration of such audible signal to not more than fifteen (15) minutes.

#### **Section 6: PENALTIES**

- 6.1 There are hereby imposed the following penalties upon an alarm user whose system transmits a false alarm:
  - A. 1st false alarm:  
Written notice of violation by the police or fire officer at the scene.
  - B. 2nd false alarm within a twelve (12) month period:  
Written notice of violation by the fire department chief or resident trooper by certified mail instructing the alarm user to correct the problem.
  - C. 3rd false alarm within a twelve (12) month period and each subsequent false alarm:  
Written notice from the First Selectman by certified mail instructing the alarm user to correct the problem and issuance of a fine of \$100. The owner will provide to the First Selectman the written certification of his contractor/installer that the system has been returned to proper working order.
- 6.2 The following acts are also prohibited and each separate violation shall carry a fine of \$100:
  - A. Intentionally causing a false alarm.
  - B. Failure to register an alarm system or to give notice of changes in registration information as required by this ordinance.
  - C. Use of an automatic dialing service or an exterior audible alarm device in violation of the provisions of this ordinance.
  - D. Installation, connection, or operation of an alarm system not meeting the specifications as set forth in this ordinance.

#### **Section 7: MUNICIPAL NON-LIABILITY**

Notwithstanding the provisions of this ordinance, the Town of Washington and its Fire and Police Departments, their officers, agents and employees shall be under no obligation whatsoever concerning the adequacy, operation or maintenance of any alarm device or monitoring facilities. No liability whatsoever is assumed for the failure to respond to alarms or for any other act or omission in connection with such alarm devices. The Town of Washington and its Fire and Police Departments shall be held harmless and authorized to enter, with force if necessary, any residence for which there is no homeowner, keyholder or unlocked entrance

available for the purpose of inspection to insure the health and safety of the residence.

**Section 8: EFFECTIVE DATE**

This ordinance shall take effect July 1, 1997.

**ADD:**

**Section 9: KEY LOCK BOXES REQUIRED**

The following structures equipped with or required to be equipped with fire detection or fire suppression systems or equipment SHALL have a lock box installed at or near the main entrance or such other location as required by the Fire Marshal or Fire Marshal Designee:

Commercial or industrial structures protected by an automatic alarm system or automatic suppression system, or such structures that are secured in a manner that restricts access during an emergency.

Governmental structures, schools and nursing care facilities.

Multifamily residential structures that have restricted access through locked doors and have a common corridor for access to living units.

**Section 9.1: KEY LOCK BOXES EXEMPTIONS**

Businesses, firms or other entities that are legally required to maintain customer, client, trade or patient confidentiality shall be exempt from this requirement. Businesses, firms, or other entities that provide sensitive personal services or that routinely store or handle potentially hazardous or expensive, rare, or unique materials may, in the discretion of the Fire Marshal or the Fire Marshal Designee, be exempted from this requirement.

**Section 9.2: KEY LOCK BOXES OPT-OUT**

Any property owner not otherwise exempt may opt out of the lock box program if such owner or owner's authorized insurance agent furnishes the Fire Marshal Office with a letter of understanding from the insurer of the subject premises directed to the Town of Washington and all Washington Fire Department and Washington Ambulance personnel and acknowledging its understanding that the Washington Fire Department and Washington Ambulance Personnel are not authorized to obtain access to the premises during an emergency by way of a lock box key and that damage resulting from forced emergency entry may occur. Additionally, all owners of such premises shall execute and deliver to the Fire Marshal an agreement, in the form and substance required by the Fire Marshal, holding the Town of Washington and Washington Fire Department and Washington Ambulance personnel free, harmless and indemnified from any claim for forced emergency entry damage or delayed access.

**Section 9.3: INSTALLATION AND LOCATION**

Type of Lock Box shall be approved by the Fire Marshal or Fire Marshal designee. Location of installation of the lock box shall be approved by the Fire Marshal or Fire Marshal designee.

**Section 9.4: MAINTENANCE**

In the event the key to the structure is changed or rekeyed, the owner/operator of the building shall immediately notify the Fire Marshal / Fire Marshal designee and provide the updated access key. The key to the lock shall be secured in the key box.

### **Section 9.5 COMPLIANCE**

The Owner(s) / Occupant(s) of a structure subject to this ordinance, shall have (60) days to comply with this ordinance after being notified in writing. The owner(s) of each newly constructed structure subject to this ordinance shall have a lock box installed and operational in accordance with this ordinance prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy.

### **Section 9.6: PENALTIES**

Any building owner or operator violating any provision of this lock box ordinance shall be subject to a fine of \$100 for every violation of this ordinance. The existence of a violation for a period of up to 30 continuous days shall constitute a single violation.

The Fire Marshal/ Fire Marshal Designee shall notify the responsible party of any violation, by mail.

Within 30 days of the mailing of such notice, the owner/ operator may correct the violation or show why the structure was not subject to this ordinance.

Within 30 days after the mailing of such notice, the owner/ operator may file and appeal with the board of Selectman, in writing.

**Ordinance amended at a Town Meeting March 24, 2022.**