



## The Corporation of the Town of Tecumseh

Corporate Services & Clerk

**To:** Policies and Priorities Committee

**From:** Laura Moy, Director Corporate Services & Clerk

**Date to Council:** October 22, 2019

**Report Number:** CS-2019-35

**Subject:** Fire Alarm By-Law Amendments

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### Recommendations

It is recommended:

**That** the amended Fire Alarm By-law as appended to report CS-2019-35 **be adopted;**

**And that** Corporate Services & Clerk Report CS-2019-35 regarding the Fire Alarm By-law Amendments, **be received.**

### Background

By-law No. 2001-48 was adopted by Council on August 14, 2001 to establish a registration program for residential and commercial property owners' fire alarms (Fire Alarm By-law). The program was introduced to encourage property owners who have fire alarm systems in their homes, or in their commercial buildings, to ensure their alarms systems are in good working order and to deter emergency calls resulting from malfunctioning or reoccurring nuisance alarms.

Calls for service resulting from malfunctioning or reoccurring nuisance alarms could potentially affect the ability of the Tecumseh Fire and Rescue Services response, and response time, to actual emergencies.

The Fire Alarm By-law was passed with similar provisions in Police Services By-law No. 2000-01 (PSB By-law) which establishes an alarm registration program for residential and commercial security alarms, as well as a penalty system for non-registration, and false alarms.

While registration of security alarms has been received under the PSB By-law, fire alarms have had little to no registrations. Fire alarms and security alarms are not always necessarily both installed on the same premises.

The purpose of this report is to recommend amendments to the Fire Alarm Registration By-law for consistency with the PSB By-law, provide clarity for staff that oversee registrations and make current the fees and charges to be collected.

## Comments

A review of the Fire Alarm By-law was undertaken in consultation with the Tecumseh Fire & Rescue Services, OPP and Financial Services.

Financial Services has been responsible for registering alarms in accordance with the PSB By-law.

The OPP is responsible for notifying Financial Services of all calls in response to 'At Fault False Alarms' and Financial Services for invoicing penalties in accordance with the PSB By-law.

'At Fault False Alarms' are defined in the PSB By-law as:

- i. The testing of an alarm without police knowledge and approval, alarms caused by the negligence or carelessness of the alarm company, the alarm monitoring company, the alarm owner or alarm user
- ii. Alarms activated due to mechanical failure or improper installation
- iii. Alarms activated by internal or external atmosphere conditions, vibrations or power surges

The PSB By-law prescribes an annual \$10 registration fee for any owner or occupier of a premise with an alarm. Registered owners are granted two (2) 'At Fault False Alarms' before being charged \$100 for each 'At Fault False Alarm' thereafter during a calendar year. The \$100 charge is imposed on any owner or occupier of a premise with an unregistered premise for each 'At Fault False Alarm.'

The current Fire Alarm By-law also provides for an annual \$10 registration fee for any owner or occupier of a premise with an alarm. Registered owners are granted three (3) 'At Fault False Alarms' before being charged \$300 for each 'At Fault False Alarm' thereafter during a calendar year. The \$300 charge is imposed on any owner or occupier of a premise with an unregistered premise for each 'At Fault False Alarm.'

The Fire Alarm By-law states that the OPP is responsible for maintaining a written record of registered alarms.

'At Fault False Alarm' in the Fire Alarm By-law is defined as:

- i. the testing of an Alarm without prior notification to and approval of Windsor Fire Dispatch;

- ii. an Alarm caused by the carelessness or negligence of any person at a Registered Premise or an Unregistered Premise;
- iii. an Alarm caused by the mechanical failure or improper installation of any warning device; or
- iv. an Alarm inadvertently activated by any means, including internal or external atmospheric conditions, vibrations or power surges.

In order to harmonize the alarm registration program for both security alarms (PSB By-law) and fire alarms, establish consistent responsibility for registration by administration and to avoid an independent annual review of the fees and charges, the following changes are recommended to the Fire Alarm By-law:

- 1) Town Administration be responsible for registration of both fire and security alarms.
- 2) Provide for the imposition of two (2) 'At Fault False Alarms' before being charged for each 'At Fault False Alarm' thereafter during a calendar year.
- 3) Prescribe the fee for registration under the annual Fees and Charges By-law.
- 4) Prescribe the fee for attendance to each 'At Fault False Alarm' as the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) rate for responses to an emergency on a provincial highway, for improved recovery of cost. This rate is currently set at \$465.42 per hour, and is subject to change from time to time.

The owner or occupier of a Registered Premise is required under the Fire Alarm By-law to attend their Registered Premise when its Alarm is activated, within thirty (30) minutes of the activation in order to allow access to the premise for inspection purposes and to answer inquiries from the Tecumseh Fire & Rescue Services. As there are numerous responses to alarms where there is no key holder on file, or where they take hours to respond, the Fire Alarm By-law now also includes a provision for an owner or occupier to pay to the Town the MTO Rate for failure to attend within 30 minutes of an alarm activation.

Other house keeping amendments have been made to the Fire Alarm By-law, including the current legislative authorities.

## **Consultation**

Financial Services  
Fire & Emergency Services

## **Financial Implications**

The average number of registered alarms over the past five years is 900. The current registration fee being charged is \$25.

According to the Tecumseh Fire Department's 2018 Year-End review, on average each year between 2014 and 2018 there has been 78 false fire calls (9% average of all calls per year).

It is difficult to quantify the number of alarm registrations that would also include a fire alarm and the number of false fire calls that may be eligible for imposition of an 'At Fault False Alarm' charge.

Town Administration overseeing registrations under the Fire Alarm By-law and Tecumseh Fire & Rescue Services tracking and better reporting 'At Fault False Alarm's' for imposition of the MTO rate charge, will result in recovery of a portion of the costs resulting from false alarms.

## Link to Strategic Priorities

Applicable	2019-22 Strategic Priorities
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- Make the Town of Tecumseh an even better place to live, work and invest through a shared vision for our residents and newcomers.
- Ensure that Tecumseh's current and future growth is built upon the principles of sustainability and strategic decision-making.
- Integrate the principles of health and wellness into all of Tecumseh's plans and priorities.
- Steward the Town's "continuous improvement" approach to municipal service delivery to residents and businesses.
- Demonstrate the Town's leadership role in the community by promoting good governance and community engagement, by bringing together organizations serving the Town and the region to pursue common goals.

## Communications

Not applicable

Website       Social Media       News Release       Local Newspaper

This report has been reviewed by Senior Administration as indicated below and recommended for submission by the Chief Administrative Officer.

Prepared by:

Laura Moy, Dipl. M.M., CMMIII HR Professional  
Director Corporate Services & Clerk

Reviewed by:

Tom Kitsos, CPA, CMA, BComm  
Director Financial Services & Chief Financial Officer

Recommended by:

Margaret Misek-Evans, MCIP, RPP  
Chief Administrative Officer

**Attachment  
Number**

**Attachment  
Name**

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By-Law No. 2019-DRAFT Fire Alarm By-law