

Memorandum to the Council of Corporation of the Municipality of Temagami

Subject: Fire Department Response to False Alarms – By-law and Fee Updates

Memo No: 2025-M-148

Date: June 12, 2025

Attachment: None

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Recommendation

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receives Memo 2025-M-148 as presented;

AND FURTHER THAT, Council consider implementing a Municipal False Alarm By-law and approve corresponding amendments to the User Fees By-law Schedule J – Fire Department Fees.

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1. Executive Summary

The Municipality currently does not have a False Alarm By-law and has historically relied on the User Fees and Charges By-law to apply fees where the Fire Department has responded to multiple false alarms. This reliance has proven insufficient due to the lack of a supporting policy and enforcement framework. A draft False Alarm By-law and proposed revisions to Schedule J of the User Fees By-law are being recommended to address repeat offenders, recover response costs, and encourage property owner compliance.

2. Background

In past years, there has been occasion to consider imposing fees for second or subsequent false alarm responses, but this was never implemented—primarily due to the lack of a formal response policy and the ambiguity of the User Fees By-law.

In 2024, the Temagami Fire Department responded to multiple false alarms at a single property. In the opinion of department members, the property owner demonstrated an attitude of indifference by failing to take corrective action, despite repeated occurrences.

The current User Fees By-law No. 24-1760, Schedule J – Fire Department Fees, contains only one category for false alarm response – “malicious,” which is difficult to prove and therefore difficult to enforce. Additional categories are present but do not address escalating violations.

| Services Offered | 2024 Approved fees |
|---|--------------------|
| False alarm response – <i>malicious</i> | \$559.86 |
| False alarm response – <i>malicious</i> , ½ hr+ | \$279.93 |
| False alarm notification failure | \$615.00 |
| False alarm response – <i>accidental</i> | \$430.00 |

3. Analysis

To address the issue of repeated false alarms, the Fire Department proposes the following escalating fee structure within a calendar year:

- First Response: Written warning issued.
- Second Response: \$600 response fee imposed.
- Third and Subsequent Responses: \$1,200 response fee per incident.

This structure is intended to:

- Establish a clear, enforceable framework.
- Provide financial deterrents to non-compliance.
- Encourage property owners to repair faulty systems or mitigate procedural errors.
- Offset the costs associated with repeated emergency responses.

The proposed approach supplements the existing categories in Schedule J and provides a policy foundation for enforcement through the development of a False Alarm By-law.

4. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial costs associated with the implementation of this by-law. Adoption of the escalating fee structure may result in minor revenue generation to help offset operational response costs. More importantly, it is expected to reduce unnecessary callouts by encouraging preventive action from property owners.

5. Conclusion

The absence of a formal False Alarm By-law has left enforcement inconsistent and cost recovery limited. The proposed by-law and fee structure will enable the Municipality to act on repeated false alarm calls in a transparent, fair, and accountable manner, while supporting the operational integrity of the Temagami Fire Department.