

CITY COUNCIL REPORT



Meeting Date: August 24, 2026
General Plan Element: ***Public Services & Facilities***
General Plan Goal: ***Provide a safe environment for all citizens, visitors and private interests***

ACTION

Adopt Ordinance No. 4720, repealing and replacing Section 18-172 of the Scottsdale Revised Code relating to the failure of a designated vacation rental or short-term rental emergency contact to respond to an emergency or a complaint

BACKGROUND

The Scottsdale Police Department handles many complaints and emergencies involving vacation and short-term rentals.

A.R.S. § 9-500.39 limits municipal regulation of vacation and short-term rentals. However, A.R.S. § 9-500.39 expressly requires the “owner of a vacation rental or short-term rental to provide the City”“with emergency contact information for the owner or the owner's designee who is responsible for responding to **complaints** or emergencies in a timely manner....” (emphasis added).

The current version of S.R.C. Section 18-172 only addresses responses to emergencies by the owner or the owner’s designee. The proposed ordinance expands the scope of the City’s ordinance to include not only emergencies but also responses to complaints by the owner or the owner’s designees.

If the proposed ordinance is adopted, the City will have an additional tool for the City to use in handling complaints against vacation and short-term rentals.

ANALYSIS & ASSESSMENT

Ordinance No. 4720 repeals Section 18-172 in its entirety and replaces it with a new section titled “Failure to respond to an emergency or complaint; penalties.”

The proposed ordinance requires designated vacation-rental and short-term-rental emergency contacts to be reachable 24 hours a day, seven days a week by telephone or email to address rental-related complaints and emergencies, while retaining the existing requirement that the

contact respond in person within one hour when public-safety personnel request a response during an emergency. It adds a definition of “complaint,” creates minimum \$500 civil penalties for an emergency contact’s unavailability and for an owner who intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly allows that noncompliance, and retains the current penalties for failure to respond in person. The ordinance also authorizes an additional civil penalty of up to \$1,000 for each 30-day period during which an owner fails to provide the required emergency-contact information after notice, consistent with A.R.S. § 9-500.39(B)(4).

The availability requirement in the replacement section is limited to the means of response expressly identified in A.R.S. § 9-500.39(B)(4), telephone or email at any time of day, and the requirement to respond in person continues to apply only when required by public safety personnel in the event of an emergency. The complaint-related duty added by the ordinance is a duty of availability by telephone or email; it does not necessarily require an in-person response to a complaint

The City Attorney’s Office worked with the Police Department to craft the ordinance and also reviewed it with City staff involved with STR issues.

RESOURCE IMPACTS

None. Existing staff will continue to administer and enforce the ordinance.

OPTIONS & STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Recommended Approach: Adopt Ordinance No. 4720, repealing and replacing Section 18-172 of the Scottsdale Revised Code relating to the failure of a designated vacation rental or short-term rental emergency contact to respond to an emergency or a complaint.

RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT(S)

City Attorney, Police Department

STAFF CONTACTS (S)

Luis Santaella, City Attorney, lsantaella@scottsdaleaz.gov

APPROVED BY



Luis E. Santaella, City Attorney



Date

(480) 312-2405, lsantaella@scottsdaleaz.gov

ATTACHMENTS

1. Ordinance No. 4720

ORDINANCE NO. 4720

AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SCOTTSDALE,
MARICOPA COUNTY, ARIZONA, REPEALING AND REPLACING SECTION
18-172 OF THE SCOTTSDALE REVISED CODE

BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the City of Scottsdale as follows:

Section 1. Section 18-172 of the Scottsdale Revised Code is repealed and replaced as follows:

Sec. 18-172. - Failure to respond to an emergency or complaint; penalties.

(a) Twenty-four (24) hour availability required. Before offering a vacation rental or short-term rental for rent, and continuously while an active license under this article is in effect, the emergency contact identified pursuant to section 18-154 shall be reachable twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week, by telephone or by email, for the purpose of responding to complaints and emergencies related to the vacation rental or short-term rental.

(b) In the event of an emergency, any person designated as an emergency contact pursuant to section 18-154, upon the request of public safety personnel, shall respond in person within one (1) hour to the physical location of the vacation rental or short-term rental for which they are a designated emergency contact.

(c) For the purpose of this section:

(1) "Complaint" means any incident where a vacation rental or short-term rental is being operated unlawfully, including by the occupants or a report made to the city alleging a crime, disturbance, loud noise, or any other type of activity that is discomforting or offensive, or detrimental to the life, health, or safety of individuals or the public.

(2) "In the event of an emergency" means any time police, fire, or other public safety personnel respond to a vacation rental or short-term rental for a call for service, including responding to a nuisance party or unlawful gathering.

(d) It shall be a civil offense punished by a minimum fine of five hundred dollars (\$500.00) for any person designated as an emergency contact for failing to be reachable twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week, by telephone or by email, for the purpose of responding to complaints and emergencies related to the vacation rental or short-term rental for which they are a designated emergency contact.

(e) It shall be a civil offense for the owner of a vacation rental or short-term rental to intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly have the owner's emergency contact fail to comply with the requirements of subsection (A). A violation of this subsection shall be punished by a minimum fine of five hundred dollars (\$500.00). Evidence such as failure of an owner to keep contact information current may be considered when determining whether the owner acted intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly.

(f) It shall be a civil offense for any person designated as an emergency contact upon request by public safety personnel pursuant to subsection (b) of this section to either fail to respond to the physical location of the vacation rental or short-term rental for which they are a designated emergency contact or fail to arrive within one (1) hour to the physical location of the vacation rental or short-term rental for which they are a designated emergency contact. Failure to respond shall be punished by a minimum fine of five hundred dollars (\$500.00), and failure to arrive within one (1) hour shall be punished by a minimum fine of two hundred fifty dollars (\$250.00).

(g) It shall be a civil offense for the owner of a vacation rental or short-term rental to intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly have the owner's emergency contact fail to comply with the requirements of subsection (b). A violation of this subsection shall be punished by a minimum fine of five hundred dollars (\$500.00). Evidence, such as the failure of an owner to keep contact information current, may be considered when determining whether the owner acted intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly.

(h) In addition to any other penalty imposed pursuant to this section, the city may impose a civil penalty of up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000) against the owner for every thirty days the owner fails to provide emergency contact information as prescribed by this article. The city shall provide thirty days' notice to the owner before imposing the civil penalty imposed by this subsection.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Council of the City of Scottsdale this ____ day of _____ 2026.

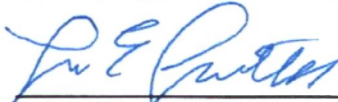
ATTEST:

CITY OF SCOTTSDALE, an
Arizona municipal corporation

Ben Lane, City Clerk

Lisa Borowsky, Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



Luis E. Santaella, City Attorney

CITY COUNCIL MEETING | ITEM 27 | AUGUST 24, 2026

Ordinance No. 4720

Repealing & Replacing SRC § 18-172 — Vacation Rental and Short-Term
Rental Emergency Contact Response to Emergencies and Complaints

Recommended Action: Adopt Ordinance No. 4720

Responsible Departments: City Attorney, Police Department

Staff Contact: Luis Santaella, City Attorney • (480) 312-2405 • lsantaella@scottsdaleaz.gov

Background & Legal Basis

Why the City is updating Section 18-172

THE GAP IN CURRENT CODE

- The Scottsdale Police Department fields frequent complaints and emergencies tied to vacation and short-term rentals.
- The current version of SRC § 18-172 only requires the emergency contact to be available to respond to emergencies — not to complaints.
- That gap leaves the City without a direct enforcement tool when a designated contact ignores a complaint that never rises to an in-person emergency response.
- Ordinance No. 4720 closes that gap by extending the same 24/7 duty to complaints, not just emergencies.

THE STATE LAW REQUIREMENT

A.R.S. § 9-500.39 limits how cities can regulate vacation and short-term rentals, but it **expressly requires** owners to give the City emergency contact information for a designee who is *"responsible for responding to complaints or emergencies in a timely manner."*

Result: Ordinance No. 4720 aligns City code with state law by expanding the emergency-contact duty to cover complaints, giving the City an additional enforcement tool against problem rentals.

What Ordinance No. 4720 Does

Section 18-172 is repealed in its entirety and replaced with the following framework

01

24/7 Availability

Emergency contacts must be reachable by phone or email around the clock — before the rental is offered, and continuously while the license is active — to address both complaints and emergencies. (Subsection a)

02

In-Person Response Retained

When public safety personnel request it during an emergency, the contact must still respond in person to the property within one hour. This existing duty is unchanged. (Subsection b)

03

New Definition: "Complaint"

Any incident of unlawful operation, or a report to the City alleging a crime, disturbance, loud noise, or other activity that is offensive or detrimental to health or safety. (Subsection c(1))

04

Definition: "Emergency"

Any time police, fire, or other public safety personnel respond to the rental for a call for service — including a nuisance party or unlawful gathering. (Subsection c(2))

Civil Penalty Structure

Minimum fines are unchanged for in-person response failures; new minimums apply to the expanded complaint duty

Violation	Responsible Party	Penalty	Code Ref.
Contact not reachable 24/7 by phone or email	Emergency contact	\$500 minimum	(d)
Owner intentionally/knowingly/recklessly allows 24/7 non-compliance	Owner	\$500 minimum	(e)
Fails to respond in person to emergency location	Emergency contact	\$500 minimum	(f)
Fails to arrive within one hour of request	Emergency contact	\$250 minimum	(f)
Owner intentionally/knowingly/recklessly allows in-person non-compliance	Owner	\$500 minimum	(g)
Fails to provide/maintain emergency contact info after 30-day notice	Owner	Up to \$1,000 per 30-day period	(h)

Resource Impact & Recommendation

RESOURCE IMPACT

None.

Existing staff will continue to administer and enforce the ordinance — no new positions, funding, or equipment required.

RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENTS

- City Attorney's Office
- Scottsdale Police Department

The City Attorney's Office drafted the ordinance with the Police Department and reviewed it with City staff involved in short-term rental issues.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Adopt Ordinance No. 4720

Repealing and replacing Section 18-172 of the Scottsdale Revised Code relating to the failure of a designated vacation rental or short-term rental emergency contact to respond to an emergency or a complaint.

MEETING DATE

August 24, 2026

STAFF CONTACT

Luis Santaella
City Attorney

(480) 312-2405 • lsantaella@scottsdaleaz.gov

Concerns Regarding Proposed Ordinance 4720

Dear City Attorney Santaella:

I am writing to express my concern about the proposed changes to Scottsdale Revised Code §18-172 in Ordinance 4720. The proposed ordinance creates a special regulatory burden on property owners simply because their homes are being operated as short-term rentals. It would require a designated emergency contact to available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and imposes civil penalties for failing to be reachable, while also expanding the definition of a "complaint" to include reports of loud noise or activity that is "discomforting or offensive." These terms are not objectively defined in the proposed ordinance.

This raises an important question: If the same noise, gathering, or activity occurring at an owner-occupied home would be addressed under Scottsdale's ordinary noise and nuisance ordinances, why should a short-term-rental owner be subject to additional obligations and penalties for the same conduct simply because the property is being rented? Scottsdale already has ordinances addressing excessive noise and nuisance activity that apply to residential properties generally.

Arizona's STR statute uses the concept of a "verified violation" in its enforcement provisions. A.R.S. § 9-500.39(L)(5) provides:

"Verified violation means a finding of guilt or civil responsibility for violating any state law or local ordinance relating to a purpose prescribed in subsection B, D, F or K of this section that has been finally adjudicated."

Ordinance 4720's new §18-172, however, defines a "complaint" as a report to the City alleging certain conduct, without requiring that the alleged conduct first be established as a violation. This raises an important question: Why should an unverified complaint or allegation trigger additional obligations and potential penalties for an STR owner or emergency contact when Arizona law uses the substantially more rigorous standard of a "verified violation"?

I also have concerns about the proposed requirement that an emergency contact respond in person within one hour when requested by public safety personnel, particularly when the ordinance imposes significant penalties for failure to respond or arrive within that time. The proposed ordinance should clearly distinguish between a genuine emergency requiring an immediate response and an unverified complaint or allegation.

I respectfully ask the City Attorney's Office to explain how these additional requirements are consistent with Arizona law governing the regulation of short-term rentals, particularly the requirement that noise and nuisance regulations be applied in the same manner as they are to comparable residential properties. I also believe the City should provide clear, objective standards for what constitutes a "loud" or "offensive" activity before imposing penalties based on such complaints.

I hope the Council will carefully consider these concerns before adopting Ordinance 4720.

Sincerely,

Susan Wood

Lane, Benjamin

From: Linda Rizzo <lrizzomail@aol.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 23, 2026 11:13 AM
To: Santaella, Luis
Cc: City Council
Subject: New STR Ordinance, Item # 27, 08242026 City Council Regular Meeting

External Email: Please use caution if opening links or attachments!

It looks like 90% of STR owners will be punished for the 10% who account for the vast majority of trouble.

Since these trouble spots are known, why not crack down on the multi-offenders and leave the law abiding STR owners in peace? (On the off chance their contacts fail to respond, must they be fined for a first offence?) Why not assess fines against owners who fail to file the numerous applications and proofs, not to mention the \$250 annual fee to the City?

Since I did not see the new Ordinance 4270, but only the Council Report, I am also left wondering exactly how a "complaint" is defined. Will you please furnish the exact old and new ordinance language and not just a narrative?

I don't have a horse in this race, I don't own an STR. I am sort of curious why this is being done in such a lop-sided manner and if it is purely a political move prior to the election.

Please see query results below:

I queried Google AI:

In the last year, how many times has the Scottsdale police or fire departments been called to an STR?

Scottsdale police responded to hundreds of calls tied to short-term rentals (STRs) over the past year, including 239 calls during the first three months of 2026 alone. [1]

Recent Call Statistics

- **January – March 2026:** Officers answered **239** total calls for service at short-term rental properties, with about 31% classified as nuisance complaints. [1]
- **May 2026:** Police responded to **48** explicit nuisance-related calls (such as loud parties), in addition to welfare checks and criminal investigations at STRs. [1]

The city does not track a single cumulative annual total for every single police or fire department dispatch to an STR, but enforcement data shows regular monthly interventions and hundreds of service calls per quarter.

*Then I asked how many times **called to the same STR***

Public records for the City of Scottsdale do not publish a specific number of emergency or nuisance calls made to an individual, specific short-term rental (STR) address.

Citywide STR Call Statistics

While exact repeat counts for a single property are kept in internal police logs or specific code enforcement files, the city tracks overall short-term rental incidents publicly through the Scottsdale Short-Term Rental Resource Center: [1]

- **First Quarter 2026:** Scottsdale Police responded to 239 calls for service at short-term rental locations.
- **Monthly Nuisance Data:** Police logged 48 nuisance-related calls in May and 77 nuisance calls in June.
- **Problem Properties:** City officials estimate that **roughly 10% of local STR owners account for the vast majority of repeat nuisance complaints and enforcement actions.** [1, 2, 3] *(My emphasis)*

best,
Linda Rizzo
Scottsdale, AZ
480 766 6606