



InfoLink

Information for Public Safety False Alarm Reduction Professionals

FARA InfoLink October, 2012

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FARA SYMPOSIUM 2013

FALSE ALARM REDUCTION ASSOCIATION

WAITING FOR YOU! ORLANDO, FL

APRIL 22-26, 2013

The Doubletree Orlando Resort at Universal

- Knowledgeable instructors
- Answers to all your questions
- Networking opportunity with peers from USA and Canada
- Sessions on:
 - You can use social media to your advantage
 - Crime prevention through environmental design
 - Ordinance & policy tune-up
 - How alarms should work
 - Building partnerships between alarm companies & public safety
 - Fire user education
 - Southeast Electronic Security Trade Show
 - What FARA has to offer may surprise you!

For more details and to download your registration please go online to:
<http://faraonline.org/members-2/symposium>



Training Materials Highlight—How to Create Regional Meetings

By Shellie Reid, Loudoun County (VA) Sheriff's Office, T & C Committee Reporter

When faced with a problem, I sometimes forget to utilize resources that are at my fingertips. I hope that I am not alone in this. The Training & Certification Committee thinks that the problem is common enough that it is worth highlighting materials that are ready and waiting on the website to help you. This month, the committee wants to highlight the "How to Create Regional Meetings" webinar. Even though I participated in the creation of this training, I have failed to utilize this resource when planning Mid-Atlantic Chapter meetings. My life would have been so much easier if I had gone to this resource for reference.

Sherry Couey, the Alarm Coordinator of the Fayetteville Police Department in North Carolina, recently gave the following feedback on this training:

"Last year, I was fortunate enough to act as a presenter for the webinar titled "How to Create Regional Meetings." Now I am taking that experience and putting it into action. One of my goals is to form a group located in my home state of NC. Working with Dee Dee Smith, Alarm Coordinator from the City of Raleigh NC, we both placed phone calls and sent emails to various alarm coordinators in our areas. The idea was to have an initial gathering of local coordinators at a public meeting of the NC Alarm Licensing Board, with the group having lunch afterwards at a nearby restaurant. As a result of a visit to a previous meeting of the NC Alarm Licensing Board, both Dee Dee and I were invited to participate in a False Alarm Reduction and Enhanced Call Verification committee along with members of the NCEA and Board President. Also invited was Sue Smelter, Alarm Coordinator from the City of Greenville, NC and fellow FARA member. While organizing a local group continues to be an ongoing project, my participation on the Regional Meetings webinar has laid the groundwork to what I think will be a great success."

If you are interested in creating regional meetings in your area, you can find this resource on FARA's website on the "Info for Members" tab under the link for "Training Materials". The Training & Certification Committee would love to hear if you have used this resource and how the resultant meeting went.

News from the Membership Committee

By: Emily Pleasance, Membership Committee Chair

FARA – InfoLink – October 2012 News from the Membership Committee

Reminder!!! Don't forget to Renew!!!

Benefits of a FARA Membership!!

- ✓ InfoLink that keeps you informed of new information



- ✓ Website filled with access to resources and information to assist in running a highly successful False Alarm Reduction Unit



- ✓ Become a Certified Alarm Manager: this program provides tools to demonstrate your professionalism and knowledge of alarm management.



- ✓ Public Safety and Alarm Industry personnel sharing tips and information on successful false alarm reduction programs



- ✓ Access to Bulletins ready for distribution! Don't reinvent the wheel!



Contact FARA or reach out to the Membership Committee TODAY!!

Email: info@faraonline.org

Website: <http://www.faraonline.org>

CAM Spotlight - Leticia Salamanca, Montgomery County (MD) Police Department

By Shellie Reid, Loudoun County (VA) Sheriff's Office, T & C Committee Member

The Training & Certification Committee continues their efforts to encourage members to take the certification exam to become a Certified Alarm Manager. The CAM spotlight is a fun way for members to meet others working in a similar position while learning a bit about the exam too.

Last month, we turned the spotlight on Norma Beaubien, this month we are staying in Montgomery County, MD, to interview Leticia Salamanca. Letty took the certification exam after being in her position just over 6 months. This is a testament to her drive, but also to the support (and maybe a push) given by her supervisor. I am sure that Montgomery County's program will continue to thrive and be a leader in the false alarm reduction efforts with energetic new employees like Letty.



Current Position

Program Specialist II for Montgomery County Police Department, Maryland

Hobbies or Interests

Listening to music, knitting, baking and cake decorating, swimming, and dancing

How long have you been a member of FARA and do you participate in any FARA committees or activities?

11 months as individual member. I am part of the Conference Committee for Orlando 2013

When you did you first obtain your certification?

May 2012

How long had you worked in an alarm unit/the industry before taking the exam?

7 months

What made you decide to take the exam?

I wanted to grow professionally and to expand my knowledge about FAR (false alarm reduction)

Did you receive any response from employers, alarm industry, family, or members of the community about your achievement?

I was congratulated by my employers, co-workers, friends, family and Facebook friends.

Do you think accomplishing your certification has benefited your career or position as an alarm manager/coordinator?

Yes, it made me more prepared professionally. The more credentials, the better prepared you are.

Has it made a difference in what you do or how you do things?

Yes, all the studying made me more knowledgeable. It is so much easier to understand users, help them, and give them suggestions.

Do you think others could benefit from achieving their Certification status?

Yes, of course! If they start thinking on a long run terms, by reading and studying all the material, you can have answers to just about every false alarm question or situation presented to you on a daily basis.

Where is your certificate now?

A copy is displayed in my office at home for everyone who comes in my home to see and the original copy is in my office at the MCPD.

I hope that you enjoyed learning a bit about Letty. She is truly a wonderful person and I hope that you have a chance to meet her in person at the Symposium in Orlando.



FARA Website Committee Now Hiring

Job Title:	Committee Member	Job Category:	Volunteer
Department/Group:	Website Committee	Job Code/ Req#:	WEBCOM
Location:	Telework	Travel Required:	No
Level/Salary Range:	Immense satisfaction	Position Type:	Job Share
HR Contact:	Shellie Reid, Committee Chair	Date posted:	October 15, 2012
Will Train Applicant(s):	Yes	Posting Expires:	Open until filled
Internal posting URL:	www.faraonline.org		
Applications Accepted By:			
Phone or E-mail: (703) 737-8348 or Shellie.reid@loudoun.gov Subject Line: Website Committee Attention: Committee Chair			
Job Description			
Job Purpose: Maintain and improve FARA website www.faraonline.org			
Duties:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accomplishes website maintenance objectives by reviewing pages, checking links, and assisting in updates. • Achieves operational objectives by contributing information and recommendations to strategic plans and reviews; resolving problems; identifying trends; determining system improvements; implementing change. • Meets financial objectives by considering future requirements or upgrades. • Updates job knowledge by participating in educational opportunities. 			
Skills/Qualifications:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to internet • Interest in sharing skills • Able to work in a team setting • Willing to learn new things • Willing to share pertinent knowledge 			

Website Committee Bits

By Shellie Reid, Committee Chair

I am sure that you have seen the "job posting" elsewhere in the newsletter for new website committee members. Although, it is a bit tongue in cheek, we really are looking for a few interested people to join the committee. The best part is that unlike other committees, we will no longer be having monthly teleconferences. The website is up and running and we just need to maintain it. Most of our business will be conducted by email as the need arises. If you have some skills in website maintenance, are willing to learn new things, or just want to assist by occasionally checking to make sure links are working properly, we would love for you to join us!

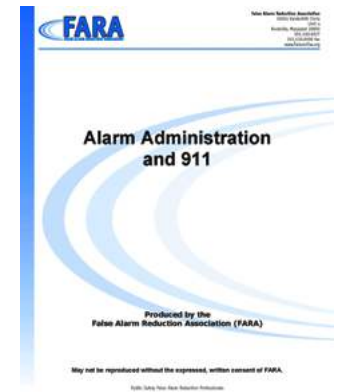
Featured Resource – Alarm Administration and 911

By Brad Shipp, FARA

This manual is designed to provide guidance on issues that arise due to alarm requests for dispatch for 911 center personnel, first responders, and false alarm reduction units. Recommendations are made for how to handle alarm calls for service, along with why those recommendations are made and how they assist false alarm reduction units better enforce ordinances and reduce false alarms..

Includes items for consumers to be on the lookout for and steps they can take to avoid being scammed.

The full list of FARA other presentations and publications can be accessed on our [web site](#). Copies can be downloaded from the member's only site.



FARA's Believe it or Not

By: Brad Shipp, FARA

- **CT: Burning Biscuits Trigger Evacuation At Bradley**
10.10.12 - Hartford Courant - Windsor Locks, CT - Flashing lights, a siren-like alarm and a recorded warning to evacuate the ... Airport staff quickly learned that the alarm was triggered by some smoke from ... [More Info](#)

Do you have any stories you would like to share about stupid criminals or strange, unusual, or funny reasons for false alarms? How about outlandish things that happen in the course of your usual work day? I know we all have them, so let's share and give everyone a chuckle! Please forward your stories to lespinosa@beavertonoregon.gov and we'll put them in the next InfoLink for all to share!

Joke of the Month

Do you have any great jokes to share? Please send them to lespinosa@beavertonoregon.gov

A Bridge to FARA

10.1.12- [Security Sales & Integration](#) – [More Info](#)

Making up what it lacks in fanfare with tireless dedication, the False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA) and its government/public safety agency members pursue knowledge, legislation and partnerships central to the cause. SSI meets with FARA presidents, past and present, and two other board members to discuss the state of false alarm reduction and relationships among responders and security providers.

The responding law enforcement community resoundingly values and seeks to strengthen partnering with the security alarm industry for the betterment of public safety. This was proven by SSI's landmark [2011 Law Enforcement Security Industry Study](#) of 1,300+ respondents when some 94% commended the industry for providing useful crime deterrents. And the feeling's mutual as the research also showed that 98% of security companies place importance on relationships with law enforcement.



Those findings are particularly gratifying for members of the [False Alarm Reduction Association \(FARA\)](#), which since 1997 has been one of the leading organizations responsible for uniting responding agencies, security firms and end users to effectively manage and maximize the effectiveness of alarm systems. FARA is primarily comprised of persons employed by government and public safety agencies in charge of working in false alarm reduction units. Its newsletters, conferences and education serves hundreds of North American members for the exchange of information, influencing legislation and establishing relationships with others interested in false alarm reduction.

The association's top three objectives are: 1) provide a forum for local government alarm ordinance managers to exchange information on successful false alarm reduction programs; 2) serve as a clearinghouse for agencies seeking to reduce false alarms; and 3) foster an environment of cooperation among public safety, the alarm industry and the alarm user. FARA is also a founding partner with SSI and the [Security Industry Alarm Coalition \(SIAC\)](#) in the [Police Dispatch Quality \(PDQ\) program](#).

Despite its important purpose, dedicated participants and meaningful work it does, FARA's limited funds and unglamorous, utilitarian nature have resulted in a relatively low profile. To lend the organization and especially its message more of the attention and credit it deserves, SSI interviewed four of the group's most prominent associates while taking part in this year's FARA Training Symposium in Albuquerque, N.M.

Addressing the alarm management issues were: [Debbie Hansen](#), false alarm reduction coordinator, Naperville (Ill.) Police Department; Amy Lowe, alarm coordinator, emergency communications center, Lynchburg, Va.; Gerry Miller, supervisor, alarm program communications center, Peel Regional Police, Brampton, Ontario, Canada; and [Kerri McDonald](#), alarm enforcement unit, Riverside (Calif.) Police Department. McDonald took over for Miller this year as the association's president, while Hansen and Lowe are also FARA board members.

Heartening as the recent research may be, reducing false alarms/dispatches and fortifying the alarm company-user-responder circle remains a crucial and ongoing mission. Read on to discover the key trends, technologies, challenges and opportunities affecting this sometimes delicate balance from the intimate vantage point of these highly engaged public servants.

Kerri, what initiatives are you looking at as FARA's new president?

Kerri McDonald: I've been involved in FARA for numerous years, most recently as chair of the Training Certification Committee. FARA is going to still be looking at false alarm reduction efforts, how we can contribute, what the association can do as a whole to look at new ways to reduce alarms, any new methods out there. That's always our main focus and main goal. Then to increase our membership, create awareness, build the partnership and relationships. And to keep that going with the alarm industry, the alarm user, software vendors, anyone and everyone with a vested interest in false alarm reduction. We're looking toward developing our false fire alarm reduction efforts — putting out publications, manuals and guides pertaining not just to burglary, which we already have, but also fire.

What is the value you get from belonging to FARA?

Amy Lowe: It's invaluable. I get the networking with people. Mainly, though, I get to discuss a lot of the issues I'm having because I am the only person who does the alarms where I am. I find out things others are doing that's working for them. I can then share that with upper command and tell them these are the things these jurisdictions are doing; can we try to implement this or can we try to do this? That one's really big for me. Then, of course, you gain friendships. You also learn about new agencies. I get to use all that to incorporate into my program.

Let's talk about some of the challenges with alarm management and permitting you face in your local jurisdictions.

Debbie Hansen: I am very fortunate that we've had an alarm ordinance [in Naperville, Ill.] since the 1980s. So when I took the job over six years ago, there were many things in place already that were helping to reduce false alarms. I was able to continue with those things that had been established. Then, of course, with what I've been learning through FARA we've changed our ordinance. We've updated it. We've changed our software, just different things to make it even a better a program, and see better results in reducing false alarms.

McDonald: Riverside [Calif.] has been pretty consistent over the years. I've been in the alarm unit for a little over 12 years now. We have seen some reduction. We had an ordinance revision in 2008. From that we saw around a 15% to 16% reduction in false alarms. Unfortunately, I haven't brought up the statistics yet this year, but we were happy with those results. Before the changes in our ordinance went into effect we were right around 10,000 alarm responses in one year. We had dropped down to a little over 8,000.

I have gone out to several association meetings in California, with the Inland Empire Alarm Association and the Orange County Alarm Association chapters of the California Alarm Association. I work with them, keep in continual contact. There are still some key players we need to bring in but as a whole we've established a good relationship. Anything that would arise in my city or any assistance they may need, we consult each other, ask each other questions and have really fostered a good relationship.

Lowe: For probably at least the last three years, our false alarms [in Lynchburg, Va.] have held about the same. I have anywhere from 200 to 230 as an estimate per month. They've held the same, but my permits have almost doubled. So you're talking about more users, more people who we have permits for, but we're still having about the same amount of false alarms. So really for us that's a reduction. I think we see that because we work so hard with the public, with the alarm user, and with the alarm industry. Instead of just sending out the paperwork and expecting them to respond, we actually try to build relationships with them so that they will be aware of it, so that we can work with them.

Gerry Miller: We all have the same issues but how we deal with them is totally different from Canada to the United States. In the U.S. they regulate the alarm industry. We do not do that in Canada. We just tell them how we will respond to the calls, get them to work with us, and reduce false alarms by working with them.

If you could pinpoint your top challenges regarding both alarm users and alarm companies, what would those be?

Lowe: Being able to find who you need to talk to sometimes, the responsible person. Even with alarm users, because you have people who own apartment complexes and maybe they've installed the system and now maybe they're not responsible for it. Once you rent to them you actually are responsible for it. It's not included in your rent, your fee. So sometimes that's a great challenge. Then also with the alarm companies is getting to the right person because sometimes you talk to someone who is just there, as actually a dispatcher they're there doing their job to dispatch those alarms. Or you deal with the monitoring center and it actually is from the alarm installer. It gets extremely frustrating, especially if the alarm owner's on the top 10 of your big offender list.

Hansen: The top challenges are educating the user on both sides. That's our biggest challenge and where we see the most false alarms, is in user error. It's getting that education to the actual user, whether it's a resident or it's that store manager who's hired a new night manager and forgets to educate that night manager on how to arm/disarm the system, etc.

Miller: I agree that there needs to be more training with the alarm user. They need to take responsibility for the alarm system. If the system is working properly and they're using it properly, false alarms would reduce even more. I think also the monitoring stations for the most part are aware when it's a false alarm, but because of liability issues they still have to dispatch police. That is unfortunate because if they could take a little more ownership to help us that would also help. What's your perception of the false alarm issue overall? It would appear things are working a little better but what's your take? How much traction toward improvement has truly been made?

McDonald: I think awareness is the most important issue. That awareness was brought up by the whole verified response issue because that made news. The awareness has benefited both sides because everyone has seen the need to form relationships and a cooperative effort to work with each other to reduce false alarms. I definitely think more can occur. Sometimes, on all sides — the industry, government, law enforcement — you still have players out there refusing to work with each other. But overall I think cooperation has increased. The issue is getting those numbers reduced and meeting in the middle to find a satisfying and happy medium.

False alarms are still going to occur because you have the human element, nature, any of those causes where it can happen. But we're aware of those causes and with the new technology coming out, like video becoming more affordable, we'll hopefully start to see an even greater drop in false alarms.

Miller: I think there are going to be more verified calls based on the technology that's becoming available. At some point there could be more nonresponse. I know some agencies are having problems with receiving [false alarm fine] payments so they're starting to suspend for payment. But I think it's the technology that's going to make a big difference in the reduction of false alarms. Even though the systems are increasing — our population increased 2.3% this year — our alarms did not go up. So there's something keeping it down, and I think it's really the technology and the hard work the industry is doing working with police.

Let's continue with that train of thought, how technology and/or certain practices are affecting the incidence of false alarms and dispatches.

Lowe: What we call two-call verification is huge. I've heard people mention this, but with me a lot of my calls are actually that they do have someone's cell phone number now. They are going to more using the cell phone than they are trying to call a home number first. They will call the person's cell, and then they actually have another person instead of just calling the premise and the home.

And we're starting to get some that have the video verification. I know in our public safety department a couple of years ago a few officers invited the people who owned the businesses in Lynchburg to come out and see what video security could do. You'll be able to see what's going on at your store or home. This allows getting into crime prevention or being able to actually make arrests because you are able to see the subject, or what's going on. With the way technology's



changing, I haven't seen much of a downside as it's actually enhancing and making things better for us.

Hansen: I am anxious to see how [video verification](#) develops and if our businesses and such start implementing this type of an alarm system. I think it's a good thing. I think we will catch more burglars that way and the police then too know exactly what they're going into. It's even better than an eyewitness who says they saw somebody break into the store, and then the alarm's activated and the police are coming. They still don't know exactly what they're coming into. With this video technology and them being able to E-mail our 911 dispatchers, they're going to be able to communicate to those officers. Also, if it is able to go to their laptops in their vehicles they will know exactly what they're walking into when they get there, as far as where that person might be in the building and such.

Miller: Technology, the way the alarm industry does business, has improved incredibly. When I first started we went to every single alarm. Now the monitoring stations are doing their best to filter the calls to try to make sure that we don't go to so many false alarms. The equipment is far superior to what it used to be. Monitoring station operators are trained much better than they used to be too. They work with police now. We used to have a separation at one time, but now we all work together to get the problem resolved. False alarms have been reduced a lot. Every single police department has seen a reduction in the past 10 years.

Technology is definitely allowing alarm systems to become more of a crime-prevention tool for police. I see it going further that way. I think police are going to use it more to assist them in crime prevention and apprehension. This is a good thing because it's going to protect our communities.

What pieces of advice can you offer security alarm companies for improving their relationships with responding agencies and putting forward a positive perception?

McDonald: One is they can join FARA. They would get to come and attend a symposium, see everyone they can meet, and network with. That would definitely show their commitment to false alarm reduction. If they're not able to participate on that level, then look at contacting your local police departments. Look at ways to work with them in setting up meetings for the community. It could be a joint effort where the police department and the alarm company, or an association if you have several companies, set up meetings and user training classes where the public can benefit. Each side would be able to benefit in that. If you're not able to attend something that's national, start it right in your own backyard. Contact your local police department, reach out to them, ask them what can be done, how they can help reduce false alarms. Talk to them about any sites they're particularly having problems with.

Hansen: Yes, contact the agencies where you currently do business and get yourself introduced so they know they have a contact. Then, say I have an issue with a resident where the alarm is going off frequently, then I have that contact to pick up the phone or E-mail and say, "I'm having trouble working with one of your customers; can you help me out?" Find out if there is an alarm reduction unit and usually you can find that out on the city's Web site. All our information is out there as far as what I do, our ordinances there and everything else.

Lowe: Just try Googling or going to a jurisdiction's Web site; if you type in "alarm unit," "alarm program," "alarm administrator/coordinator," usually you're going to get something. The first thing that pops up when you do mine, it comes up under my emergency services department and then there's my name and information. You can contact me. The biggest thing is with the technology we have today it's what I use to find alarm companies. They can use the same thing to find me. Again, being involved with their burg and fire associations is huge. Most states have one. Then there are things like SIAC [Security Industry Alarm Coalition], of course. There's a wealth. If you just go into Google and type "alarm," you get all kinds of stuff. That's a good place to start.

Alarm Coordinators Talk False Alarm Reduction Tactics

10.1.12- [Security Sales & Integration](#) – [More Info](#)

October's Alarm Response Issue of SECURITY SALES & INTEGRATION features my roundtable-style interview of four False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA) board members. They are: Debbie Hansen, false alarm reduction coordinator, Naperville (Ill.) Police Department; Amy Lowe, alarm coordinator - emergency communications center, Lynchburg, Va.; Gerry Miller, supervisor – alarm program communications center, Peel Regional Police, Brampton, Ontario, Canada; and Kerri McDonald, alarm enforcement unit, Riverside (Calif.) Police Department.



This post features bonus material in which they address topics such as the value of alarm systems, false alarm fines, the challenges of being an alarm coordinator and the impact of changing technology. I enjoyed my time with each of these women and admire them for their commitment to advancing public safety.

What's your own opinion of alarm and burglar security systems? Do they have a lot of value as a deterrent, as an apprehension element? What do you think?

Kerri McDonald: I think they can be a great tool if used correctly. It is a good deterrent just as much as locking your doors and windows can be, having a big dog in the yard. There are several types of things that can be utilized to keep your home or your business safe. I think that is one of them, and I do think it's a very important one.

What is the best way for an alarm company owner to reach out to law enforcement and build a relationship? Is it making a phone call? Is it just showing up in person? Is it E-mailing? What venue or forum do you think is the best approach?

McDonald: There are several different ways. I have formed great working relationships through attending the FARA Symposium; being involved with FARA. I have made countless contacts and been able to build relationships that I wouldn't have an opportunity to if I didn't attend. Then there have been times where it's like OK, who was the person on your paperwork or your contract? Can you fax me a copy of your contract or business card? Can you read that off and get that information from a customer? We'll go ahead and get that information from the customer and I'll call them up, whoever had done the installation or anything like that, and we'll have that information and develop the working relationship that way. I've pretty much experienced every different way and every way works.

What's the most rewarding or fulfilling part of your job?

Amy Lowe: Being able to aid in the public safety perspective of it, just being able to cut down on the false alarms, especially with officer complacency, and building relationships with the people I work with. I actually work at the 911 center and, of course, they're not always recognized as the first line of defense sometimes. But that's what they are, and I work daily with those people. They actually aid me in my job because if they don't do the things that are provided on the SOPs [standard operating procedures], and the directives for the alarms, then I wouldn't be able to run an efficient program that helps the police officers and the firemen.

Conversely, what might be the most frustrating aspect?

Lowe: Well there are a couple, but I guess the most frustrating is being told that they don't know about the program; that's huge in my jurisdiction. We do the very best we can. I do something called Safety Zone with the TV station. We do it about once every six months. I put it out in the newspaper and we put out news releases to the media. It's always frustrating to find that people have had alarm companies that for years, not even ones that are just coming to town, and they don't have any idea that there's an ordinance there because nobody took the time to find out. I wish it felt like it worked more two-way.

Regarding your jurisdiction's model alarm ordinance, are your fees and fines profitable? Do they cover costs? How does that work out?

Lowe: They do not, and I don't have my exact statistics in my head. It starts out where the first and second false alarms are free for residential and commercial. My residential and commercial burg and fire are all the same schedule fees by the way. We start out first and second free, and then we go to \$50. Then there's a \$25 increment for each alarm until \$200 and then any alarm after No. 11 is \$200. There is no way \$50 or \$200 is going to recoup the cost of us sending two police cars to a burg call. They each have two officers in them. You're talking about the man-hour time, the vehicle maintenance, all that. And then when you get into fire, I mean that's even more. We only may send one engine, but again you're sending an engine that has more than one or two people on it. It's a structure really designed to deter them.

For the bigger businesses and companies that have budgeted for fines and are repeat offenders, I actually make personal contact with them and talk to them about how we are not looking to bring in the money but rather want the false alarms to stop. Then if I work with them one-on-one, I can say on almost every instance they have joined in and we've teamed up and worked on it, and we've gotten the problem solved. Some of the biggest top offenders commercially, when I came into my position, are now not even on my list. They may have one or two. They may still have four or five, but they're not on my top offender list. So each year I look at that. I look at that to see who they are, and from there I try to make contact. It takes extra time, and I know people say they don't have it, but I think you really have to make the time when you're talking about not just trying to recoup money but actually reducing false alarms.

What would you say would be the most fulfilling or rewarding part of your job and also maybe the most frustrating?

Debbie Hansen: The most fulfilling I think is keeping our officers safe by reducing false alarms. The most frustrating is

probably having to take those calls from those homeowners and businesses that feel that responding to an alarm is part of the government's job, that they pay taxes and that this is just something that we should do, and they shouldn't be fined. I tend to get some pretty angry people on the phone, and that's probably the most frustrating. You have good days and bad days. Some days you just don't want to have to handle those calls, but they're there.

Do you find among your peers that there's a common challenge of needing to impart on supervisors or the higher levels of the agencies the importance of the role of the alarm coordinator or alarm reduction unit, and supporting that and dedicating some resources?

Hansen: Yes, I'm very fortunate in that my direct supervisor, my sergeant, is very supportive of false alarm reduction and my position. But beyond him it gets a little more difficult. And part of that too is that the economy has changed drastically and I think it's going to be tougher and tougher for public safety to be able to be trained out of state and things like that, because they're not putting it in the budget anymore. They don't have it.

Is there any way that folks in your type of position can prove the value that this has and how important it is?

Hansen: Yes, in Naperville [Ill.] the police department's annual report, I am asked for numbers: how much was charged in fees, what percent we reduced our false alarms from the previous year. The only thing I can't give them is that dispatch rate because I don't know how many total alarms are out there compared to how many we dispatch. But I can still show a reduction in a total number and I can show them the fees that were charged. Yes, it's revenue, so they like the revenue but we try not to concentrate too much on that because that's not really what we're looking for. We're not looking to charge people. We really are looking to get those false alarms reduced, and again it all has to do with that officer's safety. We've been very fortunate in Naperville. We've never lost an officer in responding to a false alarm call.

I imagine in Canada as in the U.S. there's a big trend away from landlines, and going to mobile devices as the principal phone numbers. Are you seeing that migration away from landlines? Is that creating a bit of a challenge in reaching people?

Gerry Miller: It's starting to happen. Over the past five years, we're seeing residences or owners are actually calling us advising that they're monitoring their own system. They're telling us what they see at their premise and we are responding to them. It's still considered an alarm call to us because they're just monitoring it themselves. We're also seeing the callback numbers for the residences and businesses are cellphones now more so than landlines. It's getting huge.

Could that exponentially increase the amount of calls if the vast majority of people have mobile devices they're using to actually look in and call on themselves if there's an incident?

Miller: Not necessarily because they can actually see what's happening at the premise so they know if there's somebody there that shouldn't be in there. I see that as maybe reducing false alarms, and it also allows the call to be upgraded into a priority. Now we wouldn't upgrade to priority because it's a certain type of system. We'd upgrade the priority based on the information provided. If there's video or audio, companies that have that, we wouldn't just automatically upgrade the priority. We have to have the information required to upgrade a priority to a location.

HST Brings the Hammer Down on False Alarms

10.1.12 - Security Sales & Integration – [read more](#)

HS Technology proves that implementing a successful false alarm management program does not require an especially large staff or internally generated monitoring services.

Too many installing security companies and monitoring providers resign themselves to merely accepting as fact that false alarms are a necessary evil that come with the territory. Even providers that are more conscientious commonly make the mistake of addressing false alarms as isolated incidents or as a problem separate and apart from other aspects of the business. A shining exception to such pitfalls is [HS Technology Group](#), whose comprehensive alarm management practices and procedures have been validated with the 7th annual Police Dispatch Quality (PDQ) Award.



"HS Technology Group has taken on the false dispatch issue as a company-wide effort. From sales and administration to the technical side of the company, they have confronted the issues with a 'we can fix it' approach," says [Ron Walters, director of the Security Industry Alarm Coalition \(SIAC\)](#). "It is obvious by HS Technology's realistic advertising literature, fully trained sales personnel, installation standards and monitoring company requirements that everything is geared toward proactive false alarm reduction through working closely with customers and law enforcement," adds Gerry Miller, a past president of the False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA).

Launched in 2005 by SIAC, FARA and SECURITY SALES & INTEGRATION, and now also officially endorsed by the Installation Quality (IQ) program, the PDQ program raises industry-wide awareness, motivates alarm companies to be proactive and provides workable models. The PDQ Award annually recognizes the security company that best demonstrates an enthusiastic, cooperative and successful effort in false alarm reduction strategies. Four judges grade applications that address 14 categories.

This year, HS Technology nudged out finalists Monitronics and Vector Security for the trophy, which was presented at the Electronic Security Expo (ESX) in Nashville, Tenn. In its winning 78-page submission, HS Technology listed a 2011 police dispatch rate of .18 within the Baltimore County area where it is based. That rate was verified in a letter of support from the manager of the false alarm reduction unit. The achievement was accomplished in collaboration with HS Technology's third-party wholesale monitoring provider, Lydia Security Monitoring (d.b.a. COPS Monitoring) of Williamstown, N.J. "There were two main reasons for initiating our false alarm reduction campaign," says [HS Technology President Stuart Forchheimer](#). "The first was our ongoing commitment to our customers. We're continually introducing new programs that add value to our services and contribute to the safety of the families we protect. The second reason was as treasurer for the Maryland Burglar and Fire Alarm Association and involvement with FARA's 'train the trainer' program, I felt a sense of responsibility and wanted to motivate other members to get involved. Minimizing false alarms is proven in helping law enforcement better address actual threats."

A journey inside HS Technology reveals how effectively managing alarms, minimizing false dispatches and partnering with law enforcement have become operational pillars at the core of the company's daily business activities. Plus, [Monitronics'](#) and [Vector's](#) programs are spotlighted. Together these methodologies offer other providers inspiration to produce similar results and successful tactics to emulate.

Homegrown Firm Hits Home Run

Having worked on and off for his father's general contracting company for more than 15 years, in 1993 Forchheimer leveraged his computer/IT experience and fascination for technology to form Homesafe Security Technology (HST). Since then, the firm has continuously reinvented itself from being one of the nation's leading authorized ADT dealers to its present status as an independent, diversified technology solutions provider with commercial, residential, new construction, electrical and design divisions.

"HST will be celebrating our 20th anniversary in 2013," notes Forchheimer. "From the beginning we have grown from a modest alarm company to one of the region's most respected and awarded full service technology integrators. Simply put, what truly makes us different is our people and how we go about assisting our clients day to day."

In addition to capturing the PDQ accolade, those facets of HST's business collectively garnered it finalist recognition for [SSI's 2012 Installer of the Year](#) in the small to midsize company category (fewer than 150 employees). Some of the virtues that make HS Technology unique include:

- Investing in efficiency technologies, making for a pleasant working environment and happier customers (e.g. Sagequest integration with Sedona Office to dispatch closest field tech and provide customer's history)
- Phones answered by live operator with minimal transfers
- Ongoing training for techs and other staff
- Flexibility to customize and integrate technologies quickly as they change
- Interactive showroom featuring products and services
- Product/services tested internally before deployment to ensure ease of use and identify potential future service calls
- Provide manufacturers product feedback to act as partner in development process
- Installers passionate about helping others, with minimum 10 years' industry experience
- Focus on solutions and thinking "outside the box" rather than selling a product
- Customers for Life preferred service loyalty plan
- In-house master electrician to handle electrical and generator division
- Associates motivated with internal events, as well as charitable initiatives
- Active with many industry groups

News on Door to Door Sales

Courtesy of NESAs

- **CA: Oakland: Police warn that door-to-door inquiries may be part of ...**
10.13.12 - San Jose Mercury News - San Jose, CA - The man inquired about how up to date the resident's alarm

system was, and ... Residents should not answer any questions about home alarm systems, and ... [More Info](#)

- **CT: Tell Mel: Automatic renewals not worth the gamble**
9.28.12 - The News-Press - Cromwell, CT - So his insurance company insisted Colby get an alarm system. He did, signing a three-year contract with Safe Home Security Inc., based in Cromwell, Conn. [More Info](#)
- **SC: Security System Deal Causing Alarm For Upstate Man**
9.27.12 - News Channel 7 - Greenville, SC - Security System Deal Causing Alarm For Upstate Man ... School officials say the fire alarm went off around 10 a.m. Thursday and two teachers rushed to the ... [More Info](#)
- **TX: Angie's List: Beware of Locksmith Scams**
10.4.12 - KSAT - San Antonio, TX - ... may offer much more expansive technologically advanced products such as closed-circuit TV monitoring systems, residential fire and burglary alarm systems, ... [More Info](#)
- **TX: City develops ban prohibiting some door-to-door sales**
9.30.12 - Kilgore News Herald - Kilgore, TX - Parking lot leafletting will fall under the ordinance, she said, but home alarm system salespeople will be, for the most part, exempt due to their successful ... [More Info](#)
- **UT: Vivint active on legal turf**
10.4.12 - Security Systems News - Provo, UT - Several new lawsuits involving Vivint are pending in federal court in Utah, two of them initiated by the company and one in which it's a defendant. Why did Vivint file the lawsuits? [More Info](#)
- **WA: Door-To-Door "GE Technicians" Scam**
10.13.12 - Seattle Central District News - Seattle, WA - I just had two males come to our front door, asking funny questions about our alarm system. (They saw the Monitronics sign posted in our front yard.) ... [More Info](#)
- **WI: Security firms settle with state**
9.28.12 - Milwaukee Journal Sentinel - Milwaukee, WI - Two alarm service companies, Vivint and Pinnacle, will change their business practices, pay fines and cancel more than \$1 million of customer debt as a ... [More Info](#)

Public Safety Updates

Courtesy of NESAs

- **FL: Titusville looks to stem false alarms**
9.26.12 - WFTV Orlando, - Titusville, FL - police say they are wasting time and resources responding to false alarms at homes and businesses. So the police chief wants to the City Council to ... [More Info](#)
- **GA: Council tables false alarm ordinance, discusses fire/EMS calls**
9.26.12 - NeighborNewspapers.com - Dunwoody, GA - "I'm glad to see the false alarm ordinance come back but with the modifications that the commercial alarm owner pays a \$25 annual fee and the residential ... [More Info](#)
- **GA: Council will not charge resident alarm fees**
10.2.12 - Dunwoody Crier - Dunwoody, GA - Residents with monitored burglar alarms are off the hook for alarm registration fees; Dunwoody businesses are not. Council agreed to remove a \$15 annual fee ... [More Info](#)
- **HI: Hawaii police seek to update alarm program**
10.9.12 - SecurityInfoWatch - Honolulu, HI -The Honolulu Police Department wants permission from the City Council to slap an interest charge on businesses and homeowners with security alarms ... [More Info](#)
- **PA: False alarms plaguing local departments**
10.3.12 - Daily Local News - West Chester, PA - October is False Alarm Awareness Month at the Tredyffrin Police Department (TPD), which answered over 560 false alarms this year through August. So far in ... [More Info](#)
- **TN: Due To Program Cuts Police Short When Traffic Issues Arise**
10.8.12 - WREG - Memphis, TN -... "A lot of times when you have power outages you have officers running to answer alarm calls all over the place. Then you have the criminal element that takes [More Info](#)
- **TX: Carrollton Alarm Ordinance**
9.24.12 - Effective October 1, 2012, the City of Carrollton will implement a new Alarm System Ordinance. Monitoring companies providing service to City of Carrollton (COC) residential and business customers will be required to provide the City detailed information about addition and termination of Carrollton customers. The new ordinance can be reviewed [here](#). Carrollton Alarm Website can be reached [here](#)
- **TX: Free pizza for properly functioning smoke alarms**
10.5.12 - Beaumont Enterprise - Beaumont, TX - Firefighters will deliver pizza to random homes in a fire truck. If the smoke alarms in the home are working, the pizza is free. If the smoke alarms are not working, ... [More Info](#)
- **WA: Clallam County sheriff forms burglary task force**
10.12.12 - Peninsula Daily - Port Angeles, WA - Good locks and a loud alarm, around 300 decibels, are the best way to ... Silent alarms are not as effective, since deputies often don't arrive until after the burglar ... [More Info](#)

Industry News

Courtesy of NESAs

- **NFPA creates new security controversy**
10.9.12 - Security Info Watch - Proposed revision of NFPA 730 as a code could have far reaching implications ... [More Info](#)
- **Virginia DCJS Regulation Revisions Proposed**
The purpose of this notice is to advise you of the publication of the Proposed Regulations Relating to Private Security Services by the Virginia Registrar. This document, as well as the Proposed Regulations Agency Background Document has been published in the Virginia Registrar Volume: 29 Issue: 2. [More Info](#)
- **Fire Side Chat: How NFPA Committees Get Technical About It**
10.1.12 - Security Sales & Integration - While NFPA 72 is the most widely referenced document for installing fire system contractors, the codes and standards it contains are a distillation from a host of other influential organizations and governing bodies. Being a true professional means understanding not just what these directives are but also the how and why. [More Info](#)
- **BBB Watch: Home security systems**
9.26.12 - Pittsburg Morning Sun - Know the ins and outs of your contract. If your alarm system will be monitored, either by your installing company or by a third-party monitoring center, find out the ... [More Info](#)
- **Alarm companies settle with Wisconsin following complaints**
10.1.12 – SecurityInfoWatch - Two alarm service companies, Vivint and Pinnacle, will change their business practices, pay fines and cancel more than \$1 million of customer debt as ... [More Info](#)
- **Convergence Channel: Managing the Impact of False Alarms**
10.2.12 - Security Sales & Integration - The “convergence” of newer technologies, new competitors and new customer preferences require business owners in the security industry to rethink their business strategies in the future. Learn how to save the environment, your business environment that is. [More Info](#)
- **Not all smoke detectors created equal**
10.3.12 - NBCNews.com - Reporter: we know of several cases where the smoke alarm , people say, just did not go ... it helps them escape better when the 10.3.12 smoke alarm eventually goes off. [More Info](#)
- **Inside the Tyco separation**
10.8.12 - Security Info Watch - Company executives discuss what the move means for Tyco, ADT moving... [More Info](#)
- **Video alarms deliver solid arrest rates**
10.13.12 - SecurityInfoWatch - Some 100 attendees, including central station companies, alarm dealers and integrators, manufacturers, law enforcement officials and the insurance industry ... [More Info](#)
- **Court Rules Fire District Must Exit Alarm Business Oct. 4; Why the ADT v. Lisle-Woodridge Battle Isn't Over Yet**
10.13.12 – SDM - After a federal court ruled in favor of ADT and other alarm companies against a fire protection district in Illinois attempting to create a fire alarm monitoring monopoly, that fire district was issued a deadline of Oct. 4 to exit the alarm monitoring business. [More Info](#)
- **AT&T Begins 'Text to 911' Testing In Tennessee**
10.8.12 - Security Sales & Integration - AT&T has begun working with public safety agencies in Tennessee to determine the best way to allow citizens to send SMS/text messages to 911 systems. AT&T will work with the Tennessee Emergency Communications Board (TECB) to provide a “text to 911” trial service that would allow AT&T wireless users to send text messages to Tennessee 911 call centers, which are known as public service answering points (PSAPs). [More Info](#)

Please Share Your Newsletters and Tips with Us

We would like to see how you communicate with your alarm users. Please add FARA to your mailing list if you send out Newsletters or mailings with false alarm reduction information. Do you have a brochure that describes your ordinance or program? We would like to see it. Staff will review what we receive and share tips and information with your fellow members in later issues of this newsletter.

Please send your newsletters, tips and brochures to:
False Alarm Reduction Association
10024 Vanderbilt Circle, Unit 4
Rockville, MD 20850
bradshipp@4yoursolution.com

FARA Mission Statement

It is the mission of the False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA) to provide a forum for local government alarm ordinance professionals to exchange information on successful false alarm reduction programs, to serve as a clearinghouse for agencies seeking to reduce false alarms, and to foster an environment of cooperation among public safety, the alarm industry and the alarm users.

Contact Us

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