



InfoLink

Information for Public Safety False Alarm Reduction Professionals

FARA InfoLink November 2017 Edition

- **FARA News**
 - FARA Symposium Hotel and Dates set for 2018
 - Thanks to Institute Sponsors!
- **General News**
 - Be Alert- State Law Changes Can Limit Your Options
 - Maryland FARA Members Faced ADT Bill
 - Lessons Learned From The Maryland Legislative Session
 - Why a Legal Challenge to Sandy Springs' (Ga.) Alarm Ordinance Is ...
 - Class action challenges false alarm ordinance
 - Richmond Alarm Company Obtains TMA Five Diamond Monitoring Center Designation
 - SmokeCloak Device Aims To Deter Crime
 - Why Does The Alarm Keep Going Off At Night At Folsom Lowe's?
 - DIY Entrant Konnected Converts Existing Alarm Panels Into Smart ...
 - Rajant Uses Drones to Reduce Response Time for Triggered Home Alarm System
 - FARA's Believe it or Not
 - Public Safety Updates
 - Industry News
 - Legislative News
- FARA Mission Statement
- Contact Us

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Be Alert- State Law Changes Can Limit Your Options

By Brad Shipp, FARA

Some in the alarm industry are advocating changes to state law to limit how local alarm ordinances can be enforced. Over the last several years changes to state law have been advocated by ADT, SIAC and other companies and associations. The changes are designed to prevent fining alarm companies, for failing to register and alarm, failing to give the alarm user info on registration requirements, for requesting a dispatch without a permit or fining the alarm company instead of the alarm user when an alarm occurs. Other changes would prevent regulation of wireless alarms.

Included in this issue of InfoLink are several articles on this issue.

- Maryland FARA Members Faced ADT Bill - covers how one member of a local FARA chapter viewed the process of dealing with proposed legislation last year.
- Lessons Learned From The Maryland Legislative Session – relays valuable tips of what you can do if similar legislation is proposed in your area.
- Why a Legal Challenge to Sandy Springs' (Ga.) Alarm Ordinance Is ... – gives you SIAC's view on why they are filing a lawsuit on this issue.

Also new in this issue, we have added a Legislative News section. We will report on laws introduced that might impact you.

How alarm companies are regulated is a hot topic that will probably come to a courthouse or statehouse near you. Do your homework so you will be ready when it does.

Maryland FARA Members Faced ADT Bill

By Alberto Hook, FARA Mid Atlantic Chapter

Problem Bills Introduced

Late in 2016, ADT introduced **Senate Bill 952 and House Bill 1271**: Business Regulation – Security Systems – Permitting and Registration. The purpose of this bill was to update regulations on low-voltage permitting, alarm user registration, and civil citations to the alarm companies in the State of Maryland. More specifically, ADT was seeking to implement the

following: 1) have the State develop a uniform basic permit for use regarding low-voltage permitting and wireless alarm systems, 2) remove the requirement to ensure registration of the alarm users, and 3) remove civil penalties associated with requesting dispatch for alarm users that are not registered in the County. Certain sections of the bill would eliminate alarm companies' responsibility to ensure their alarm users are registered. Other sections of the bill would remove public safety's ability to issue civil citations to alarm companies for requesting dispatch to unregistered alarm users. These were the sections of the bill that specifically impacted the operations of the False Alarm Reduction Section (FARS) of Montgomery County.

Impact Would Have Been Severe

Montgomery County alarm law requires all alarm companies to ensure that their alarm users are registered with the County. The inability to issue civil citations for failure to register their users would have taken away the one measure to ensure compliance by the alarm companies. For many alarm companies, the civil citation is severe enough to ensure compliance. If the legislation was successful, FARS would no longer have the ability to enforce these two critical areas of the alarm law and executive regulation. The requirement for the alarm companies to register their alarm users keeps the alarm company engaged and active in the process of keeping FARS informed of their business within the County. By removing the need to have the alarm company register their users, the bill would potentially reverse the alarm companies' conduct of business and interaction with the public. The alarm companies in Montgomery County are responsible for adding over 5,000 alarm users annually. This is the actual number of alarm users that FARS registers and does not encompass the alarm companies actual book of business.

Need To Stay Vigilant

The fact that this bill was discovered because a member of the False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA) happened to be looking at the bill from an electrical permit perspective is frightening. If the member had not read all of a long bill the impact on us might have been missed. The bill was distributed to all the FARA Mid-Atlantic Chapter members for review. We contacted the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo). MACo agreed with the position each of the counties took on this issue and assisted with navigating the opposition process through the House and Senate. We immediately took action making phone calls and setting up conference calls with all the parties impacted, as well as the proponent of the law. We were shocked to learn that the ADT representative was willing to participate in a conference call with us to discuss the purpose of their bill. When we had the conference call, our goal was simply to hear what she had to say and formulate a plan for a response. This was my first experience engaging in any sort of legislation, but I was extremely passionate about the content, as I knew this would have dire consequences to my program. The next step taken was to meet with the Chapter members and MACo to determine what and how each member would be presenting their opposition to the bill.

FARA Members Presented their Case

All counties agreed that the bill should be opposed, as written. Our relationship with Maryland Burglar and Fire Alarm Association (MDBFAA) assisted in getting their buy-in, as well. While MDBFAA did not go on record opposing the bill, the alarm association did not actively support it. Each county followed the steps, required by their legislative teams, to present their argument. Some counties had their legislative team write letters of opposition and some attended each session. I was one of the Chapter members that attended and testified at the House and Senate. The one thing that remained consistent in the House and Senate was that it was extremely difficult to read the members of the legislative committees. I was unable to determine how the information the proponent presented or what we provided was received by the legislators. This experience was both exciting and nerve wracking and it was extremely challenging for me, both, physically and emotionally. I felt as though I was in limbo.

Success in the End

We all work hard every day to ensure that we are fighting the good fight and moving our programs in the right direction. We work diligently to ensure that our programs have purpose and show success. This bill, as introduced, had the ability to cave in all our hard work. For several weeks, I sent our Chapter members emails and correspondence regarding the bill and whether a decision was reached. I believe that we, as a chapter, joined together and presented enough of an argument to get the House and Senate to understand our position and the value we added to our public safety areas. By doing this, we were successful in blocking the bill. At the end of last year both bills died in committee.

Our Work Is Not Done

The bill is being re-written and will be presented again. We were afforded the opportunity to review the amended bill. Montgomery County's position remains the same; we will oppose the bill.

Overall, this was a very positive experience. I felt a sense of accomplishment and I look forward to being involved in future legislation that impacts the false alarm law in Montgomery County. I would gladly be a resource for anyone in FARA that is going through a similar situation. We need to band together to ensure that the local government's ability to enforce laws is not taken away.

Lessons Learned From The Maryland Legislative Session

By: Meredith Wivell, Mid-Atlantic Chapter President

As many of you know, FARA was created and formed in partnership between public safety and industry members in Maryland. There were common goals that the group worked together on achieving as it was evident many years ago that false alarms were a problem for public safety. We also know that the issue remains problematic for many public safety agencies today.

This year in Maryland, we witnessed something that has been making waves throughout other parts of the country. ADT, one of the nation's leading alarm companies, in conjunction with a lobbyist group, are actively working on addressing their own issues with alarm ordinances that will ultimately impact the ability of local government to enforce such ordinances. These bills seem to come almost out of nowhere until it's too late.

With less than two week's notice, the proposed legislation had already had its first reading. The bill was aggressively introduced in both the house and the senate. Unfortunately, the manner in which the bill was written led to ambiguous interpretations of the language. The bill set out to accomplish many things to include the way that the wireless permits are regulated at the local level and the way that alarm programs will be able to be enforced.

Since there were many public safety agencies that would be impacted, I set out to notify each jurisdiction of the proposed legislation. We all gathered on a preliminary conference call that included many representatives from each agency that were able to join given short notice. We then partnered with the Maryland Association of Counties. Natasha Mehu was our right hand lady. She led discussions and sought to clarify things for all of the interested parties. Most importantly she worked hard and advocated for the collective group that would be negatively impacted by the proposed bills.

There were **many** conference calls that took place and there will probably be several more in the near future as it's unclear if further bills will be introduced the next session. Here is my advice to you coming as the chapter president of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of FARA.

- First, do some outreach. Know who your contacts are before there are potential issues. Our chapter has a matrix that includes the public safety agencies that currently have alarm programs. Periodically review them to ensure the information is correct.
- Second, figure out what levels of government will be impacted. In Maryland, we had both city and county agencies that would have been impacted. We have the MML (Maryland Municipal League) and MACo (Maryland Association of Counties). Partner with your resources as soon as you're able.
 - Determine if it's in the best interest to offer amendments versus to generally oppose the bill. Depending on the political climate, your legislative partner (MACo in our case) will help be able to guide your agency to determine what the appropriate action would be best for you.
 - In our case, we all opposed the bill even after amendments were offered by the lobbyist and sponsors of the bill.
- Thirdly, make sure that your group representatives have permission (usually via chain of command) before any comments are offered. Invite them to participate in teleconference discussions.
 - You can obtain a free conference call number with relative ease that will assist with scheduling such meetings.
- Explain what each agency needs to supply MACo (your lead contact at the legislative session.)
- Communicate, communicate, and communicate. Communicate with each other and keep each other updated as to where you are at. If possible, offer a sample letter from your agency regarding a position that your agency is taking (opposing, etc.) Make sure everyone is on the same page which sometimes can be challenging. A leader keeps things moving in the right direction and keeps everyone motivated.
- Offer written testimony and oral testimony only when you have supervisory approval. Be prepared to offer both as it offers a stronger case on your behalf.
 - Have your elected county officials give their peers on the committee a heads up that your Department has offered that written testimony.
 - If you happen to be a chapter board member, seek approval from the FARA International board to send testimony on behalf of FARA.

- If you are prepared to offer oral testimony, dress professionally and come prepared with high impact statements as you will only have a limited number of minutes to speak.
- Keep in mind that your legislators are hearing a number of proposed bills during this time and that also depending on where you fall on the docket, they really might not want you to take the whole time.
- Most definitely do NOT read your written testimony.
- Be prepared to sweat and be nervous too. Don't worry, it's normal. It shows you really care about the importance of which you will testify.
- Be prepared to speak with the opposing group to try to get them to understand where you are coming from. Sometimes, things can be compromised and sometimes they can't.
- Do your best. Represent your agency and/or FARA proudly.
- Let others in the international FARA group know what has happened or what has been proposed in your area. Chances are, that others may be able to help you.
- Lastly, look at your processes at your own local unit. Is there something that you can do to make it easier for partnerships to be facilitated with alarm industry?
 - Get out there to your local alarm association's meetings and talk to the people in industry.
 - We looked at our alarm registrations across the board here in Maryland to see if there were things that we could improve upon. Most agencies have online registration capabilities as that was something that was sought out after from the alarm companies.

Why a Legal Challenge to Sandy Springs' (Ga.) Alarm Ordinance Is ...

10.31.17 - Security Sales & Integration- Stan Martin (stan@siacinc.org), SIAC Executive Director

There is no lack of activity to report from the Security Industry Alarm Coalition (SIAC) and our work to positively impact false alarm dispatch reduction and alarm management at the local, state and national levels. None of SIAC'S current efforts are more pressing than in Sandy Springs, Ga. In July, the city passed an ordinance that requires alarm companies to bill, collect and foot the cost for alarm-user fines.

The new legislation took effect Sept. 1, and at press time the first invoices were to go out on or about Oct. 1. It is not clear if these invoices will be sent to the alarm company or to the central station.

In addition, Sandy Springs Police Chief Kenneth DeSimone is actively promoting "his" ordinance to Atlanta area police chiefs, as well as the Georgia State Associations of Chiefs of Police (SACOP) Alarm Committee. However, the SACOP alarm committee does support the alarm industry's position.

Halting Security Company Fines

The industry has identified a preferred legal counsel and is attempting to mount a campaign to fight the most onerous elements of the Sandy Springs ordinance. But the funding goal we need to meet is six figures — and the commitments are slow in coming. SIAC has agreed to be the collection point for these funds and to distribute the dollars to counsel. One-hundred percent of all funds will go directly to the effort with no administrative charges.

Adding to the uncertainty in Sandy Springs, there have been reports that if a security company fails to submit even one fine for one dispatch response, then all of the company's customers will be suspended. It is interesting that when Chief DeSimone was still communicating with the industry, he initially proposed accepting only dispatches to video surveillance and audio alarm systems. However, his rationale was if an alarm that receives higher dispatch priority turns out to be false, then he would charge the monitoring station criminally. Fortunately, we were able to have this ridiculous criminal element removed from the ordinance.

Based on our past efforts in California, we are confident that if we act quickly we can stop this burdensome requirement for collection of fines in Sandy Springs, and elsewhere. Similar issues are being addressed across the nation and the activity level is extremely high. Along with Sandy Springs, the following jurisdictions are also looking at amending their response positions: Memphis, Tenn., Prescott Valley, Ariz.; Kent, Wash.; and, Portland, Ore. In Colorado, officials in Aurora and Colorado Springs are also looking at amending their response positions. It is not clear to what degree this will be structured, but SIAC is in contact with both cities.

As a refresher, Aurora was the first city in Colorado that adopted a nonresponse position. Colorado Springs maintained its alarm response policy, but only if there were no other calls waiting dispatch. In related news, California joined Florida and Texas by passing statewide legislation prohibiting fining alarm companies for customer false alarms.

Credit goes out to ADT and the California Alarm Association (CAA) for getting this beneficial legislation passed. Kent passed an ordinance that highly limits daylight dispatches to intrusion alarms at commercial occupancies. Portland is revisiting a stricter response policy, although there are no details at this time. Historically, this issue comes up every few years there. Funding Needed to Wage Legal Battles

SIAC continues to make contacts daily with law enforcement officials across the nation. The single biggest issue is Sandy Springs. Litigation is always expensive and there is a shortage of funds. SIAC has agreed to be the collection point for this cause and we encourage all industry stakeholders to make donations.

The Georgia Electronic Life Safety & Systems Association (GELSSA) is coordinating activities and, again, 100% of all funds will be used for this legal battle. We need to support Georgia or this policy of fining companies will spread without question. Please consider donating by going to siacinc.org and click on the donate button. While on the SIAC website, sign up to receive SIAC news and updates daily via email, which will allow you to stay informed on pressing issues. There is no charge to sign up for this service. You will also have access to SIAC's blog, again at no cost.

[More Info](#)

Class action challenges false alarm ordinance

11.21.17 – Sentinel Record – Hot Springs, AR - By David Showers

Hot Springs is one of three cities named as a defendant in class action claims asserting fines authorized by false alarm ordinances violate property and due process rights granted by the state Constitution.

Newoods Inc., which does business at ABC Block & Brick, 907 Spring St., filed a lawsuit in Garland County Circuit Court last week seeking to invalidate the ordinance adopted by the Hot Springs Board of Directors in 2006. Newoods is also suing for a refund of all false alarm fines and fees the prospective class paid over the last three years, compensatory damages and attorney fees.

The company, which has 12 locations in Arkansas, filed the same claim against the cities of Little Rock and Fayetteville earlier this month. The complaint filed by attorney Chris Corbitt, who is listed as Newoods' vice president, said the ordinance imposes an undue burden on property owners, making them solely responsible for false alarms when installation and monitoring companies can also be the cause.

"Nationwide, the reliability rate is almost 6 percent," the filing said. "This means 94 percent or higher of all alarm signals are false alarms. The problem with alarm reliability and false alarms has persisted for decades." The complaint said the ordinance is vague, allowing the police department, in the absence of a clear standard enshrined in the city code, to determine whether an alarm is false. In addition to installation and monitoring companies, the complaint said false alarms can also be caused "by acts of God." "What's to say what a false alarm is?" Corbitt said last week. "Maybe a perpetrator came by and shook the door. Maybe a storm or faulty equipment caused it to go off."

A fine is levied after five false alarms, with property owners paying \$25 each for false alarms six through 10, \$50 each for false alarms 11 through 15 and \$100 for every one after that.

A spreadsheet the city compiled at the request of the lead plaintiff's attorneys, and that The Sentinel-Record obtained through an Arkansas Freedom of Information Act request, showed the city assessed 264 businesses, churches and residences false alarm fines totaling \$25,200 in 2014.

Billing records obtained by the newspaper showed

- Tractor Supply Co. at 2307 Albert Pike Road has been fined the most since 2015, with \$9,525 in fines levied for 129 false alarms through July 2017.
- CHI St. Vincent Hot Springs was fined \$1,275 for 24 false alarms at its 1 Mercy Lane facility last year.
- St. Mary's Catholic Church was fined \$375 for 15 false alarms in 2015 and \$575 for 17 false alarms last year.
- The KFC at 114 Airport Road was fined \$975 for 21 false alarms in 2015, and
- Las Americas Supermarket was fined \$875 for 20 false alarms last year.
- The city fined ABC Block \$125 for 10 false alarms from April to August of this year.

Corbitt said the city presumes an alarm is false if the subsequent response doesn't turn up an intruder, a standard he said other calls for service aren't held to. "Maybe the alarm did its job and scared them off, or they've left by the time the police get there," he said last week. "If someone sees an unusual guy creeping around their neighborhood, or something weird

going on, and they call the police, does that citizen get a fine or invoice in the mail if the cops show up and can't find anyone?"

Corbitt said he's using billing information obtained from the city to identify potential co-plaintiffs. [More Info](#)

Related Stories

- [AR: Brick business sues Little Rock over false-alarm fees - 11.6.17 - Arkansas Online](#)
- [AR: Suit calls LR rental checks unlawful- 11.24.17 - Arkansas Online](#)

Richmond Alarm Company Obtains TMA Five Diamond Monitoring Center Designation

11.14.17 - The Monitoring Association (TMA) - Vienna, VA

The Monitoring Association (TMA) is pleased to announce that Richmond Alarm Company - www.richmondalarm.com - Midlothian, VA has obtained the prestigious "TMA Five Diamond Monitoring Center" designation. Richmond Alarm Company is a long term member of FARA.

This designation is granted annually to monitoring centers that satisfy all of the requirements of the "five points of excellence":

- Commitment to ongoing job-related education and testing by having 100% of its monitoring center operators certified using the TMA online training series on industry best practices.
- Commitment to random inspections and quality criteria standards by a nationally recognized testing laboratory such as FM Approvals, Intertek/ ETL and UL.
- Commitment to raising the industry standards through TMA membership and participation in its activities.
- Commitment to reducing false dispatches.
- Commitment to the highest levels of customer service.

The TMA Five Diamond designation means, in particular, that a monitoring company has demonstrated an exceptionally high degree of responsibility to their local community and their customers through the investment of time, money and commitment to quality operator training. Operators serve as the life -saving link between residential or business properties and the police, fire and emergency services in local areas. The TMA Monitoring Center Operator course covers virtually all phases of monitoring center communications with customers, police, fire and emergency services communications centers.

In order to achieve the Five Diamond designation, each and every operator must not only pass the course, but demonstrate:

- Proficiency in alarm confirmation process, which helps reduce false alarms
- Proficiency in communications with Public Service Answering Points, such as the Emergency 911 centers
- Knowledge of electronic communications equipment, including, cellular, radio and internet communication systems
- An understanding of the codes and standards of such organizations as Underwriters Laboratories, Factory Mutual, the National Fire Protection Association and others
- Proficiency in the area of emergency preparedness under a wide scenario of possibilities.

There are approximately 2,700 monitoring centers in the United States that communicate and interact with police, fire and emergency services agencies. Of this group, fewer than two hundred monitoring centers have achieved the Five Diamond designation, setting these companies apart.

SmokeCloak Device Aims To Deter Crime

11.15.17 - KOB 4- Albuquerque, N.M.

For some, it seems like property crime, break-ins and burglaries are a new normal. But there's a new tool to fight crime here in New Mexico, and it may look similar to something seen in a theater production or haunted house.

The machine is called the SmokeCloak, and it hooks into an alarm system. Within seconds, it can fill an entire business or home with vapor similar to a fog machine at a theater.

Kevin Paul distributes the product in North America. He said the vapor is the harmless chemical as those in fog machines, but it can hang around for an hour and a half. The idea behind it is "if you can't see it, you can't steal it."

"They take a baseball bat to the door and the glass is going to crack, the security system's going to trigger, and they're going to see through the window that they can't move freely and they're going to leave," Paul said. "They're not even going to gain entrance."



And when the criminals leave, the goal is they'll take just one thing with them -- a DNA component that's unique to the vapor in each machine.

"Now they have a tag that can be forensically identified to say it was them that broke into the premise and give law enforcement another tool in their tool belt to help prosecute and get these criminals off the street," Paul said.

A-Tech Security is jumping on board. The Albuquerque-based company is selling the product to business and homeowners. They said its equipment that can help give people a piece of mind, as crime continues to increase. The machines sell for anywhere between \$2,500 and \$4,600.

[More Info](#)

Why Does The Alarm Keep Going Off At Night At Folsom Lowe's?

11.14.17 - CBS Sacramento - Folsom (CBS13)

FOLSOM (CBS13) — Neighbors in Folsom are frustrated by an alarm going off week after week, and they say it's coming from the Lowe's store on Bidwell Street. "This is not a single event, it happens weekly!" said Ryan Mohondro, who lives nearby. "I've called multiple times with no response. I've gone into the store and asked for multiple managers and left my name!" Mohondro said the alarm has been going off every weekend for the last year. "12, 1, 2, 3 in the morning," he said. "It's crazy, it's loud!" said Jodi Hall. "I thought that somebody's house was being broken into."

Mohondro thought it was a car alarm, but after several weeks, he decided to investigate. "I'm in my sweatpants, driving around, looking like a crazy man at two in the morning," he told CBS13. He finally discovered that the alarm was coming from the Lowe's store a half-mile away from his bedroom window.

The next day, he went to the store to make a complaint. "The store manager and a couple of other people have said that it's a rodent and bird problem in the store, setting off the motion sensors," Mohondro explained.

But every Friday and Saturday, the alarms persisted. Finally, Mohondro posted on Lowe's Facebook page in October asking them to take action.

The company replied saying, "Ryan, we apologize for any inconvenience this has caused. Your situation has been escalated, and we have documented your concerns for further review." But the alarms kept going off. "Every time it goes off now, I call the police, and I meet the officer out at Lowe's," Mohondro said.

Folsom Police Department told CBS13 they got three calls over Veterans Day weekend and reached out to management to find a solution. "Why they haven't been able to fix it, I don't understand," Hall said. But Ryan hopes additional pressure from neighbors will force the store to silence the alarms. "This has been going on for a year, and if [the manager] says that he's been correcting the problem, it probably should have been taken care of a year ago!" Mohondro said.

We reached out to Lowe's, but the store manager was unavailable to comment. We also reached out to the Lowe's corporate office, and they said they are looking into and working to get it resolved soon.

[More Info](#)

DIY Entrant Konnected Converts Existing Alarm Panels Into Smart ...

11.18.17 - Security Sales & Integration- Alameda, Calif.

The startup Konnected Alarm Panel is billed as the first-of-its kind solution to convert a wired alarm system for app-based smart home controls. Does it feel like the DIY smart home market is becoming something of a hornet's nest with new entrants joining the fray on a near daily basis? This week comes word of a San Francisco software engineer who tinkered with his home's hardwired alarm and ... voila! ... converted it into an app-based system.

Nate Clark got entrepreneurial about his home automation invention - coined, The Konnected Alarm Panel - and went on to sell more than 500 DIY kits with “zero marketing,” according to a press release. He recently launched a Kickstarter campaign for the project and met his goal of raising \$25,000 in the first two hours - “the first step in his quest to bring smart home security to the some 20 million American households, and millions more around the world, that are pre-wired for alarm systems,” the press release vows.

As of Friday (Nov. 17), the crowdfunding campaign eclipsed \$70,000 with pledges from more than 775 backers. Here’s a description of how the Konnected system works: the panel “seamlessly connects” a home’s existing wired alarm system sensors and siren to Samsung’s SmartThings Hub via a wireless connection. SmartThings users can then use the built-in Smart Home Monitor app and other SmartThings apps to monitor and automate their home, sans monthly fees or subscriptions.

The open source panel is said to replace any brand of wired alarm system panel and works with hundreds of brands and models of wired alarm system sensors, including door and window sensors, motion sensors, glass-break sensors, flood/leak detectors, smoke/heat detectors and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors.

Those who buy in via Kickstarter — pledging \$59-\$129, depending on the size of their residence — receive the device and step-by-step instructions to install it into their alarm system wiring and connect it to their smart home hub. The initial version requires users to have a SmartThings Hub, but support for other hubs such as Wink and HomeAssistant are “expected to be available soon,” the press release states.

While this can be a straight-up DIY play, consumers can opt for professional monitoring by Scout Alarm, which is offered to SmartThings customers via the Smart Home Monitor app. The system is available in configurations of six-, 12-, 18- and 24-zone setups, and is expected to ship in January 2018.

Here is more of the backstory from the press release: Clark, until recently an engineering director at a successful San Francisco startup, created a beta version of the Konnected Alarm Panel in early 2017 after a rash of burglaries hit his neighborhood. He figured it was time to put his rental home’s old-school wired alarm system into action and went in search of a product that would enable him to adapt it to the cloud so he could monitor it easily and remotely with his smartphone. To his surprise, Nate discovered no such product existed. So he went to work. A big fan of open source, he shared instructions for making the DIY system he came up with on GitHub and in smart home community forums, where enthusiastic forum members tried it out, gave rave reviews and valuable feedback, and encouraged him to sell it as a pre-packaged kit. He threw together a website and within two months had shipped kits to more than 500 customers around the world. “I’m not surprised there’s an appetite for an affordable and painless way to convert a wired alarm system to the cloud, but I’m floored that no one had come up with a solution before,” Clark states in the announcement. “There are millions of inactive traditional alarm systems out there, and millions more being used by people who would prefer an app-based system if given an affordable choice.”

The possibility for disruption to professionally installed and monitored alarms would seem obvious, but to what degree? Curious, we reached out to SSI “Legal Briefing” columnist [Ken Kirschenbaum](#) to inquire about potential liability issues taking over legacy systems, as well as legal ramifications associated with the original system providers. Following is Kirschenbaum’s take:

“It’s an interesting concern because the company is encouraging the subscriber to replace the existing panel by DIY. That process is going to be well beyond the capability of all but the most mechanical subscribers. Also the ‘outdated’ devices are not being replaced, only the panel. Seems to me that this product is going to cause lots of confusion and probably result in many alarm systems being disabled. It probably will create some service work for [professional installers]. Subscribers under monitoring contacts will also find that they are in breach if they stop paying the monthly charge.”

After SSI brought the product to the attention of Kirschenbaum, he in turn reached out to alarm industry veteran Wayne M. Wahrsager to get his thoughts on it and the likelihood for disruption. Wahrsager replied:

“This is nothing more than a substitute alarm panel. I don’t think this will catch on as it requires the end user to remove the old panel and move the wiring over to the new panel properly, which is way beyond the ability of the average end user. Also it does not take into account the various end of line resistors that are located out in the field of the job site, nor does it address the requirements to deliver power to devices, such as motion detectors, audio sensors, shock sensors etc. It’s a good attempt but won’t catch on.”

[More Info](#)

Rajant Uses Drones to Reduce Response Time for Triggered Home Alarm System

10.26.17 - SDM

Rajant, a provider of private wireless networks, successfully conducted tests that show the national average time for authorities to respond to a verified home alarm - seven minutes - can be drastically lowered if alarm companies use unmanned aerial systems (UAS, or drones), to supplement their current infrastructure.



Rajant partnered with AlarmTransfer of Norman, Oklahoma, to test the viability of using drones for aerial surveillance throughout the neighborhoods where AlarmTransfer's cameras are stationed. The "Launch on Alert" tests used the xCraft's x2i Hybrid VTOL drone, which runs on Rajant's InstaMesh networking technology, and can fly for 45 minutes at speeds up to 60 mph. The tests proved that a home alarm company can get aerial surveillance on the scene as quickly as 30 seconds.

"If an alarm is triggered, you want to get eyes on the scene as fast as you can and find out what's going on," said Don Gilbreath, vice president, systems, for Rajant. "This UAS system can cut response time down to a few minutes or even seconds, which increases the safety of communities and decreases police department overhead by reducing false calls for service."

The drones live in "nests" that are autonomous recharging units, located within a certain geographic radius of a business or residential customer. When a customer's alarm or alert is triggered, information is sent to a drone nest that gives the drone relevant data on the event. The nest then deploys a drone. Computer logic dictates flight path and the type of a drone responding (e.g., sending a drone with a thermal camera for a fire event).

The drone flies along a predetermined route to investigate. There is an open link between the drone's feed and a command center, so operators can view the scene and take remote control as needed. Once the investigation is complete, the drone returns to the nest, docks, begins recharging and waits for next mission. The system can choose to send one or more drones at one time to respond to a particular alarm, and the entire process is autonomous.

"The one place you should feel safe is your own neighborhood," said Lee Stauss, CEO for AlarmTransfer. "With Rajant, we have the ability to deploy multiple drones that are interconnected, so they all communicate with each other to track suspicious activity on the property in real time. We're able to look at the whole community at once, at a much greater level of detail."

The communications and flight control system are platform agnostic, allowing companies to use whatever drone system best fits its application. A control station allows personnel to monitor the drone's avatar as well as its telemetry, communications and live video feed, all in real time. A single person can control the entire fleet as well as the cameras aboard each drone, to angle cameras toward a specific region of interest.

"Because every drone is on our mesh network, all drones are in communication with each other," Gilbreath said. "This allows them to share information and work together to fly to a location and gain aerial intelligence faster than a land vehicle can." Stauss added, "Rajant's network and the x2i drone allow us to build an aerial platform to create faster response times [and] take some burden off the police department, with a camera system to deter crime. The key is being able to intervene and change the course of an event as it's unfolding. With this technology, we don't have to stand by passively and wait for first responders to arrive. Now, when something happens, we have the ability to go out and stop it."

[More Info](#)

FARA's Believe it or Not

By: Brad Shipp

- **AK: Bugs inside, drugs outside. Is this subsidized hotel really catering to ...**
11.11.17 - KTUU.com - That includes a whopping 24 false fire alarms, said Battalion Chief James Dennis. When we checked into the hotel on a recent afternoon, the desk clerk warned ... [More Info](#)

- **MO: Police officer caught off guard when house starts talking to him**
11.23.17 - KMOV.com - A Jefferson County deputy was caught off-guard when he responded to a security alarm going off at a Eureka home. Tony Allen, the owner of the home, was able to communicate with the officer through the home security system while Allen was on vacation in South Carolina. The officer was surprised and confused when ... [More Info](#)
- **NC: Deer Gives Triad Woman Early Morning Scare After Breaking Into ...**
11.4.17 - THV 11 - Amanda McNeil said the deer entered her house through a bedroom window which set off her alarm and the animal knocked over several item. The deer was .. [More Info](#)
- **SC: The locked wheels of a shopping cart foils Thanksgiving burglar's ...**
11.24.17 - Myrtle Beach Sun News - Myrtle Beach police were called to the Food Lion at 10 p.m. after an alarm was tripped in the closed store. The alarm was still wailing .. [More Info](#)
- **TN: Nashville man's own burglar alarm leads to police finding 31 pounds ...**
11.6.17 - WZTV - A Nashville father's own burglar alarm led to police to finding over 31 pounds of marijuana inside his residence on Saturday.... [More Info](#)
- **TX: Video captures ghost at Sansom Park grocery store ... or did it?**
11.17.17 - Fort Worth Star Telegram - He said on his drive home to Arlington he got an alert from the alarm system a few minutes after midnight. "I came back and left, then after one hour I had to come ... [More Info](#)

Do you have any stories you would like to share about 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 bradshipp@4yoursolution.com and we'll put them in the next InfoLink for all to share!

Door to Door Sales

Courtesy of NESAs

- **Tonight @ 10: Alarm salesman's aggressive tactics go too far**
11.3.17 - WMC Action News 5 - "He says, 'Ma'am, I see you have a Vivint alarm system, and I was wondering what kind of panel you have on the wall,'" said Bessie's daughter, Pam Miller. [More Info](#)
- **'Scammer' Alarm Companies Reach \$500K Settlement with AG's Office**
10.25.17 - Law.com - Utah-based Alder Holdings and a subsidiary, Alarm Protection Georgia, have agreed to pay \$500,000 to settle claims that they defrauded Georgia consumers. [More Info](#)
- **What You Should Know Before Signing a Home Security Contract**
11.7.17 - NBC 7 San Diego - A Carlsbad's woman asked NBC 7 Responds for help when she tried to cancel a contract with a home security system company, Five Alarm Security. ... [More Info](#)
- **Rosie on the House: Basics to know on home security systems**
11.7.17 - Green Valley News - When sensors are tripped by intruders, a hard-wired system sends signals to a control panel to sound an alarm and can then use a cellular network or a ... [More Info](#)
- **House alarm company barred from selling systems in WV**
11.20.17 - Charleston Gazette-Mail - West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey reached a \$25,000 settlement with Trio Alarm LLC and its manager, Tyler Ignatowski, Curtis Johnson, Morrisey's ... [More Info](#)

Public Safety Updates

Courtesy of NESAs

- **AZ: City of Mesa apologizes for sending out bogus 'false alarm' bills to ...**
11.16.17 - AZFamily - Alice Nelson just got a letter from the City of Mesa saying she owed \$210 in fines for having false alarms on her home security system. Mesa, like many Valley ... [More Info](#)
- **CA: Music Store Owner Says City Billed Him After Burglary Attempt**
11.16.17 - CBS Sacramento - "They got in far enough to set the alarm off," Janis said. "We have alarms placed strategically at those locations so any movement in that area would set off the ... [More Info](#)
- **CA: Time to make alarm companies pull their weight in City of Manteca**
11.18.17 - Manteca Bulletin - The uproar this past week over a city coding error that sent Janis Music a \$700 bill for false alarms that turned out to actually have been alarms set off by criminal ... [More Info](#)
- **FL: False house alarms: The price Jacksonville homeowners are forced ...**
10.27.17 - ActionNewsJax.com - False alarms take valuable time from the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, — where officials say 98 percent of all alarm calls are not legitimate. The agency has ... [More Info](#)

- **GA: Some businesses question false alarm monitoring company in ...**
11.16.17 - 13WMAZ - Warner Robins Police are asking businesses to register as soon as possible with the Cry Wolf company to monitor and try to cut down on false alarm calls. [More Info](#)
- **GA: Warner Robins (Ga.) Adopts CryWolf False Alarm System After Year ...**
11.15.17 - Security Sales & Integration - Police delayed the implementation of the monitoring software in 2016 due to public confusion and other issues surrounding the city's false alarm ordinance. [More Info](#)
- **GA: Warner Robins cancels CryWolf false alarm contract**
11.20.17 - The Telegraph - A week after announcing a second attempt to implement the CryWolf plan to curb false alarms, Warner Robins City Council voted Monday to cancel it. The city ... [More Info](#)
- **IL: Elgin to unveil proposed 2018 budget Wednesday**
11.3.17 - Chicago Tribune - The department could increase revenue, Schmidt said, by means that include charging for repeated false alarms, increasing what it bills to insurance companies ... [More Info](#)
- **IL: Higher fees look likely for Peoria homeowners**
10.26.17 - Peoria Journal Star - ... but rejected the idea of hiking fees on false fire and burglar alarms and charging annual fees for people who have alarm systems in town and those who install ... [More Info](#)
- **MO: City Council Considering Home Alarm Ordinance**
10.25.17 - KBIA - The Columbia city council is considering a new penalty system for home security false alarms. The ordinance would potentially ding violators with \$100 fine after ... [More Info](#)
- **NC: Home security registration required in Charlotte**
11.23.17 - WCNC - "Caused by faulty equipment, people not maintaining their alarm systems and people not knowing how to properly use their systems," said Allen. Now in 2017, a time when Charlotte's population has grown exponentially, police are finding many residents are unaware of the ordinance. CMPD says they always respond, ... [More Info](#)
- **NC: Police seek new ways to stem false alarms**
11.21.17 - The High Point Enterprise - Police Chief Ken Shultz has proposed the concept of an "alarm school" that ... owners whose alarms are the source of repeated false activations or who fail to ... [More Info](#)
- **OR: Fine for repeat false alarm violators approved**
11.20.17 - KTVL - "A lot of the alarms are in very remote areas. A deputy will spend sometimes an hour going to an alarm, [only] to find out there isn't a problem," said Julie Denney ... [More Info](#)
- **OR: Repeated false alarms will bring \$250 fine**
11.19.17 - Mail Tribune - A false alarm from an electronic security system could bring a \$250 fine as Jackson County looks to combat a rising number of unnecessary alerts for law ... [More Info](#)
- **TN: Hamilton County hopes to trim 911 response times**
11.3.17 - Chattanooga Times Free Press - The Automated Secure Alarm Protocol, made possible through a partnership between the district and ADS Security, allows alarm companies such as ADS to ... [More Info](#)
- **TN: Tennessee County Hopes to Trim 911 Dispatch Times**
11.9.17 - Firefighter Nation - The Automated Secure Alarm Protocol, made possible through a partnership between the district and ADS Security, allows alarm companies such as ADS to ... [More Info](#)
- **TX: Plenty of topics at meet-and-greet with Killeen's top cop**
11.14.17 - The Killeen Daily Herald - Every false alarm that a home security system generates requires the attention of two police officers and takes about 21 minutes to tend to, Kimble said. If there ... [More Info](#)
- **WA: Billed for Burglary? KHQ investigates Spokane false alarms**
11.3.17 - KHQ Right Now - Property crime continues to plague family after family in our community. We're constantly telling you stories of the latest victims. It has so many of you worried, ... [More Info](#)
- **WI: Madison, Wisconsin, may require security cameras at all convenience stores**
11.1.17 - SIW - Proposed ordinance would require stores to install high-resolution cameras, store video for 30 days... [More Info](#)
- **WI: Windsor board drafts alarm ordinance**
11.23.17 - hngnews.com - The Windsor Village Board is drafting a new ordinance to mandate registration of automatic-response alarm systems. During the board's Nov. 16 meeting, village trustees discussed the prevalence of false alarms at home and businesses properties. Those false alarms – described as "nuisance calls with no real value" by ... [More Info](#)

Industry News

Courtesy of NESAs

General Items

- **86% of burglars will leave if they hear someone at home**
11.1.17 - Which? - When we conducted our own survey of over 100 ex-burglars we found over 7 in 10 were put off by houses that had alarms and the same percentage would think ... [More Info](#)
- **Medical Alert System Market – Growth, Trends, Absolute Opportunity ...**
11.4.17 - Medgadget - ... Absolute Opportunity and Value Chain with Top key player like Legrand Assisted Living & Healthcare, Alertone Services, ADT Corporation, Bay Alarm Medical ... [More Info](#)
- **How Comcast's Xfinity Home Is Disrupting Residential Security**
11.13.17 - Security Sales & Integration - ... television or satellite television companies branching into the residential alarm business was roundly scoffed at by the electronic security industry community. [More Info](#)
- **To Xfinity ... and Beyond!**
11.2.17 - SSI - After decades of false starts, cable, satellite TV and telecom companies are becoming forces in the residential security and connected services market. Take a deep dive into one of the leading players - Comcast's Xfinity Home - and a winning formula that has surpassed 1 million customers. [More Info](#)
- **TMA releases new monitoring center operator training course**
11.16.17 - SecurityInfoWatch - Vienna, VA - Monitoring center operators are the critical link between alarm notifications and first responder dispatch. Their performance ... [More Info](#)
- **Years after regulatory crackdown, some security cameras still open to hackers**
11.15.17 - Washington Post - TrendNet security cameras are vulnerable to hackers. (ReFirm Labs) Several widely available security cameras. [More Info](#)
- **New statistics on home structure fires**
10.27.17 - NFPA - Since 1980, the number of reported home fires and fire deaths has been cut roughly in half. But there is still work to be done, as an average of 7 people die in U.S. home fires every day. And the rate of deaths per 1,000 reported home fires was 10 times higher than in 1980, according to NFPA's new report. [More Info](#)
- **Alarm designed by Andover man prevents bathroom overdoses**
11.16.17 - Andover Townsman - The health care clinic hasn't had a bathroom overdose in months since the electrician's restroom alarm system was installed. Telecommunications and electrical ... [More Info](#)

DIY

- **Let's Guess What's Inside Honeywell's Upcoming DIY Security System**
10.26.17 - SSI - Smart home pro Julie Jacobson predicts Honeywell's DIY security system will utilize Z-Wave for home automation, Total Connect for SHaaS (smart home as a service) and more. [More Info](#)
- **Amazon makes its foray into DIY home security**
10.25.17 - SIW - Company announces the launch of 'Amazon Cloud Cam,' 'Amazon Key' [More Info](#)
- **Wink Throws Hat in Ring for DIY Home Security System Supremacy**
10.25.17 - SSI - Wink is the latest smart home company to release a DIY security system, following recent launches by Nest and SmartThings. [More Info](#)
- **Nest updates its app to support the just-released Nest Secure alarm ...**
11.1.17 - Android Police - Nest announced its Secure alarm system in September, but the starter pack just became available for purchase today. And to go with that, Nest has updated its ... [More Info](#)
- **Honeywell announces a DIY security system with Alexa integration**
11.1.17 - The Verge - And while many companies offering similar products are happy to sell customers a professional monitoring service on top — so that if the alarm goes off, ... [More Info](#)
- **Honeywell Unveils DIY Security System, Launches on Indiegogo**
11.1.17 - SSI - Honeywell says its smart home security system is an all-in-one awareness and home-integration system. [More Info](#)
- **T-Mobile enters connected home security market with Nest security pack offering**
11.8.17 - SIW - Wireless carrier also named the exclusive cellular backup provider for Nest Secure... [More Info](#)





Mergers & Acquisitions

- **ADT acquires Gaston Security**
10.19.17 - SIW - Company makes its third commercial security integrator acquisition since August... [More Info](#)
- **ADS Security makes fourth acquisition of 2017**
10.24.17 – SecurityInfoWatch - Equinox Alarm Services owner, Carl Grantham, will be joining the ADS Security team in Tuscaloosa in a technician role. Equinox customers are currently being ... [More Info](#)

- **Nest Partners With I-View Now to Offer Video Alarm Verification ...**
10.26.17 - Security Sales & Integration - Nest Cam security camera owners can now ask their Nest Pro installer to add the I-View Now video verification monitoring service with most alarm systems. [More Info](#)
- **Bay Alarm Company Gets a Little Larger**
11.1.17 - Digital Journal - Concord, Calif.--(Business Wire)--Bay Alarm, the largest independently owned security company in the United States, got a little larger today by acquiring ... [More Info](#)
- **Convergent Technologies Acquires Security Products Company**
11.2.17 - SDM - Convergent Technologies, ranked No. 2 on SDM's Top Systems Integrators Report, acquired Minnesota-based Security Products Company (SPC). [More Info](#)
- **BCE Announces Agreement to Acquire AlarmForce Industries**
11.8.17 - SDM - BCE Inc. (Bell) announced it will acquire AlarmForce Industries Inc., a Canadian leader in home security and monitoring services, in a transaction valued at approximately \$166 million. [More Info](#)
- **Bell Canada pushes into smart home security market via AlarmForce acquisition**
11.8.17 - SIW - BCE Inc. to acquire more than 100,000 Canadian security customers ... [More Info](#)

Legislative News

Courtesy of NESAs

Jurisdiction	Bill Text	Description	History
Florida	FLHB00539 Text 	Introduced by Senate Ethics and Elections Revises requirements for alarm confirmation to include additional methods by which alarm monitoring company personnel may confirm residential or commercial intrusion/burglary alarm signal to require two attempts be made to confirm alarm signal. Status: 11/6/2017 : House - Filed	History
New Hampshire	NHHB01255 Text 	A bill relative to the state fire code. Bill ID=1293. Status: 01/03/2018 : Prefiled	History
United States	USHR04283 Text 	To encourage States to require the installation of residential carbon monoxide detectors in homes, and for other purposes. Status: House - 11/07/2017 Referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration.	History
United States	USS02061 Text 	Next Generation 9-1-1 Act of 2017 Status: Senate - 11/02/2017 Read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.	History

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.

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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.

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