



InfoLink

Information for Public Safety False Alarm Reduction Professionals

FARA InfoLink 2014 Symposium Edition

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Annual FARA Membership Meeting

President **Kerri McDonald** reviewed significant accomplishments during the past year, including

- Development of the New Model Ordinance and Guide to Model Ordinance; the new ordinance was greatly reduced in size and all of the specific items to consider when addressing your false alarm problem are now located in the Guide.
- A New FARA Chapter was formed for the Oregon and SW Washington.
- Two press releases were sent out, Door to Door Sales and Is Mother Nature Causing Havoc with Your Alarm System in which FARA gained national attention in several publications.
- A new website (www.alarmuser.org) was created dedicated to the alarm user to provide them with information on how to reduce false alarms.
- Several assistance requests were sent out.
- Continued development of online training occurred.
- Continued improvement to the website took place.

Institute sponsors were thanked for their continued support and help in getting many public safety attendees to Baltimore.

FARA Treasurer, **Steve Heggemann**, gave the financial report of the meeting. Audit will be done by the Mid-Atlantic chapter of FARA.

A bylaw amendment to allow the board to fill a vacancy if a board member misses too many meetings was adopted.

Elections were held for FARA Director and Officer positions. Results were as follows:

- Vice President - Electronic Security - **Debbie Hansen** - Naperville Police Department
- Director at Large - **Pam Steiger** - Louisville Metro Police Department
- Director at Large - **David Wilson** - Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department
- Secretary - **Shellie Reid** - Loudoun County Sheriff's Office
- Electronic Security Associate Director - **Kathleen Schraufnagel**, Monitronics

Per the FARA Bylaws, President McDonald made the following appointments:

- Symposium – **Tammy Foxworthy** and **Joe Carr**
- Membership – **Debbie Hanson** and **Kristina Walker**
- Training & Certification – **Sherry Couey**
- Website – **Shellie Reid**
- Communications – Acting- Co-Chairs - **Kerri McDonald** and **Kathleen Schraufnagel**
- Awards - **Kathleen Schraufnagel**

Committee Reports

By: Brad Shipp

During the symposium, each committee gave a report on their activities.

FARA committees do an outstanding job for the members, but every committee could use more help.

Committees meet on teleconference calls so no travel is required.

For more information about the committees or to join one contact bradshipp@4yoursolution.com



The **Symposium Committee** presentation was given by Co Chairs - **Tammy Foxworthy & Joe Carr**.



Amanda Garner reported for the **Communications Committee**.



The **Membership Committee** report was given by Co Chairs - **Kristina Walker** and **Debbie Hansen**.



Julie Rush reported for the **Training & Certification Committee**.



Shellie Reid gave the update for the **Website Committee**.

Norma C. Beaubien Public Safety Award for 2104

By Kathleen Schraufnagel

The Norma C. Beaubien Member of the Year Award is presented to outstanding FARA members for their contributions to FARA, their agencies and the communities they serve. The winners are selected by past winners of the member of the year awards. This year two members were recognized.

David Wilson, Charlotte- Mecklenburg Police Department, North Carolina

David Wilson has been a police officer for over 25 years. Five years ago he became the False Alarm Coordinator for his department and has been working on updating the alarm program.

In 1996 the Charlotte - Mecklenburg Police Department responded to 106,061 alarm calls. In 2013, CMPD responded to 40,848 alarm related calls, a reduction of 65,213 alarm calls since 1996.

They have increased their permitted sites to 191,765, and currently enjoy a dispatch rate of 0.21. In 2013, alarm related calls were only 2.6% of the total calls for service.

David has been a very active member of FARA for 6 years and served on the Symposium Committee for most of that time.



David was elected in 2009 to the FARA Board as an At-Large Director.

In 2010, David took over Symposium Fundraising Sub-Committee after Rex Bell retired. David has sold as many 50/50 tickets as Rex did if not more. He also assisted with the annual silent auctions and taught classes at past symposiums.

Officer Wilson says that being a FARA member, (quote) “gives us a peace of mind knowing that years of experience are just a phone call away. It is an awesome feeling to know that when a problem or situation rears its ugly head that you haven’t seen before, you can pick up the phone and call a FARA member to discuss ways to resolve the issue. We have made “the call” to another FARA member on many, many occasions and have always been able to resolve the problem at hand.”

David is very committed to FARA and personifies what the Norma C. Beaubien Public Safety Member of the Year Award stands for.

Shellie Reid, Loudoun County Sheriff's Office, Virginia

Shellie Reid graduated from Eastern Kentucky University in 1989 with a degree in Police Administration and a minor in Business. Since that time she has been in and out of law enforcement several times because as a military spouse, she and her family moved 13 times in 16 years before her husband's retirement.

In the late 90's, she was hired by the Prince William County (VA) Police Department and attended their police academy before the Navy shipped the family off to Japan.

In 2008, Shellie was hired as a Public Safety Services Technician for Prince William County Police Department.

In November 2010, she was hired by Loudoun County to head the False Alarm Reduction Unit. Shellie immediately became involved in FARA and currently serves as President of the FARA Mid-Atlantic Chapter, Secretary of the FARA Board as well as Chair of the Website Committee.



She has worked countless hours over the past three years, first helping to shape what the future FARA website would look like and then assisting Brad Shipp in making the changes. She also created a training document and teaches Committee representatives on how to manage their Committee website pages.

As education is a passion of hers, Shellie has also been active in the Training and Certification Committee almost since the first day and currently serves as their Reporter. Shellie is a contributor to FARA InfoLink. She also proudly achieved the status of Certified Alarm Manager in 2011.

Shellie has also provided countless time and resources to the public safety departments and security companies that put together the FARA Northwest Chapter in Oregon. She has also been a presenter at FARA Symposiums.

W. Rex Bell Associate Member of the Year Award for 2014

By Kathleen Schraufnagel

The W. Rex Bell Associate Member of the Year Award is presented to outstanding FARA members for their contributions to FARA, their companies and the communities they serve. The winner is selected by past winners of the member of the year awards.

Jordan Brown - NESAs

Jordan has been with Guard Tronic since 1988. He manages this full service security company and is involved in all aspects of the company including sales, installation, service, accounting, and overseeing their U.L. listed central station.

Jordan has supported his local security industry by holding numerous positions on the board of the Arkansas Security Alarm Association. He is also the Training Coordinator for that association and a certified electronic security industry instructor in Arkansas as well as Oklahoma.

He has served as curriculum developer for the National Burglar & Fire Alarm Association and developed and revised curriculum for both fire and advanced alarm technician courses. He also personally holds advanced certifications in both these areas. Additionally, he has served as a licensing board member of the Arkansas Board of Private Investigators and Private Security Agencies. On a national level, he is currently President of the National Electronic Security Alliance (NESAs) as well as their Training Coordinator.

Along with all the above initiatives that have helped to create and maintain good alarm technicians and salespersons, which leads to well-trained alarm users and less false alarms all over the country, Jordan has volunteered his time and expertise to FARA as well. He has been a resource to the Communications Committee as they worked on several documents, most recently the updating of the Alarm Equipment Guide.

Jordan has also participated in the annual training symposiums and has taught or moderated classes for the past three years. He works very hard to promote FARA within the security industry. Jordan has also been a long-time supporter of the FARA Institute, which provides funding to help FARA public safety members attend the annual training symposiums that they would otherwise be unable to participate in.



Special Thanks to Tom Foxworthy

FARA owes thanks to **Tom Foxworthy** for unselfishly volunteering his free time to man the registration desk during the entire symposium.



Opening Session

By Tammy Foxworthy

FARA President **Kerri McDonald** opened the 18th Annual International Training Symposium by welcoming attendees to Baltimore. President McDonald highlighted the exciting FARA activities planned for this year's symposium. Dine Arouds is a new way to organize evening plans for attendees. On Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, there was a choice of four trips. The first trip would take you to the Inner Harbor, historic Fells Point, a water taxi ride and dinner at Amicci's in Little Italy. The second trip took you on a tour of Baltimore's Museum Industry and to Mr. Rain's Fun House for dinner. The third trip took you to Inner Harbor for a tour of the historic ships of Baltimore and dinner at the Rusty Scupper. The fourth trip was a water taxi ride around Baltimore's waterfront, a stroll around Inner Harbor, Federal Hill and Fells Point and dinner at Phillips Restaurant. Due to the flooding rains, few were able to partake in the wonderful trips.

Fundraising changes were announced with a twist. There would be no silent auction this year. In conjunction with the 50/50 raffle, the winner would get a choice to take 50% of the money raised selling raffle tickets or they could choose the donated Ipad from United Central Control. If the winner chose the cash, the Ipad would be auctioned off to the highest bidder.

President McDonald then introduced two very special guests, Baltimore City Police Commissioner, **Anthony Batts** and Baltimore City Fire Chief, **Niles Ford**. Each told stories of their dealings with false alarms during their careers.



Mid Atlantic Chapter Meeting

By Kerri McDonald

Shellie Reid from Loudoun County, VA contributed to the first day of the FARA Symposium by conducting a FARA Chapter Meeting. Shellie who also serves as the President of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter wanted other FARA members to see what goes on at a chapter meeting. The meeting started off with a welcome to the visitors and a code of conduct reminder; then it quickly proceeded into the election of a board member. There was an opportunity for both public safety and alarm industry to bring up any items for discussion. Once all the chapter business was taken care of there was an open forum discussion on the benefits of having a chapter. This was an informative class and something you should try in your area.



Mock Trial

By Shellie Reid

Those who attended Tuesday's offerings in Baltimore were treated to some fine acting and realistic arguing during the Mock Trial and Mock Trial Results sessions. FARA was privileged to have real attorney's play the role of attorneys and judge for this very interesting and realistic drama.

Cast:

Judge— **Brian Kilgore**, Attorney, Land Recourses Division, Baltimore Housing

Attorney--**Thomas Arkas**, Assistant State's Attorney, Special Assistant City Solicitor – Represented Summer Sales Company X

Attorney--**Ilya Altman**, Assistant State's Attorney, Special Assistant City Solicitor – Represented ABC Security and Fire Alarm Company Owner

Jo College (SSCX Salesperson)--Mara D'Angelo, Baltimore Housing Permits & Code Enforcement Division
James Thompson (Homeowner)--Kevin Haber, Baltimore Housing Permits & Code Enforcement Division
Plaintiff: ABC Security and Fire Alarm Company Owner (ABC)--Stuart Forchheimer, HST Technology Group
Defendant: Summer Sales Company X Owner (SSCX)--Brad Shipp

Jurors:
John David Evans-Director of Code Stat
Shushen Chia-Information Technology Manager
Rosetta Jennings-Office Assistant, Special Investigations Unit
Cindy Kresslein-Systems Analyst
Brian Morgan-Code Enforcement Investigator
Nicholas Stephens-Accounting Assistant

The scene opened in the courtroom where the plaintiff's attorney for ABC Security opened by introducing into evidence an alarm contract between James Thompson and ABC Security and Fire Company for a system installed on April 15, 2009. The contract terms were \$32.99 + tax per month for 60 months.

We were then introduced to James Thompson, the homeowner, who explained that on May 5, 2012, Jo College knocked on his door. The homeowner went on to explain that the salesperson offered an "upgrade" to his alarm system for only \$10 more per month than he was currently paying. This offer was only available if accepted at that time. If it was accepted later, it would have cost \$100. The homeowner also explained that the salesperson arrived as his family was preparing to leave for church. Mr. Thompson also mentioned that the salesperson pushed the high crime rate and the new technology available in the system. He further mentioned that he believed that it would just be an upgrade to his current system.



The homeowner then added that the system was installed that day. The old "box" was removed and a new panel was installed. Two months later, he received a bill and he called ABC to ask why he was getting two bills. ABC explained to him that he had received a whole new system and was now paying for it and a non-existent service from the old panel. He then added that ABC was now trying to charge him \$1157 for the unused months under the contract and a disconnect fee.

On cross-examination, the SSCX attorney inquired whether the homeowner had been asked if he had a contract with another company. Were any threats made? Did you read the contract? Did you contact ABC? To all of these, the homeowner answered No.

The defense attorney asked that three items be entered as exhibits:
Defendant exhibit #1: alarm "box" marked with decal of ABC Security & Fire
Defendant exhibit #2: alarm "box" marked with decal of Summer Sales Company X
Defendant exhibit #3: contract with Summer Sales Company X

The SSCX attorney then continued the questioning by asking if the homeowner contacted Jo College? The homeowner replied that he did on May 24th, 19 days after install. The attorney asked "what information did you receive?" Mr. Thompson replied that since it was longer than 3 days after the sale, he couldn't be relieved from the contract. The attorney then asked the homeowner to read clause 4 of the contract that states that the contract may be cancelled up to 3 days after...



At this point, the plaintiff's attorney had the opportunity to redirect and questioned Mr. Thompson again. Mr. Thompson clarified that he had the new system installed because he believed that it was simply an upgrade. The attorney asked "What else did the SSCX rep promise?" Mr. Thompson replied "that they would pay assisted monitoring charges and remaining charges for the previous contract".

The plaintiff's attorney then called the ABC Alarm Company owner Stuart Forchheimer to the stand. The attorney asked Mr. Forchheimer about the situation with Mr. Thompson and what ABC did about it. Mr. Forchheimer stated that when a customer asks to cancel service, they try to determine why. If the customer still leaves, they charge a \$150 panel reprogram fee to prevent accidental transmissions or they charge to remove equipment.

In this case, ABC decided to leave the equipment but hold Mr. Thompson responsible for a percent of the monitoring charges left on the contract.

The attorney then asked about other business practices and the owner mentioned that his company tracks attrition. In May through mid-July each year, they see a spike of cancel requests due to another system that has been installed. Usually, the homeowner is confused as to why they are being invoiced twice. Many have expressed that they thought they were getting an upgrade to their current system.

The defense attorney then cross examined the witness.

DA: Are there any clauses in your contract that forbid Mr. Thompson from contracting with another company?

SF: No.

DA: If someone contracts with another company, would they still have a debt to ABC?

SF: Yes.

The attorney then asked ABC's owner to review the Notice of Cancellation Clause. Mr. Forchheimer stated that it appeared to be a standard clause.

The defense then called their first witness, Brad Shipp, the company President and owner of Summer Sales Company X. Mr. Shipp was asked to describe his business practice. He explained that representatives are sent door to door where they greet the homeowner and ask if they are interested in upgraded alarm services. They then ask to walk through the house to see the current system and assess what the areas of vulnerability might be. The associate then provides the homeowner the first page of the contract that gives the proposed enhancements. The attorney then clarified through questions that the contract was for alarm services. Questioning then ascertained that after the contract is signed, the associate calls a technician to install. Ideally, this occurs on the same day.



The plaintiff's attorney(PA) then cross examined Mr. Shipp.

PA: Are sales representatives required to carry ID? What does it say?

BS: Photo, name, company, and role.

PA: What are reps instructed to say if there is an existing contract?

BS: To contact the company to make arrangements.

PA: How much time is given to do this?

BS: Our model is to install the same day.

PA: How much time is given to call?

BS: Under the customer's control.

PA: What if home owner wants to wait?

BS: The offer may change but some offer will still be available.

PA: Do you offer reimbursement of fees owed to other companies?

BS: No, that is not one of the things that we offer. We offer upgrade from wired to wireless system. We also offer additional sensors occasionally.

PA: What else was offered in this case by Jo College? What would it cost Mr. Thompson?

BS: Standard fee for installing the system which is monthly monitoring for \$30. Installation costs were waived.

The defense attorney (DA) then redirected with the following questions:

DA: Do you train your sales associate to threaten or harass customers?

W: No. Sales associates are instructed to inform the customer that they should contact their existing company to see if it the service offered is compatible.

The defense then called their second witness, Ms. Jo College (JC).

DA: Did you discuss alarm system services?

JC: Yes, he was interested. I then verified that the hardware was compatible and asked if he was interested. I gave him the contract and let him know that there was a technician in the area. I told him to take as long as he needed to review the contract. He took about 5 minutes.

The plaintiff's attorney then cross examined the witness:

PA: Did you mention that he would be breaching his contract? (This question was objected by opposing counsel so no answer was given).

PA: Did you mention that would be breaking his contract?

JC: I told him that he should contact his company. I don't know if he made the call.

PA: What else did you offer to induce him to buy your system?

JC: That is was an upgrade with cellular service.

At this time, Stuart Forchheimer was recalled to the stand.

PA: What are typical work times of legitimate alarm companies? Objection

PA: What are your work hours?

SF: The administrative hours are Monday through Friday 8:30-5; the call center is available 24 hours.

PA: What do your technicians wear to identify themselves?

SF: State license

Mr. Forchheimer was again cross-examined by the defense.

DA: Do you own (the names of several companies were listed)?

SF: No

DA: So you don't control hours of other alarm companies?

SF: No

The plaintiff's attorney gave his closing statements that summarized the case in the following manner:

Regular home owners are approached by predatory companies that descend like a team of locusts. He then asked the jury to find in favor of the plaintiff and award compensatory damages of \$2000 and punitive damages of \$1 million.

The defense attorney closing statement referenced the following remarks:

There were no locusts, and no apocalypse, Ms. Jo College simply discussed an alarm system with the homeowner who was over the age of 18 and not intoxicated. She provided every opportunity for the home owner to be sure that the contract was right for him. In addition, the jury was asked to consider that five elements were needed to prove that there had been interference of contract.

After the closing arguments, the judge instructed the jury to deliberate the preponderance of evidence and clarified that preponderance is 51% or more.

Mock Trial Results

During lunch, the jury was given the opportunity to deliberate. When the session reconvened, the jury ruled in favor of Summer Sales Company X. Their decision was based on the fact that the homeowner had 3 days to back out of the contract.

After the jury gave their decision, a Question and Answer session followed.

The audience was asked to consider the following questions:

- Is the "upgrade" terminology deceptive or is it good salesmanship?
- If salesperson was not licensed in the state would that affect the contract?
- Can a new alarm company use existing equipment in a home?
- Who does the equipment belong to?

In Maryland, the alarm companies are allowed to file a UCC1 for security interests on equipment in a house—this costs \$18-25 and comes up as a debt in a title search.



- What happens if a new homeowner wants system removed?
There is no contractual relationship between the new home owner and the alarm company.
- Do some items become part of the home?
Wireless systems are easy to move and can be relocated.
System parts are generally not installed in other homes. They may be refurbished and used for parts, repairs, or loaners. (if owner moves to a new home, they can be moved with them. But cancelled contract parts are being discussed here).
Fire system parts (smoke detectors) installed in new construction cannot be removed. However, if the parts are retrofits and there are standard smoke detectors, they may be removed.
- For consumer issues, contact the local attorney generals office.

Alarm Design to Reduce False Alarms

By Cindy Smith

Joe Carr, UCC, gave an overview of the components of an alarm systems and passed around many components to allow the participants to see how they looked. He discussed ways to reduce false alarms using the proper system design. As many alarms transmitted to law enforcement are false recommending these steps to your citizens will help reduce false alarms.

- Use a control panel that is ANSI SIA CP-01 compliant
- Replace batteries when needed
- Use swinger shutdown feature – multiple trips of a signal zone will stop reporting
- Provide cross zoning-requiring two zones to trip within 1 min
- Allow appropriate entry /exit delays for the location and lifestyle of the consumer
- Use pet immune devices when necessary



Joe also reminded us that alarm systems provide detection and not protection as the best alarm will not prevent a break in but a well-designed system will provide notification when a break-in has occurred and using proper install techniques will keep the false alarms to a minimum.

"Take a Walk in Their Shoes-Part 1"

By David Wilson

The training symposium started off the second day of training with a block titled "Take A Walk In Their Shoes / Part One". The discussion was moderated by **Steve Heggemann**. Steve assembled an expert industry panel consisting of **Keith Godsey, Kristina Walker, Derrick Jackson and Craig Bober**. This training block focused on what the alarm industry feels public safety can do to make complying with their codes and regulations easier.



It was quickly agreed upon that good communication between public safety and the industry is the key ingredient. The industry panel agreed that it is vital that there be a great working relationship with public safety, and that public safety knows the industry is willing to work as a team to resolve alarm issues. The panel and public safety members agreed that training and inspections are key elements in the battle of against false alarms, and at the same time this effort helps stop wasting police resources and will increase safety for responding officers and citizens.

Local alarm companies in attendance noted that it is extremely difficult to keep up with all of the permit renewal dates and license requirements and renewal dates because their manpower is spread thin. They suggested that all permits and license renewals become due in January to assist with manpower issues. Another topic came up when public safety members asked how the alarm industry deals with clients that have frequent false alarms. The response was very impressive. The alarm industry deals with false alarm abusers on a daily basis.

The local alarm company represented on the panel said they call every location that has a false alarm, and the larger alarm companies notify each region daily to investigate their false alarm locations.

This was a very informative class that provided excellent information from the alarm industry panel. After all was said and done, it appears public safety and the alarm industry does have a very strong working relationship. Both sides expressed the desire to strengthen this relationship even further, and gained valuable information as to how this can be achieved in this block of instruction. So, public safety members, the alarm industry is waiting for your call!

How to Deal with Government Agencies

By Amanda Garner

Debbie Hansen & Shellie Reid moderated a session on How to deal with Government Agencies. We learned that this can be an issue for all Public Safety Agencies. In the city of Garden Grove, the Public Works department is a chronic offender for our city due to the large number of employees entering and exiting the location. Garden Grove does not charge schools, post offices, government offices or our own city departments for false alarms. In the past when I have made calls to the location, whether it be a school or city department, no one seems to know who is "in charge" of the alarm system. This class gave me great insight as to what other municipalities are doing about curbing the false alarm dispatches.



Here are some of the key points from the class. Ask for the facilities manager for the location, if they are not in charge of the alarm system they will know who is. Call the alarm company and ask who their contact person is for maintenance at the location. If it is a government location, ask to speak to the department head for that location, often they are not aware of the false alarm problem. If all else fails, and your municipal code allows it, put that location on non-response. Often when the Law Enforcement Agency is not responding to the location, the alarm system issues will be fixed.

On a personal note, I was surprised how many agencies charge the different city departments for false alarm dispatches. Someone in the class mentioned that even though the funds come out of the general fund and ultimately go back into the general fund, each department has a separate budget. False alarm fees can be a drain on that department's budget and that will usually get the alarm system fixed or employees re-trained.

Brag or Cry About Your Program

By Kerri McDonald

This dynamic session, moderated by **Jim Cogswell**, focused on improving alarm programs nationwide through interactive discussion and networking opportunities. The session provided each organizational representative with a chance to share the successes and the challenges faced. Mr. Cogswell put it best when he said, "we have opportunities, not obstacles." When we fail to learn how to transform those obstacles into opportunities, we will not be successful at reducing the number of false alarms.



False alarms are a major challenge for all law enforcement agencies. Networking with other agencies is one of the best ways to discover possible solutions to common problems.

Dealing with Complaints

By Kerri McDonald

Dealing with Complaints was the last class on Wednesday which was an outstanding way to wrap-up the day. **Hannah Long from the Better Business Bureau of Greater Maryland** presented us with some very insightful information. We learned that the mission of the BBB is to create a community of trustworthy businesses, set standards for marketplace trust, encourage and support best practices, celebrate marketplace role models and denounce substandard marketplace behavior.

We found out that Burglary Alarms Systems, Security Control Equipment and System Monitoring were in the "Top 40" for inquires for 2013. Hannah explained in detail each of the steps in a complaint process which include prevention, responding, resolving and learning. This was an awesome class with information that both public safety and the alarm industry can apply in any type of complaint situation.



Are Some Alarm Calls Hiding From You?

By Kathleen Schraufnagel

The title of this session that was presented on Thursday, May 1st by **Thomas Waugh** from the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development, Permits and Code Enforcement Division, tells you right away that there are some new challenges for public safety and alarm companies.

Technology is a wonderful thing and it changes constantly. Consumers can now go to a home improvement store, electronics store, and even stand-alone shops for some of the major telecom companies and buy a security system in a box. Many consumers are choosing what they want on the internet and having it delivered to their house. These are known as Do It Yourself (DIY) alarm systems. With no training and little assistance, consumers install the equipment and go. These systems can usually be monitored by a Central Station, but most consumers are just having the information sent to their mobile device or in some cases the system can be programmed to automatically dial the police with a recorded message for the dispatcher.

The potential for false alarms is huge and as technology becomes more mobile, dispatchers must ask more probing questions and be more aware of who may be reporting an alarm in order to code the call as an alarm and not a crime in progress. This is particularly true when an alarm user is able to monitor cameras from their home or business. There may actually be fewer false alarms from residences when the owner has the ability to monitor their cameras, but public safety is seeing an increase in false alarms from commercial locations, depending on who is monitoring the system.

GPS tracking devices are also increasingly causing false alarms. By the very nature of how they are used it is inevitable in some circumstances. Many companies use this technology to keep track of their equipment at job sites and open equipment yards. Individuals will use it to track vehicles, laptops, bicycles and scooters. Retailers and banks use it to track stock, cargo, and even cash. Most often there is no discussion with a person when these alarms are received. When property is on the move, it causes an alarm that transmits a message to the owner/employee's cell phone and based on that the person calls 9-1-1 to report a theft. These units are currently available on line for as little as \$40 each.



LoJack was also discussed, but it is different in that law enforcement is not involved until an actual stolen vehicle report is completed and the police are handling the tracking directly. So you can see a pattern here, right? Instead of the primary point of contact being an alarm company or monitoring company, it can also be citizens. It can cross jurisdictional boundaries and to top it off, GPS tends to be accurate to within 50 meters when the item being tracked is out in the open and within the range of cell towers. However, all bets are off if the item being tracked is inside a building, particularly if it is multi-story. In those instances the signal may not be able to get out at all.

Some of the suggestions for ensuring that these calls are coded right fell into three categories: Training for law enforcement in the field; Training for 9-1-1 operators; and ensuring that your ordinance covers all the different scenarios that are currently going on.

Law Enforcement in the field: review the current guidelines and where needed update them to reflect what is now considered a false alarm so that they code their responses correctly. Work with command staff to provide training during roll call and CE classes.

9-1-1 Operators: They need to be more aware of where calls are coming from. If a person is calling in an alarm and it is a private phone number and not a monitoring company, they need to ask more questions to determine what the real situation is. For example; when a person states that there is a burglary in progress, ask them how they know and request more details. Listen for key words such as "I'm not home" or "I got a text."

Ordinances: Review your ordinance to ensure that it covers the needs of changing technology. Be sure that your definition of an "Alarm System" is covering the current scenarios. The Baltimore City definition of an alarm system is a good example of where to start.

(b) Alarm system.

(1) "Alarm system" means a device or series of devices that emits, transmits, or relays:

(i) an audible, visual, or electronic alarm signal that is electronically programmed to cause contact with or summon police; or

(ii) an audible or visual alarm signal that is intended to elicit a police response at the alarm system user's property when activated.

Everyone agreed that the difference now over past years is that both the industry and public safety are affected by all the new innovations. We are all having to adjust how we do business. The more we work on these issues together, the better the solutions will be now, and in the future.

"Take a Walk in Their Shoes- Part 2"

By Jim Cogswell

During our week in Baltimore, we got to see and hear many things. Most notable was the rainy weather! Since we were all inside during the day, we didn't have a problem but the public safety personnel of the area had their work cut out for them.

We were fortunate to have a representative of the Baltimore City Police Department, Captain **Bernard E. Douglas**. Capt. Douglas is the head of the Community Partnership Division of the BCPD and as such deals with crime prevention and working with the community to make Baltimore City a safer place. He noted that two major problems for responding officers was lack of access at a facility to which the officers have been sent and a specific address. The apartment building has locked main doors and 600 apartments but the request from the monitoring center was for the entire building.



Another frustration is multiple requests during a day to respond to the same address. The inability of the monitoring company to contact the responsible party for a structure and to have someone address a problem alarm system wastes a great many man hours.

Because of the rain and flooding, Lt. Derrick L. Ready, the scheduled representative from the Fire Marshall's Office of the

Baltimore City Fire Department was unable to attend. One of our members in attendance, Fire Marshall **Tim Knisely** from State College, Pennsylvania, volunteered to step in and gave us the view point from the fire services perspective. He spoke of the lack of access problem as well but noted that the National Fire Protection Code requires that rental properties use a “Knox Box” to securely store a key to the facility. Single family homes are not required to have these but some fire departments are encouraging older residents or those with physical problems to utilize the Knox Box system.

Fire Marshall Knisely also mentioned that the fire service does not consider an alarm caused by burnt food as a false alarm and, especially in college towns, burnt popcorn is the biggest cause of these alarms. In addition, fire alarm pull stations are being phased out in many localities or are required to be placed high enough to prevent small children from activating them. And, as always, change the batteries in smoke detectors and make sure that they are working properly.

Both Capt. Douglas and Fire Marshall Knisely stressed communication between the false alarm reduction unit, the departments and alarm companies and to identify problem alarm systems, correcting the problems and educating the users.

Dealing with Disabilities

By Debbie Hansen

Our final session of the symposium did not disappoint as we gained more knowledge and strategies to successfully work with those who have disabilities. Our panelists included **Lori Ritter** and **Michelle McBee** from Vintage Security as well as **Dayna Brown** from the Howard County Office on Aging. They shared specifics on dementia and those who are defined as disabled according to the Americans with Disabilities Act. **Meredith Wivell** was our moderator as we participated in a group discussion with our panelists and learned more about government programs such as the Silver Alert and Evens Law. Specific strategies to reduce false alarms were shared by not only the panelists but those of us in the room who have dealt with these concerns in our own jurisdictions.



Michelle Henry, from the Howard County ADA office, was unable to attend but provided a wealth of information by providing us with a guidebook on assisting individuals with disabilities. For those of you who weren't able to join us, look for this information on the FARA website!

Group Trip

By Kerri McDonald

The last activity of the symposium was a group trip to Arundel Mills. We started off by playing a team building game! Due to incredible minds of the FARA members they had all the clues figured out in half the time we planned. After the prizes were handed out and pictures taken everyone was free to enjoy this enormous shopping, dining and entertainment destination.



FARA's Believe it or Not

By: Brad Shipp

- **AB: A little burned popcorn results in entire City Hall evacuation**
5.8.14 - Red Deer Advocate - A lunch-time snack turned crispy created smoke in the halls of Red Deer City Hall, setting of alarms and causing the evacuation of the building on Thursday. [More Info](#)
- **CA: Bank Robber Botched Crime With Poorly Written Holdup Note**
5.21.14 - OC Weekly - Santa Ana's Oscar Omar Rodriguez walked into a Bank of America in April 2012, sat down at a desk and used a sticky note pad to scribble a criminal communication. "I need money fast," he wrote b...[More Info](#)
- **CA: Man attempting to rob business locks himself in bathroom**
5.29.14 - The Stockton Record - Stockton – Police were alerted early this morning to investigate an alarm with audible banging noises at a northeast Stockton business. They ended up arresting a man locked inside a bathroom. [More Info](#)
- **MI: Burglar blunder: Teenage thief tries to steal from officer, held for back up**
5.13.14 - Oklahoma's NewsChannel 4 - Georgetown Township, Mich. – A teenager was taken into custody after making a massive mistake. Authorities say 19-year-old Brady Veltman was arrested for first-degree home invasion after breaking into a police officer's car. Audra Guikema said she was getting ready for work when she heard a car alarm go off. She said, "When I looked ... [More Info](#)
- **NJ: Manville: Beeping sound from garbage bag provokes call to police**
5.20.14 - The Manville News - A beeping sound from a black garbage bag brought police to Louis Street and North 7th Avenue at 9:24 a.m. April 28. They found a smoke alarm that still had a battery in it. The battery was removed and the item discarded. [More Info](#)
- **PA: Intoxicated man strays into another's home in Bethlehem**
5.27.14 - WFMZ Allentown - Police said they responded to a burglar alarm. Upon arrival they encountered a man in his 20s, bare feet, in his boxer shorts ... [More Info](#)
- **TX: Odessa Police Seize 20 Pounds of Marijuana After Responding to an Alarm Call**
5.26.14 - News West 9 Midland - Police in Odessa took some drugs off the street after they found more than 20 pounds of marijuana inside a home. The bust happened in the 2700 block of Walnut. [More Info](#)
- **TX: Texas police seek man in miniskirt over bank arson**
5.7.14 - KOSA - An alarm led emergency responders to the fire, which had burned itself out. Police did not immediately return a message Wednesday. [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!

News on Door to Door Sales

Courtesy of NESAs

- **TX: Neighbors on alert after man seen posing as alarm technician**
5.3.14 - KPRC Houston - A man dressed as an alarm security technician rang his doorbell. "He had a clipboard and a very official shirt on, he was ringing doorbells and he let us know ... [More Info](#)
- **AZ: Beware of alarm system scammers in Arizona**
5.6.14 - KTAR 92.3 Phoenix - Summertime scammers should have Valley residents on full alarm. [More Info](#)
- **NL: RNC Warns of Suspicious Door-to-Door Scam**
5.7.14 - Voice of the Common Man - The RNC is 'raising the alarm' about some suspicious door-to-door sales tactics being used in the St. John's area. VOCM's Linda Swain explains. Police have received a number of calls in recent days concerning suspicious individuals going door-to-door selling home security alarm systems. [More Info](#)
- **TX: Liberty residents warned of alarm salesman**
5.8.14 - Dayton News - The Liberty Police Department received information, May 8, about a man going to houses in the City of Liberty claiming he was there to either upgrade current alarms or to sell an alarm. [More Info](#)
- **IN: Alarm policy sparks debate**
5.16.14 - Journal Review - Since February the Crawfordsville City Council has been unable to complete an ordinance to establish an electronic burglary and alarm system policy. Following ... [More Info](#)
- **KS: The alarming costs of false alarms**
5.6.14 - KSN-TV - WICHITA, Kansas — False alarms are a serious concern for law enforcement that affects how many officers are out on the street responding to real emergencies. [More Info](#)
- **WY: Excessive Residential Fire Alarm Ordinance on Tuesday City ...**
5.5.14 - K2 Radio - Under the proposed ordinance, registered homes will be given two free false alarms each year. Homeowners that aren't registered with the city, however, will be ... [More Info](#)
- **Be cautious of door-to-door alarm sales**
The Bandera Bulletin - A scam that had been initiated in the past may pass our way again. Beware of companies soliciting alarm systems door-to-door that are not licensed to install ... [More Info](#)
- **Be on alert of home security system robocalls**
5.16.14 - fox6now.com - These current calls do not appear to come from a legitimate alarm company and are likely fraudulent. Hang up if you receive a similar call. The messages will tell ... [More Info](#)
- **Consumers: Check door-to-door alarm sales licenses**
5.21.14 - The Arizona Republic - Homeowners may be approached this summer by unlicensed door-to-door alarm salespeople [More Info](#)
- **Cedar Rapids Police: Ask for licenses during door-to-door sales**
5.21.14 - KWWL Iowa - The Cedar Rapids Police Department is reminding residents that they must have a license to go door-to-door selling items. [More Info](#)
- **Protect yourself from door-to-door alarm system scams**
5.29.14 - WDAM-TV Hattiesburg - This is a news release from the Mississippi Alarm Association Warm summer months tend to bring out sunscreen, swimsuits and alarm system salespeople. While the majority of these salespeople are from... [More Info](#)

Public Safety Updates

Courtesy of NESAs

- **AZ: False alarms ring in \$650000 for police**
4.28.14 - StarPhoenix - When a burglar alarm goes off in Saskatoon most of the time it's false, leading to thousands of hours of officer effort and approximately \$650,000 in fees being ... [More Info](#)

- **CA: Alarms ignored As police plan to disregard automated alarms, council member wants discussion.**
5.29.14 - Chico News & Review - Jeff King, the owner of Grana, recently received a notice from the company that monitors his downtown restaurant's alarm system. Attached was a letter... [More Info](#)
- **CA: The sheriff, false alarms, tickets & distracted driving**
5.16.14 - Manteca Bulletin - A burglar alarm goes off somewhere in the United States without an actual crime taking place. In excess of 36 million false alarms occur each year. The cost of ...[More Info](#)
- **CT: Trumbull, Conn. council says false alarm offenders' fines won't be waived**
5.6.14 - Security Info Watch - Town requires residents to register home alarms or face a \$100 penalty after the first false alarm... [More Info](#)
- **KY: Fire alarm response costs division upwards of \$1000**
5.2.14 - BG News - To students, fire drills and fire alarms may seem like a hassle, but the biggest cost of a fire drill is one some students probably do not think about. Vince Davis ... [More Info](#)
- **MS: License required to sell alarm systems**
4.30.14 - Jackson Clarion Ledger - If someone comes to your door trying to sell an alarm system, ask to see their license and photo ID issued by the State Fire Marshal's Office," Chaney said in a ... [More Info](#)
- **NC: Greensboro city leaders considering leaf collection, false 911 call fees**
5.28.14 - myfox8.com - "It cost the tax payers \$1,400 every time the fire trucks go out on a false alarm, so that can get very expensive very quickly," explains Tony Wilkins, a Greensboro ... [More Info](#)
- **NC: New fees, layoffs may close \$5 million Greensboro budget gap**
4.23.14 - Greensboro News & Record - The police department recommended increasing the fines when officers have to respond to a false alarm and a new \$25 annual fee for owners to register their ... [More Info](#)
- **NE: City to take over alarm registration service**
5.27.14 - Lincoln Journal Star - The city is taking over the registration and billing service for burglar and fire alarms in homes and businesses from a private company whose four-year contract is ... [More Info](#)
- **ON: Burglaries could rise if police scale back alarm response, security ...**
5.28.14 - Toronto Star - Torontonians may be more vulnerable to burglaries if the police stop sending officers to alarm calls, even if an overwhelming number of calls are false, warns the ... [More Info](#)
- **TN: Olive Branch to charge firms for excessive false alarms**
5.29.14 - Memphis Commercial Appeal - Olive Branch city officials plan to start charging businesses for excessive false fire alarms to end repeated, unnecessary calls that tie up manpower and equipment. [More Info](#)
- **TX: State Fire Marshal's Notice - Licensing Requirements Related to Sound Sensors for Smoke Alarms in 1- and 2- Family Dwellings**
May 2014 - The State Fire Marshal's Office continues to receive questions related to a new wireless device that senses the alarm sound from existing smoke alarms in a house and transmits the signal to a central monitoring station. [More Info](#)
- **TX: State Fire Marshal's Notice- Household Fire Alarm Systems – Test of Transmission Signal to Remote Monitoring Location**
May 2014- The State Fire Marshal's Office has been made aware that some alarm dealers and monitoring stations may not be providing the required monthly test of alarm signal transmission on residential systems – or may not be taking action if/when the monthly test signal is not received. [More Info](#)
- **WA: Fire monitoring system to end**
5.16.14 - KING5.com - "Some of that will fall on the alarm dealers and some of that will fall on the customers that didn't realize the urgency and wanted to wait until it was absolutely ...[More Info](#)

Industry News

Courtesy of NESAs

- **ASG buys in Louisiana, Florida**
4.23.14 - Security Systems News - Beltsville, Md.—Bolstering its platforms in Louisiana and Florida, super-regional security company ASG on April 22 announced two acquisitions, one in each state. Which companies did ASG acquire and why is the company so pleased with its Q1 results? [More Info](#)

- Guardian Alarm acquires in Ohio**
 4.23.14 - Security Systems News - Southfield, Mich.—Guardian Alarm, a super-regional based here, has strengthened its Ohio presence by acquiring a longtime security company in the Cleveland market, according to Guardian President David Goldstein. Which company did Guardian buy and why does Goldstein say that the employees Guardian gained in the deal are as valuable as the accounts it acquired? [More Info](#)
- Intrusion detection challenges: Reducing false alarms with ...**
 4.23.14 - SourceSecurity.com - Highly sensitive devices can cause too many false alarms, while devices with insufficient sensitivity are easily defeated by sophisticated intruders. Innovations in ... [More Info](#)
- Smoke alarms show little progress since WISN 12 investigation**
 4.24.14 - WISN 12 Milwaukee - Ten years ago, WISN 12 News alerted officials that children may not wake to the sound of a smoke alarm. WISN 12 News reporter Kent Wainscott checked on what has changed since then. [More Info](#)
- AT&T's Digital Life to sound the alarm in 7 new markets**
 4.25.14 - Communications, Engineering & Design Magazine - Starting today, AT&T's home automation and security service, which is called "Digital Life," is available in seven new markets. The latest launches coincided with ... [More Info](#)
- Judge stays ADT's second lawsuit against Vision Security**
 4.30.14 – SSN - ADT ordered to first comply with previous settlement agreement it made with the door-knocking company in an earlier lawsuit over deceptive sales techniques... [More Info](#)
- BSIA partners with ACPO to reduce false alarm numbers**
 5.12.14 - SourceSecurity.com - Police are now more likely than ever to respond to genuine alarm activations, thanks to a partnership approach between Police and the private security industry, ...[More Info](#)
- Nest recalling 440K smoke alarms for safety risk**
 5.21.14 - ABC 7 Chicago - Nest Labs is recalling 440,000 smoke alarms to fix a feature that could prevent the alarm from sounding immediately. [More Info](#)
- ADT Offers \$25,000 Reward to Help Stop Security Sales Scams**
 5.27.14 - Business Wire via Yahoo! Finance - Alarmed by an increasing number of consumer complaints about deceptive home security sales tactics, industry leader ADT has announced it will award up to \$25,000 for proof of a company training its sales teams to be deceitful. [More Info](#)
- Can you hear it now: Low frequency tones a new requirement for smoke, CO detectors**
 5.27.14 – Security Info Watch - NFPA 72 mandated accommodation for the hearing impaired expected to benefit everyone... [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

False Alarm Reduction Association

Comments and suggestions regarding FARA's InfoLink are both encouraged and welcomed. If you would like to submit an article for publication, or if you have any questions or concerns about this newsletter, please contact the

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