



InfoLink

Information for Public Safety False Alarm Reduction Professionals

FARA Infolink October 2005

- Call For Entries- PDQ Award
- Update on Communications Committee Efforts
- FARA Board Conducts Productive Mid Year Meeting
- FARA Joins with the North Texas Alarm Association to Produce Training Video
- You Don't Have to Leave Your Heart to Enjoy San Francisco!
- FARA Seeking Multi-Jurisdictional Alarm Users to Join Association
- Greenville County, South Carolina Sees Fantastic Results
- Brink's Home Security Recognized for Second Consecutive Year by J.D. Power and Associates
- CryWolf Incorporates the FARA Universal Permit/Registration Form in Their Software.
- New False Fire Alarm Ordinance Goes Into Effect In Gainesville, Florida
- Montgomery County, Maryland Conducts Community Outreach
- Featured Bulletin - The Holidays
- Brink's Home Security Opens Frederick, Maryland Office to Handle Growth
- Some Say Dallas Proposal Is Cause For Alarm
- Newspaper Survey Reveals Alarm Systems Lacking in Serial Burglary Spree
- Alton, N.H., Updates Ordinance for Fire and Security Alarms

Call For Entries

"Promoting Partnerships in Public Safety"

Security companies and law enforcement agencies work together as partners, sharing information and communicating frequently to protect public safety and serve their communities. The [Security Industry Alarm Coalition](#) (SIAC) and the [False Alarm Reduction Association](#) (FARA) have created the **POLICE DISPATCH QUALITY** program to promote cooperative best practices, to reduce unnecessary dispatches and give officers the most complete information when responding to alarms.

Examples of police department and security company cooperation are now being collected to help create best practices guidelines in the PDQ program **co-sponsored by Honeywell Security and Security Sales & Integration Magazine**. The best overall collaboration will be honored with the **North American PDQ Award for 2006**.



- A representative from the winning security company team will receive an all-expense paid trip to the awards ceremony in Las Vegas at ISC West on April 4, 2006.
- Monitoring and/or installing alarm dealers in the U.S. and Canada must mail an application postmarked by Dec. 1, 2005.
- Outstanding program ideas will be highlighted in Security Sales & Integration Magazine, in security association publications and their web sites and at ISC West in Las Vegas.
- Security companies and local police officials should meet now to form partnerships in public safety.

Download an application and the "Getting Started" Guide at www.siacinc.org or www.faraonline.org

If you know of alarm companies, which excel at reducing false alarms, have a high level of customer service and established good working relationships with area public safety agencies, contact them and strongly suggest that they apply for the first ever PDQ Award. Remember, applications must be postmarked no later than December 1, 2005. Let's help reward those alarm companies that go above and beyond and help to make our jobs easier and more productive.

Update on Communications Committee Efforts

The Communications Committee has been hard at work reviewing some existing FARA publications and creating new ones designed to give our members more information on up-and-coming issues. The Committee just recently completed revisions to the Job Descriptions for Alarm Unit Staff manual, which will be available on line very soon. FARA's Quick Reference for Alarm Equipment manual has been completely reworked into a massive Guide to Alarm Equipment and will become a joint effort with the National Electronic Security Alliance (NESA). It provides extensive detail on all alarm system components, their use, advantages and disadvantages and major causes of false alarms, among other things. The FARA/NBFAA Model Burglar Alarm Ordinance is also being revised. Both documents should be ready for publication prior to the FARA Annual International Training Symposium in San Francisco in April 2006.

Other work the Communications Committee has been working on include new bulletins on audio and video verification and Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP), a membership recruitment notice for multi-jurisdictional alarm users, and a protocol for the electronic filing of alarm user permits/registrations. FARA's five false alarm reduction brochures (for residential, business, churches, schools and banks) are being translated into Spanish and should be ready in the near future.

Work that is still on the "plate" but not yet completed includes manuals on writing annual reports, working with third-party alarm administrators and understanding the new NFPA 731 standard. The Communications Committee is actively seeking greater participation and would welcome any time you can offer for the good of the association. If you are interested in joining this committee, please contact FARA's Executive Director Brad Shipp at bradshipp@4yoursolution.com.

FARA Board Conducts Productive Mid Year Meeting

The FARA Board of Directors conducted its mid-year meeting in Dallas from September 30 through October 1, 2005. A wide variety of topics were covered including the approval of new members, various training courses conducted by Board members, acceptance of credit cards to pay for membership and training symposiums, and grant opportunities. The Board received committee reports from committee chairs on work that has been accomplished, as well as additional initiatives scheduled for completion. Extensive discussion was held on creating more opportunities and training on the false fire alarm issue. Bylaw amendments to accommodate more participation by public safety and industry fire officials will be recommended to the membership for vote in San Francisco. Regional training sites were selected for the coming year. The Board also approved the Conference Committee's recommended agenda for the San Francisco training symposium and selected Denver as the training symposium site for 2009.

FARA Joins with the North Texas Alarm Association to Produce Training Video

FARA is helping to sponsor and is working with the North Texas Alarm Association (NTAA) to create a consumer training video regarding the importance of reducing false alarms, which will include information on the burden false alarms place on public safety agencies. The video project began, in part, based on recent revisions to the alarm ordinance in Texas, which requires alarm user training on alarm ordinances, how to reduce false alarms, and how to properly operate the alarm system.

The professional video, which will be six to eight minutes in length, will cover the legal mandates in Texas, as well as discuss how to arm and disarm the system, the importance of compliance with all state and local ordinances, the need for communicating errors to the monitoring center, proper use of the alarm system and the impact false alarms have on public safety and the taxpayer at large.

The video will be made available to association members free of charge and gives the latitude to add personal introductions from individual alarm companies. FARA will take the raw footage and produce a more generic version, removing Texas specific provisions, which will be available on our web site under consumer information. The goal is to have the video complete by January 1, 2006.

You Don't Have to Leave Your Heart to Enjoy San Francisco!

Fine food, plenty of sites, the finest training and prime networking all await you in San Francisco April 24 to 28, 2006. The training agenda has been completed and will include such topics as understanding alarm systems, working with the media, getting reductions in the real world, effective ordinance management and proactive alarm industry false alarm prevention steps, among others. The symposium registration packets will be mailed to the membership before the end of October and is also now available on-line at FARA's web site. Don't get left out of this unique opportunity to learn how you can reduce false alarms in your community.

The International Training Symposium will be held at the world-famous Fisherman's Wharf. Our host hotel offers easy access to Pier 39, the Cannery, Harbor Cruises and Ghirardelli Square. Across from the Powell and Mason Cable Car Line, our downtown hotel is a mile from the bustling Union Square, the Financial District and Nob Hill. You can make your reservations on line directly from FARA's web page!

Visit our web site – <http://www.faraonline.org> for more information.

FARA Seeking Multi-Jurisdictional Alarm Users to Join Association

FARA has been working cooperatively with the alarm industry on a wide variety of initiatives for many years. One segment of FARA's alarm management efforts has been missing, however, and that is the alarm user. In keeping with FARA's mission to foster an environment of cooperation among law enforcement, the alarm industry and *the alarm user*, the Communications Committee was charged with developing initiatives that would bring more end users into the fold. The Communications Committee developed and published a one-sheet informational bulletin, which describes the benefits multi-jurisdictional alarm users; i.e., national and large regional companies, would realize by becoming members of the False Alarm Reduction Association. The bulletin helps alarm users understand that they have a large role to play in the reduction of false alarms and can assist public safety and alarm industry personnel to understand the challenges they face. In working together cooperatively, all parties can develop strategies that reduce false alarms. Alarm users should also have a voice in the creation and enactment of fair alarm management ordinances and multi-jurisdictional FARA members can serve as advocates for end users in that arena. FARA members are encouraged to recruit multi-jurisdictional alarm users and can download and print the bulletin at www.faraonline.org.

Greenville County, South Carolina Sees Fantastic Results

The Sheriff's Office in Greenville County, South Carolina started enforcing an alarm ordinance in November 2000. Since they were able to install the CryWolf false alarm tracking and billing computer software system in 2003, they have been successful in reducing the number of false alarms public safety responded to by 56%. FARA member Joe Patterson, Alarm Coordinator for the GCSO, reported that the number of requests for dispatch in 2004 dropped by 10,117 calls from 2003. Joe also reported that new home construction is in full swing, and he will be approaching the Home Builders Association to request that false alarm reduction information, including a registration form, be included in the builder's final package presented to all new homeowners. Kudos to Joe and Greenville County for effecting such meaningful false alarm reduction!

Brink's Home Security Recognized for Second Consecutive Year by J.D. Power and Associates

Brink's Home Security has been recognized two consecutive years for customer service excellence under the J.D. Power and Associates Certified Call Center Program.

Brink's Home Security, headquartered in Irving, TX, is one of the largest and fastest-growing providers of monitored security services to single-family residences and commercial properties in North America. Operating in more than 250 metropolitan areas in 44 states and two provinces in Canada, Brink's services over 970,000 customers.

Brink's passed a detailed audit of its recruiting, training, employee incentives, leadership roles and responsibilities, and quality assurance capabilities. In addition, customers who contacted these centers during the audit period were surveyed to measure customer satisfaction.

"To surpass the rigorous standards of the certification process two years in a row is a testament to Brink's Home Security's strong on-going commitment to providing its customers with a consistent, positive experience with its call centers. Brink's has created a highly customer-focused culture that stresses the importance of meeting customer needs at every touch point opportunity. Brink's customers give particularly high ratings to both its customer service representatives and call center operations in general," said J.D. Power and Associates.

For certification status, a call center must perform within the top 20 percent of customer service on both internal metrics and external customer satisfaction, based on J.D. Power and Associates' cross-industry customer satisfaction research.

Brink's Home Security's keen focus and dedication to providing rapid response and peace of mind 24 hours a day have positioned the company as the standard bearer for service quality in the home security industry.

The Call Center Certification Program was launched by J.D. Power and Associates in 2004 to evaluate overall customer satisfaction and help call centers in various industries increase their efficiency and effectiveness by establishing best practices for handling service calls.

CryWolf Incorporates the FARA Universal Permit Form in Their Software

AOT Public Safety Corporation, the developer of the CryWolf false alarm tracking and billing software, has incorporated the FARA Universal Permit/Registration Form into their product. FARA is grateful to AOT for their willingness to embrace FARA materials and assist public safety throughout North America in developing comprehensive alarm management programs. By including the Universal Permit/Registration Form, the document will receive more exposure and will, hopefully, become the "standard" making it easier for a smooth transition to electronic filing of permits/registrations.

New False Fire Alarm Ordinance Goes Into Effect in Gainesville, Florida

Safety for its citizens is the driving force behind the new False Fire Alarm Ordinance that took effect in Alachua County and the City of Gainesville on July 1. Mirrored after the highly successful False Burglar Alarm Ordinance, the goal of the new ordinance is to reduce the amount of false fire alarms in both the city and the county.

Fire alarms are designed to protect lives and property, and when properly installed, maintained and operated, are a critical component to any home or business. Due to misuse and/or abuse, however, fire alarms can become an unfortunate liability.

When Fire Department crews respond to a false fire alarm, it takes personnel out of their call area, reducing the response to legitimate emergencies.

Alachua County Fire Rescue and Gainesville Fire Rescue have responded to over 9,000 false alarms since 2002. During the calendar year 2004 alone, GFR responded to 2,331 false alarms while ACFR was dispatched to nearly one thousand false fire alarms.

What exactly is a false alarm? A false alarm is any fire dispatch or response initiated automatically by a fire alarm system and which is determined by the fire department upon arrival not to be an actual fire or similar emergency.

As of July 1, a permit is required for both **monitored** and **unmonitored** alarm systems. If an alarm system is monitored by a remote monitoring agency, has an audible horn or emits a signal that summons the local Fire Department, a permit will now be required. Should homeowners already possess a valid residential burglar alarm permit, a second fee will not be required for the fire alarm permit. However, additional paperwork will have to be filed for the fire alarm permit. Commercial building owners must permit each building separately and pay a separate permit fee for each.

All permitted sites are given one free false alarm per year and thereafter fines begin at \$25 and continue to increase with each additional false alarm. On the high end, a false alarm can cost a business or homeowner \$400, and additional excessive false alarms could force them to re-permit their system at a fee of \$50. Additionally, if the business or residence is discovered to be non-permitted, there is an automatic fine of \$200, so everybody is encouraged to permit their system as soon as possible.

The False Alarm Reduction Unit offers a False Alarm Awareness Class. If system users attend the class, one fine may be written off during their permitted year.

Montgomery County, Maryland Conducts Community Outreach

In an effort to reach more citizens and get the word out about false alarms and their detrimental effect on public safety, the Montgomery County Police Department, False Alarm Reduction Section (FARS), has begun to conduct outreach at various community activities around the county. Starting with the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair in August, the FARS staff talked with hundreds of county citizens about the importance of reducing false alarms and the costs involved to public safety, the alarm user, the alarm industry and the public at large. FARS staff have also participated in district station open houses and talked with alumni of the MCPD's Citizens Academy. More events are planned for the future.



FARS staff handed out reminder trinkets including balsa airplanes, punching bags, and bracelets for the kids and letter and jar openers for the adults, all with printed information on how to contact the FARS and using the universal "no false" symbol.

Featured Bulletin - The Holidays

Are you ready for the Holidays? Well it's that time again. Christmas decorations will soon start replacing the Halloween merchandise.

Don't let your Holiday Season be ruined by false alarms! There are simple steps you can take to avoid what could be costly mistakes, while at the same time creating a lovely holiday atmosphere in your home or business.



The full list of bulletins, which have been approved by the board, can be accessed on our web site at http://www.faraonline.org/html/consumer_tips.html

Brink's Home Security Opens Frederick, Maryland Office to Handle Growth

High growth levels in the housing market of Montgomery and Frederick Counties have fueled the demand for home security systems, and Brink's Home Security is opening a new office in Frederick, MD to meet the needs of this market. The branch office is located, along with a number of other new businesses and hotels in the area, at 5111 Pegasus Court, Suite A.

"As our business continues to grow, we need new offices to more conveniently serve our customers. The branch office in Frederick will not only help us to enhance local service, but will also benefit our employees and reduce expenses by cutting down on drive times to the homes and businesses we serve," said Keith Patterson, Vice President of Region Operations for Brink's Home Security.

The new office will handle territory previously covered by other Brink's Home Security branches in Sterling, VA and Lanham, MD. It will be fully staffed with a sales force, technicians and administrative personnel.

"We're pleased to join the Frederick community and look forward to a strong relationship with the community and our customers," Patterson added.

The Frederick Brink's Home Security Branch Office will be headed by General Manager Brian Schmidt, who recently joined Brink's Home Security from Terminix International, where he served as the Branch Manager in the Baltimore/Washington, D.C. area. The Technical Manager will be John Weatherholtz, and he will be in charge of the system installation and service of monitored security systems.

Some Say Proposal Is Cause For Alarm

Dallas: Police say verified response saves time; residents fear crime

09:08 AM CDT on Thursday, October 13, 2005
By DAVE LEVINTHAL / The Dallas Morning News

If a burglar alarm rings but no police answer, does it really make a sound?

Such was the theme Wednesday at Dallas City Hall, as dozens of people, some shouting, crying or waxing philosophical, battled over a contentious police response proposal before the City Council during a marathon public hearing. Known as "verified response," the policy proposal would require private alarm companies to verify the validity of an activated alarm before sworn officers respond.

Dallas police say that the vast majority of sounding alarms are false, and that responding to them wastes officers' time and contributes little to overall public safety.

Opponents' primary argument: A verified response policy would render alarms all but useless, prompting burglars, who would no longer fear apprehension, to invade private property at will. The disabled and elderly, they say, would be particularly susceptible to crime. "Burglars – they will have a field day in our city. The image of Dallas will be one even more dangerous than it already is," Brent Sonntag told the council. "How will you convince residents that this is an improvement in their quality of life? You cannot," Charles O'Neal said.

Supporters of verified response, however, argued that the policy proposal would allow police to address more pressing crimes. Police roundly back it. A letter signed by the presidents of six Dallas police organizations – the Dallas Police Association, Latino Police Officers Association, Texas Peace Officers Association, Asian Police Officers Association, Dallas Police Executive Lodge No. 89 and the Dallas Fraternal Order of Police No. 588 – states that verified response would "enable the men and women of the Dallas Police Department to provide emergency services more promptly by alleviating the burden of responding to thousands of false burglar alarms each year."

Police Chief David Kunkle described verified response as "good public policy and terrible politics." "Frankly, I don't know how to do a good job communicating the message ... that this will result in quicker response on average," Chief Kunkle told the council, noting that unverified burglary calls already are low priority calls. "I don't know anything we can do to generate better results with minimal risk to the public." Under verified response, private security officers would on average respond to alarms more quickly than Dallas police do today, the chief said.

About 50 people, most of whom opposed the plan to stop responding to unverified alarms, spoke at the meeting. Under verified response, Dallas police would continue to respond to panic alarms, 911 calls and direct burglary reports as priority calls.

"Burglar alarms are not a public safety issue," said Larry Davis, chairman of the council-appointed Commission on Productivity and Innovation, which supports verified response. "The alarm industry is emotionally pumping up these people at the detriment of their customers just for their own pocketbooks. They are scared to death they won't be able to sell alarms."

Most of the more than 50 residents who addressed the council – rarely in recent years have so many people done so at once – opposed the verified response policy proposal. At least 200 additional people, including alarm company representatives and police officers from Salt Lake City, gathered at City Hall for the public hearing, forcing building staff to open an overflow room above the main council chambers.

The atmosphere? Charged. The audience frequently ignored Mayor Laura Miller's requests not to applaud, and occasionally shouted down the few advocates of verified response who spoke before the council. "Now, now, now, now, now ... don't get testy," Ms. Miller warned them after a loud round of boos. "All right, all right, all right ... quiet," she implored later after loud groans. "I understand the arguments on both sides," the mayor said, adding that she remains neutral on the issue. "We must free officers up, but at what cost?"

The council voted to extend the public hearing for an additional hour, resuming Oct. 26. A vote on verified response is not yet scheduled.

Newspaper Survey Reveals Alarm Systems Lacking in Serial Burglary Spree

Oct 12, 2005, SPRINGFIELD, Ill. -- A newspaper examining an explosion of burglaries in Springfield, Ill., in July found one trait common: A lack of an alarm system. Even then, burglar alarms didn't give homeowners complete immunity from burglaries because many system owners forgot to turn them on according to a survey conducted by the State Journal Register.

The survey was part of the newspaper's analysis of the 89 residential burglaries reported to Springfield Police in July to determine who was more likely to get robbed. The survey found that only 6 percent of the respondents had burglar alarms, while one person was robbed because he didn't turn his on.

Additionally, the survey found that 70 percent of the burglaries took place during the week, 35 percent of those robbed had dogs and 47 percent had no idea if they had a neighborhood watch program. According to the Register, it is estimated that only about 60 percent of home burglaries in the U.S. are usually reported to the police.

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Alton, N.H., Updates Ordinance for Fire and Security Alarms

New fire alarm requirements include strobes, Knox boxes; higher fines for false security and fire alarms

SIW Editorial Staff- SecurityInfoWatch.com

Alton, N.H., is yet another town on this week's round-up of cities across the nation that are updating their alarm ordinances. Following a number of problematic responses to alarms in the town, the city has responded with more stringent measures to reduce false alarms and ensure proper response, according to a report on the (Laconia, N.H.) Citizen Online.

As part of the new ordinance, facilities and residences armed with fire alarms will need to have a lockable box on the exterior that includes a building master key, a list of emergency alarm contacts and

information on operating the alarm system. The ordinance also requires that alarmed structures feature a red strobe on the exterior to indicate to responders that the structure is the source of the fire alarm call. The ordinance also includes an increase in false alarm fines. First false security alarm responses within the year will not be fined; second responses will cost \$50; a third false alarm will be assessed \$100; fourth and additional false alarms will be billed \$250 per instance.

A similar fee structure will be in place for false fire alarms. First offense is free; second is fined \$250; the third false alarm is billed \$500; and subsequent false alarms will be charged \$750 per instance. The new ordinance also allows a clause for the police or fire department to stop responding to structures that have a very high number of false alarms.

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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 managers 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 law enforcement, the alarm industry and the alarm users.

Contact Us

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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 FARA Board of Directors at 301/519-9237, or by e-mail at: info@faraonline.org

Submitted articles in this newsletter are the expressed opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Officers and Directors of FARA.