



InfoLink

Information for Public Safety False Alarm Reduction Professionals

FARA InfoLink October 2006

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Mid-Year Board of Directors Meeting a Great Success

The FARA Board of Directors held its semi-annual meeting September 29-30, 2006 in Charleston, South Carolina, site of FARA's 2008 training symposium. Even in light of cancelled flights and marathon drives, the meeting was a huge success with numerous topics covered and the opportunity to tour historic Charleston and see all it has to offer our symposium attendees in 2008. The Board signed a contract with the Francis Marion Hotel, located right in the heart of downtown Charleston, as the host hotel for 2008.

FARA Treasurer Steve Heggemann reported that the financial status of the association is great! For the first time ever, FARA has invested some of its revenues to better provide for the future of the association, and Steve will continue to look for additional investment opportunities to solidify our standing. In other financial news, Steve reported that use of credit cards for payment of membership dues and training symposiums is working well and makes it easier for members and attendees to submit membership and symposium fees. On-line credit card acceptance is in the works and should be available in the not-too-distant future.

The Board discussed new proposals, such as an opt-in subscription service designed for retailers, alarm users and alarm companies, that will provide education and initiatives on false alarm reduction and alarm management. Heavy emphasis was given to developing a Fire Committee within FARA to help those working with false fire alarms. The Board agreed that the Dallas training symposium provides us with a great opportunity to kick off this effort. Committee reports were also given and demonstrate that an incredible amount of work is being done on behalf of FARA members. Recruitment of new members and how to better get the

word out about FARA was also discussed. Finally, a good amount of time was given to discussing the Dallas training symposium and how to make it the best ever for our members.

Bylaw Amendments Proposed

Any member in good standing may submit a proposal to amend or repeal any section of the bylaws. Any and all proposed change(s) shall be submitted to the Secretary at least 120 days prior (December 24, 2007) to the next regular membership meeting. The following changes were considered by the Board of Directors at the 2007 Mid Year meeting and are submitted to the members for consideration.

ARTICLE 2. PURPOSE, MISSION and OBJECTIVES

Section 2. Mission: It is the mission of the False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA) to provide a forum for local government alarm ordinance managers 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 user.

ARTICLE 5. MEMBERSHIP

Section 2. Public Safety Membership: Public safety members are entitled to all benefits and rights offered by the association. Public safety memberships shall be open to government agencies charged with responsibility for that government's alarm management. The agency may designate one or more employees as FARA members, for a maximum of five (5) per agency. Each public safety membership is allowed one vote on any issue before the membership, regardless of the number of government employees contained within each public safety membership. The agency must identify one primary point of contact, who will then receive the newsletter and other FARA related materials on behalf of the agency. The individuals covered under an agency membership may change in the course of the membership period as long as the agency notifies FARA and the individuals shall meet the following requirements:

- A. Willing and agree to conduct themselves in accordance with the bylaws of FARA for the purpose of advancing the purposes of the association.
- B. The individuals are employed by the government agency and are either charged with the responsibility for that government's alarm management or work in a unit, office or other group that is responsible for that government's alarm management.
- C. Submitted an application to the FARA which was accepted and approved under procedures established by the Board of Directors as meeting the criteria for Public Safety Membership set forth in these bylaws.

Section 3. Associate Members: Associate members are generally entitled to all benefits and rights offered by the association with the exception that associate members may not vote on any issue before the association other than to vote for the Associate Board Members. Associate membership shall be open to any individual who shall meet the following requirements:

- A. Does not meet the requirements for public safety membership but has a vested interest in advancing the purposes of the association.
 - B. Willing and agrees to conduct themselves in accordance with the bylaws of the FARA for the purpose of advancing the purposes of the association.
 - C. Submitted an application to the FARA which was accepted and approved under procedures established by the Board of Directors as meeting the criteria for associate membership set forth in these bylaws.
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PDQ Nominations Now Being Accepted

The PDQ Award was created by the False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA) and the Security Industry Alarm Coalition (SIAC) to promote partnerships in public safety and to recognize those companies that understand the impact of false alarm responses on all parties involved and develop comprehensive programs to reduce or eliminate false dispatches. The Police Dispatch Quality (PDQ) Award is presented to the security company that demonstrates outstanding collaborative efforts to reduce unneeded public safety dispatches while providing superior service to the customers and communities it serves.



If you know of alarm companies, which excel at reducing false alarms, have a high level of customer service and have established good working relationships with area public safety agencies, contact them and strongly suggest that they apply for the 2007 PDQ Award. Applications must be postmarked no later than December 31, 2006. Let's help reward those alarm companies that go above and beyond and help to make our jobs easier and more productive.

The best overall collaboration will be honored with the **North American PDQ Award for 2007** and will receive:

- A custom-made PDQ Award and/or certificate
- Presentation of the award at a ceremony in the alarm company's town from their local law enforcement representative with local press coverage
- A \$1000 check to cover expenses for one representative to attend the 2007 ISC West Show for the formal presentation of the award
- Photo of your company receiving the award inside a subsequent issue of Security Sales and Integration Magazine
- Official press release and listing on SIAC's, FARA's and Security Sales and Integration's web sites

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

False Alarm Appeals – How Creative Can You Be?

We have often heard that alarm users can be very creative when filing appeals on false alarms. One FARA Board member was so enamored of the following appeal that he had to share it with everyone. How would you have responded to this appeal? Grant or deny?

Jim:

I am pleading here.....to dismiss us from ALARM SCHOOL! I realize we have had 3 false alarms at this location! However....even though they were at this location, none...absolutely none of them were the fault of any bank personnel!

Alarm #1 was set off in error by a construction worker upstairs...way back in March. The one in May was due to the storm we had, and the most recent one, this month (sorry!) was because there was a new cleaner on the crew that got here early and did not know how to disarm the alarm!!!

Could you please "let us off the hook" this time? Gayle has her AA meetings, Aloyshia has

Gamblers Anonymous, I have Weight Watchers, Jo Ann has classes for imprudent driving, Mike is going to confession...and only GOD knows how long that'll take! Could you please excuse us from this class on OCT 26th????

Thanks much! VERY much!

Featured Bulletin – Enhanced Call Verification – Avoiding False Alarms



Enhanced Call Verification (ECV) is a simple and effective way alarm users and alarm companies can help avoid sending law enforcement to false alarms. It requires alarm companies to attempt to verify alarm activations by making a minimum of two phone calls to two different numbers prior to requesting law enforcement dispatch. This new bulletin is directed to alarm users and helps to explain ECV, how it reduces false alarms, and why it is a good thing to ask your alarm company to do.

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

FARA Exhibits at Security Canada

On October 18 and 19th at the Toronto Congress Centre in Toronto, Ontario, Chris Van Geest of the Hamilton Police Service staffed a display of FARA brochures and publications seen by alarm dealers from throughout Canada.



FARA congratulates Chris for her initiative in arranging the display and urges other FARA members to follow her example.

Password Security Still Weak

One in three workers writing passwords down on notepaper at desk, or saving in text file on PC

Reuters Baseline.com

NEW YORK--One in three people write down computer passwords, undermining their security, and companies should look to more advanced methods, including biometrics, to ensure their systems are safe, a new study shows.

A study released on Tuesday by global research firms Nucleus Research and KnowledgeStorm found companies' attempts to tighten IT security by regularly changing passwords and making them more complex by adding numbers as well as letters had no impact on security.

Staff still had a tendency to jot down passwords either on a piece of paper or in a text file on a PC or mobile device.

"This is really a lot like mom and dad buying a great new security system for the house and junior leaving the combination under the door mat," David O'Connell, senior analyst at Nucleus Research, told Reuters.

The study, which surveyed 325 U.S. employees, found that a single sign-on system is just as effective as more complex schemes and that user education on the importance of proper password protection did not deter employees from their lax habits.

"Passwords are high maintenance. People forget them, people lose them, they have to be reset. Resending passwords is time intensive and costly. It takes up time at a help desk," said O'Connell.

The report suggested companies look instead to biometrics, such as voice recognition Devices or thumbprint scanners, or cognitive biometrics, the latest security system that learns characteristics about you while you tell a story in the form of multiple choice answers.

"It's these higher order techniques that companies need to shift to in order to get away from passwords," said O'Connell.

False Alarms Drop after Little Rock Changes Ordinance

LR code that raised fines, added rules cited as cause for 66 percent decline

BY BRANDON TUBBS ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

A new ordinance is drastically reducing the number of false burglar-alarm calls police in Little Rock have to handle, city officials believe.

Police responded to 3,718 false burglar-alarm calls through the first seven months of 2006, 7,343 fewer than during the first seven months of 2005 - a 66 percent decrease.

While he hesitates to say that the ordinance has permanently reduced the number of false alarms police deal with, "It's had an impact," said Bob Biles, the city's finance director. His department tracks and documents false alarms in the city.

City officials sought to reduce false alarms - burglar, fire and other alarms - through the ordinance, which took effect Jan. 1. It increased the maximum fine for a false alarm from \$96 to \$200. It also requires alarm owners to register their systems and allows alarm companies to place two telephone calls to the owner before calling police. If an owner informs the alarm company there is no trouble and provides the correct pass code, police are never dispatched. If the owner cancels the call while police are en route, owners pay a discounted fine for the false alarm.

The first three false alarms are free.

Fire and medical emergency calls are dispatched immediately.

Statistics on non-burglar alarms responded to by emergency workers in the city so far this year were not available.

Fewer false alarms frees the city's police to patrol areas as needed and respond to actual emergencies. Little Rock Police Officer Michelle Hill, a department spokesman, believes the two-call notification portion of the ordinance in particular has reduced the number of false alarms her department has had to handle.

"It has helped because it has allowed the owner to have a little bit of discretion on what the alarm is," Hill said.

City officials have put the average cost of responding to a false alarm at \$96, a figure that would mean the city has saved about \$705,000 so far this year. A U.S. Department of Justice study put the nationwide cost in 1998 at \$42 per call. Using those numbers, Little Rock would have saved about \$308,000.

The lower number of false alarms, however, also has cut back on the fines the city has collected. The city collected \$122,010 through the end of July 2005 in false alarm fines, and \$67,000 through July of this year.

Increasing numbers of false alarm calls are a problem in many communities around the country, leading many local governments to consider ordinances similar to Little Rock's. As the cost of placing alarm systems in homes has declined, new homes have increasingly been built with the wiring needed for alarm systems, said Stanley Hanson of the False Alarm Reduction Association, a nine-year-old international organization of government and public safety officials. The presence of more alarm systems has resulted in more false alarms, said Hanson, who also is alarm administrator for the city of Palm Bay, Fla.

Several factors contribute to false alarms. Systems do require maintenance, and lightning and animals can sometimes cause motion detectors to set off the alarm. But the biggest factor leading to false alarms, he and others said, is that alarm-system owners often don't fully understand how to arm and disarm their systems.

In Arkansas, at least 16 cities have false-alarm ordinances, said Jordon Brown, training coordinator for the Arkansas Security Alarm Association.

But the ordinances have not come without disagreement.

Some alarm companies have argued that fines should not be levied, since taxes pay for police services. Brown, however, likened a false alarm to a false 911 call.

"If somebody calls 911, that person needs to need response," Brown said. A non-emergency call to 911 is a waste of resources, money and time, he said.

"When an alarm goes off, there needs to be a reason for it to go off and a reason for officers to respond," Brown said.

Within the past five years, alarm companies overwhelmingly have started working with the false alarm association and government officials to help draft ordinances, Hanson said.

"We all have to face this problem, and it's not going to go away," Hanson said.

This article was published 08/28/2006

Alarm Ordinance Promises to Reduce False Alarms in City of San Rafael

Sep 6, 2006, SAN RAFAEL, CALIF. -- In an earlier story, *San Rafael Aims to Reduce Costly False Alarms*, dated Aug. 10, *Security Sales & Integration* covered the city of San Rafael's efforts to curb false alarms that was costing the city upwards to \$250,000 a year. As outlined by the city of San Rafael's Web site, between 2005 and 2006, 3,224 alarm calls were received by the city, 708 which were canceled prior to dispatch. Twenty-six of the remaining 2,516 involved valid burglar alarm signals, leaving a total of 2,490 alarm calls as false. The resulting cost to the community is allegedly \$253,756, or the equivalent of two full-time police officers.

In a meeting held on Aug. 9 by Chief Tom Simms of the San Rafael Police Department, Captain Mike Keller addressed the issue of a draft ordinance designed to curb false alarms in the city. He explained that a date had not yet been set for Council to review and vote on the proposed ordinance.

According to the city of San Rafael's Web site, Margo Rohrbacher and Peggy Ruge introduced the process and costs associated with a typical alarm when received by a valid central station facility.

By the time a police dispatcher enters the call into the system and dispatches a police cruiser four minutes has elapsed. The assigned cost for this portion of the overall call, according to San Rafael, is \$5.75. By the time police respond and a police officer contacts the alarm system owner or contact, 20 minutes has elapsed, costing the department \$75.83.

An additional step introduced into the process, as outlined by San Rafael's Web site, involves a public service officer's review of the alarm call. During this time the officer will determine whether the alarm system is licensed by the city and whether the alarm was false. If it was false, the officer must then write warning letter or issue an invoice. This step is estimated to take 10 minutes and the assumed cost to the department is \$20.31. According to Rohrbacher and Ruge, the overall cost of a single alarm call to the city is \$101.91.

Part of the proposed changes involve altering the section of the existing alarm ordinance to include a misdemeanor charge for those who install or fail to register their alarm system. An annual renewal process will also be established with a recurring, annual fee to the alarm owner. The listed response time of 60 minutes will also be reduced to 45 where it involves permit holders.

Another change on the horizon if those already proposed are enacted by the city of San Rafael involves how alarm companies do business within the city. Alarm companies must have a valid San Rafael business license and will be required to verify permits before installing an alarm system.

Those who assume ownership of a property equipped with an existing burglar alarm system will also be required to take out a new alarm permit, eliminating fee transfer of the system. Property owners are also required to notify the city when changes have taken place to their licensed alarm system, including when the system is removed. This, too, will require a fee by the city of San Rafael. External noise-makers must also be reduced in time duration from 30 minutes to 20.

Also attending the meeting was Jon Sargent, president of the California Alarm Association (CAA) and Industry/Law Enforcement Liaison for the Security Industry Alarm Coalition (SIAC). Sargent offered to look at the language of the proposed ordinance and to work with the city in

drafting additional requirements mandating the use of alarm panels that comply with the CP-01 alarm standard as well as SIAC's Enhanced Call Verification false alarm solution.

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Registration Packets Mailed for Dallas Training Symposium

Registration packets for FARA's 2007 Annual International Training Symposium were mailed to members on October 20, 2006. Only one packet per department was sent. If you have not yet seen your packet, please visit our web site at www.faraonline.org where you can view and print a copy. The FARA Board and Conference Subcommittee are very excited about the vast array of classes on tap for 2007 and we think you will agree that it is a symposium you can't afford to miss! So visit the web site now and put through your request to attend FARA's 2007 Annual International Training Symposium in Dallas April 23-27, 2007!

The Radisson Hotel Central Dallas is the host hotel for 2007. FARA was able to obtain a special room rate of \$85 per night. This incredibly low rate should allow more people to attend than might otherwise be able to, and you can make your reservations right on-line at www.faraonline.org. In order to ensure the reduced rate, you must make your reservations no later than April 2, 2007. We recommend, however, that you make your reservations early to ensure that you get in under the FARA block of rooms. Be sure to tell them you are with the FARA training symposium.

Board Seats Up For Election in Dallas

During the 2007 training symposium, we will elect a Vice President-Electronic Security (formerly called the 1st Vice President), Secretary, two At-Large Directors and an Associate Director. Any FARA member who has: been in good standing for at least one year; and attended at least one FARA Annual Conference; and served on one or more FARA committees, can be elected to any of the offices.

The current occupants of these offices are:

- 1st Vice President, Jim Cogswell, Leawood Police Department, KS
- Secretary, John Moorhouse, Alachua County Sheriff's Office, FL
- At Large Director, Kerri McDonald, Riverside Police Department, CA
- At-Large Director, Sally Shaffer, Loudoun County Sheriff's Office, VA
- Associate Director, Kathleen Schraufnagel, Brink's Home Security, TX

Members, who are interested in seeking a position as an officer or member of the Board, must submit a written request for consideration of candidacy for the particular office they are seeking along with a biographical resume to the Secretary no later than ninety (90) days prior (January 25, 2007) to the commencement date of the annual FARA conference. The request for consideration of candidacy must include a brief statement as to why the member wants to hold the office being sought. All members, who fit the criteria, are encouraged to consider serving on the Board.

Nominations for FARA Achievement Awards Needed!

FARA is dedicated to honoring those in our profession, who have shown exemplary commitment to the reduction of false alarms and to establishing and maintaining positive working relationships among all parties involved. Are you proud of your alarm management program? Do you have a terrific success story to share? Do you want the world to know about it? If so, then tell us! Too often, the wonderful work done in False Alarm Reduction Units throughout North America goes unnoticed. We want to recognize your efforts and provide you with a wonderful plaque you can display in your office to show others how significant your accomplishments are. How would you like to be able to return from Dallas with a coveted Achievement Award that you can share with your Chief or Sheriff? (Attendance at the training symposium is **not** required for nominations to be considered.) Let us help you advertise your success.

Please send in your nominations for FARA's False Alarm Reduction Achievement Awards. Feel free to nominate your own agency/company or others. Both public safety and associate members can submit nominations for any category listed below. All submitted nominations will be provided to the attendees in Dallas. All attendees will then cast a vote on who their favorite is in each category. As such, your nomination should contain sufficient information to allow those voting to understand what the accomplishment is and how you were able to achieve it. You may use narrative, charts, graphs or any combination of the three. Please limit your nomination to no more than four (4) pages in length. The Achievement Awards will be presented during the Dallas training symposium.

- **Public Safety False Alarm Reduction Achievement Award:** This award is presented to the public safety agency that has an alarm management program, which has shown meaningful or significant reduction in the number of false alarms over a 3 to 5 year period.
- **Industry False Alarm Reduction Achievement Award:** This award is presented to an individual alarm company that has implemented and sustained an alarm management program, which has shown meaningful or significant reduction in the number of false alarms over a 3 to 5 year period.
- **FARA Achievement Award:** This award is presented to an individual, company or association that has demonstrated significant or meaningful contributions toward the FARA mission.

We know that great things are being done by public safety and alarm industry alike to combat false alarms. Tell us what you have done and let us help you get the recognition you deserve with an Achievement Award. Nominations must be submitted on or before April 13, 2007 to be considered. Please submit your nominations to FARA c/o Brad Shipp at bradshipp@4yoursolution.com. or via fax at 301/519-9508.

Nominations Needed for FARA Public Safety and Associate Members of the Year!

The FARA Norma C. Beaubien Public Safety and W. Rex Bell Associate Member of the Year Awards are the highest honor FARA gives to deserving individuals, who demonstrate a significant commitment and contribute the most to their department or company, the community and to FARA. Do you know anyone who fits this bill? Please tell us and let us honor them with these coveted awards. Once again, both public safety and associate members can submit nominations for either category. Please submit your written nomination detailing the

reasons you believe the individual nominated deserves such an award. Please limit your nomination to one (1) page or less. Submit your nominations to FARA c/o Brad Shipp at bradshipp@4yoursolution.com. or via fax at 301/519-9508 no later than March 23, 2007.

Take Advantage of FARA Grant Opportunity to Attend Training Symposium

The Security Industry Alarm Coalition has provided FARA with funding for grants to cover the registration fee for the training symposium. Your ability to receive the grant, valued at \$349, could be the difference between your training or executive staff approving or denying your request to attend! The grant application will only take a minute or two to complete, so what have you got to lose? You can download the grant application at <http://www.faraonline.org/grantapplication.pdf>. Under the terms of the grant, you agree to attend the training provided at the symposium and you must submit written approval from your department to attend. That's it! If you have any questions about the grant application or process, please contact FARA's Executive Director at bradshipp@4yoursolution.com or at 301/519-9237.

Sponsorships Available for Training Symposium

In the past, we have been very fortunate to receive sponsorships, which allow FARA to provide free breakfasts, numerous lunches, and break-out snacks and refreshments, as well as symposium handouts and programs. It is through this generous support that we can keep costs down and allow many more alarm management professionals to attend than would otherwise be able. Sponsorship opportunities for the 2007 Annual International Training Symposium are available and we are grateful for any support you can offer. To learn more about how you can help or become a sponsor, please review the sponsorship opportunities in the training symposium registration packet or contact Brad Shipp at 301/519-9237. All FARA members are thankful for your continued support.

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

False Alarm Reduction Association
10024 Vanderbilt Circle, Unit 4
Rockville, MD 20850
Email: info@faraonline.org
<http://www.faraonline.org>

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.