FARA InfoLink InfoLink
Information for Public Safety False Alarm Reduction Professionals

FARA InfoLink November 2007

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FARA Mid-Year Board of Directors Meetings

The FARA Board held its semi-annual meeting in Denver, Colorado on September 28-29, 2007 to discuss the many and varied issues facing the association. The Board was able to tour both the host hotel and city for FARA's 2009 annual international training symposium. FARA Treasurer Steve Heggemann reported that the financial strength of the association is good and continues to move forward in a positive vein.

The Board's push to have non-board members serve as committee chairs was hugely successful with only a couple still needing replacement at this time. The Board received written reports from all committee chairs, which reflects all the wonderful, hard work being performed for the benefit of FARA members by the committees on a daily basis. A short snapshot follows:

- **Associate Committee**: Hard at work on projects to encourage end user membership in FARA.
- **Awards Committee**: Newly formed to solicit nominations and award the Norma C. Beaubien Public Safety Member of the Year and the W. Rex Bell Associate Member of the Year Awards.

- **Communications Committee**: Reviewing and revising numerous written publications of the association, as well as writing new one-page bulletins.
- **Fire Committee**: Still in the development phase and working on a recruitment flyer geared to bringing on public safety and industry fire officials.
- **Membership Committee**: Focusing efforts on growing the mentoring program, creating a FARA presentation that any interested member can give to pass the word about FARA, and making personal contact with public safety agencies throughout North America that are not currently members.
- **Training and Certification Committee**: Concentrating on selecting sites and holding numerous regional training classes throughout North America in the next 12 months, offering professional certification exams at each regional training course site, and coordinating efforts of the Conference Subcommittee for the Charleston annual international training symposium.
- **Ways and Means Committee**: Working on fundraising efforts for the Charleston symposium to keep costs at a minimum and to provide for prizes at Casino Night.

New initiatives were **discussed including the formation of possible FARA regions, development of a "create your own ordinance" on**-line for jurisdictions looking to enact or amend a false alarm management ordinance, roll-out of a promotional DVD to use as a marketing tool for the FARA regional training courses and a program to work with more trade publications, both public safety and alarm industry, to promote FARA and false alarm reduction.

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New Look and Feel for FARA Committees

The FARA Board of Directors spent a considerable amount of time during their mid-year meetings to **discuss FARA's various committees, their responsibilities and jurisdiction, as well as liaisons, assignment of** new members and structure. The Conference Subcommittee, which was placed under the Training and Certification Committee last year, was, once again, given full committee status.

New Committee Rules and Regulations were reviewed and adopted. The Board felt that it was time to standardize how FARA committees function and how meetings should be conducted. It is not the intent of the Board to stifle creativity or to make the rules so stringent that people choose not to participate. Rather, the Board believes that by adopting the rules and regulations it will make it easier for committee chairs to do their work and also provides a guide to assist new members in understanding the roles of committees and how they operate. It gives specific assistance on teleconferencing, schedules, meeting agendas and the creation of meeting minutes.

A large portion of the rules and regulations deal with review of written materials. One significant change to this process is that documents will be reviewed for content changes rather than stylistic changes. In other words, if information is incorrect, outdated or there is something new to add to a document, those are all amendments that are acceptable. However, if a proposed amendment simply changes the words **but doesn't add anything to** a document, those amendments will not be accepted by the Board. The reason for this drastic change is that there is a significant amount of work that needs to be completed by FARA after every document is amended. Amendments require that staff post the new document to the web site, change what is distributed to members on the FARA flash drive and requires coordination with members to make sure they use the current document, particularly as it relates to taking the Professional Certification Exam. All exam **questions come directly from FARA's library of documents, so it is critical to** coordinate the posting of documents with the questions on the exam.

Every FARA document and program will be reviewed at least once every three years by the Board or the appropriate committee. The Communications Committee will be responsible for the majority of written materials produced by FARA. However, other committees will also have responsibility for writing and reviewing material germane to their particular committees. The Membership Committee will take over responsibility for all member related documents; i.e., new and renewal applications, brochures, flyers and recruitment materials. The Professional Certification Subcommittee will take over responsibility for all professional certification program materials, including but not limited to program objectives, rules, exam, policies and procedures, approval of activities for renewal certification, and public safety tips. The Training and Certification Committee will take over responsibility for all regional training materials,

including presentation, class exercises, handouts, instructor agreement and policies and guidelines. The Board of Directors will review all FARA Resolutions on an annual basis at the mid-year Board meetings.

A Publications Checklist will be posted on the web site, which provides information on when a document was approved, the last time it was reviewed/amended and whether or not it is currently under the revision process. The FARA Board and staff will work very hard to ensure that all documents are posted promptly upon revision and that the checklist is updated in the same fashion. Additionally, minutes of every committee meeting will be posted in the Member's Only section of the web site so all members can monitor the activities of each committee and hopefully become more involved.

The Board is confident that by instituting committee rules and regulations and by redistributing the workload of all committees that they are positioning the association for a more fruitful, lasting future. If you would like to review the new rules and regulations, please visit the Member's Only section of the web site under Committees.

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Video on Regional Training is now available on the FARA Web site

Visit our website to view or download the video and learn about the benefits of FARAs Regional Training Program. http://www.faraonline.org/html/regional_training.asp

To schedule a class in your area or for more information, contact Training and Certification Chair Sue Clark at 240-773-6300 or Susan.Clark@montgomerycountymd.gov.

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Reminder Ontario, CA Class Starts Nov 14

Click here to download a registration form http://www.faraonline.org/Ontario_Regional_Training.pdf

Date & Time:
Wednesday, November 14, 2007- 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Thursday, November 15, 2007- 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Place:
Sheraton Ontario Airport Hotel
429 N. Vineyard Ave
Ontario, CA 91764
http://www.sheraton.com/ontario
Cost:
FREE for Public Safety Agency Employees & Members of CAA or FARA.
$429 for Industry Non Members

Developed by FARA

Sponsored by California Alarm Association & Inland Empire Alarm Association
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Mark Your Calendars for the Charleston Symposium

Plan now to join us in historic **Charleston, South Carolina from April 21 to 25, 2008**. The Francis Marion, in the heart of downtown Charleston, will be the host hotel for the symposium. FARA has negotiated extraordinary rates of $135 a night for the first 25 attendees from government agencies who register. Others will get the still special rate of $179 per night. Cutoff date for the special rates is **Friday, March 21, 2008.**   Call (843) 722-0600 or 1-(877) 756-2121 for reservations. For information on the Francis Marion visit their web site - http://www.francismarioncharleston.com/

So Much to Do- Check out the visitor's bureau site http://www.charlestoncvb.com/visitors/index.html to see why there is so much to do in Charlestown. You can stand on the site of the first shot in the Civil War, come face to face with a giant sea turtle, take a tour of an antebellum mansion, climb aboard a WWII aircraft carrier or just relax in the many blossoming gardens.

Budget Now for Symposium Registration

Public Safety Registrations:

Early Registration	Member	Non-Member	Late Registration	Member	Non-Member
Full Symposium	$365	$515	Full Symposium	$411	$561
Per Day Rate	$99	$249	Per Day Rate	$119	$269
Spouse (Meals)	$85	$85	Spouse (Meals)	$85	$85

Associate Registrations: (Alarm Users, Alarm Industry, and Others)

Early Registration	Member	Non-Member	Late Registration	Member	Non-Member
Full Symposium	$415	$565	Full Symposium	$515	$665
Per Day Rate	$115	$265	Per Day Rate	$135	$285
Spouse (Meals)	$85	$85	Spouse (Meals)	$85	$85

Register to Attend the Symposium

The conference packet with a full schedule and information on the hotel has been mailed. You can also download a brochure from the web site at http://www.faraonline.org/html/symposium.asp

Flight Options to Charleston Expanded- The historic beauty of Charleston, South Carolina, is just hours away with AirTran Airways new nonstop service between Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and Charleston International Airport beginning May 24, 2007. With the low introductory fares, South Carolina's seemingly endless beaches, world renowned golf and historic downtown area are closer than you think. And with AirTran Airways Business Class seating and free XM Satellite Radio, it's both enjoyable and affordable to visit this beautiful southern coastal city.

Air Tran	www.airtran.com	Reservations: 1-800-247-8726
American Eagle	www.aa.com	Reservations: 1-800-433-7300
Continental	www.continental.com	Reservations: 1-800-525-0280
Delta	www.delta.com	Reservations: 1-800-221-1212
Northwest	www.nwa.com	Reservations: 1-800-225-2525
United Express	www.ual.com	Reservations: 1-800-241-6522
US Airways	www.usairways.com	Reservations: 1-800-428-4322

Featured Bulletin – Selling a Home Should Not be Alarming!

Some false alarms are caused by real estate agents while they are showing properties. This bulletin covers:

- o   What Sellers Should Do
- o   What Listing Real Estate Agents Should Do
- o   What Visiting Real Estate Agents Should 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

Featured Manual- How to Create the Most Effective Annual Report

Writing annual reports can often be burdensome and take a fair amount of time to do well, but the rewards of presenting the best overall picture of what you have accomplished over the past year often outweigh any inconvenience it causes. Annual reports allow you to educate elected and appointed leaders

in your locality, the general public and the alarm industry on exactly what you have done and why. By reporting on the successes or failures of those efforts, you can bring the alarm management program to the forefront in your community.

This manual is designed to assist you in developing your own annual report. The tips and information provided in this guide will help you to lay out your report in a cohesive fashion and serve as a reminder of what you may want to include.

The full list of manuals, which have been approved by the board, can be accessed on our web site at http://www.faraonline.org/html/publications.asp. Copies of manuals can be downloaded from the **member's only site.**

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FCC Issues Consumer Advisory on AMPS Sunset

SDN Newswire By L. Samuel Pfeifle - 10.11.2007

Editor's note- Information on this topic is posted on the FARA Web Site so that you can refer alarm users to it. http://www.faraonline.org/html/news.asp

WASHINGTON--On Oct. 1, the FCC finally satisfied some in the alarm industry by issuing a consumer advisory regarding the upcoming Feb. 18, 2008, analog cellular sunset. Though it's somewhat buried on the FCC's Web site, alarm companies now have a trusted government source to point out for customers who may be confused as to why their alarm system's cellular backup radio needs to be replaced with a digital solution.

Just days before the announcement, Steve Shapiro, director of strategic product planning at ADT, lamented the lack of action on the part of the FCC from the ASIS International floor: "The FCC published their denial of our request for an extension in June and still hasn't put this up on their Web site," he said at the time. "If we could give customers a .gov link, that would help communication and help our reliability with the customer. The alarm industry is absolutely concerned that the alarm industry is doing all the notification and we're not seeing it from other sources."

In the consumer notification, the FCC groups alarm owners with others who "rely on cellular radio equipment," like those who may have an older version of the OnStar in-vehicle service, in alerting those who might be affected to the fact that cellular telephone companies will no longer be required to provide analog service. Later, in a paragraph directed at alarm owners, the FCC estimates that roughly one million of the 26 million alarm system owners in the United States will be affected. This jibes with Shapiro's estimates.

"In many cases," the warning says, "if you have an analog alarm radio that has not been replaced and the analog wireless network stops operating, the radio will emit a 'beep' or warning tone." This gets at the heart of Shapiro's worries.

"As the industry knows," he said, "when the analog towers do get shut off, any systems that have not been changed will go into a trouble mode, and as an industry we have to avoid large amounts of customers going into trouble mode all at the same time. We have to work as much as possible."

Both AT&T and Verizon have stated in public documents that they intend to turn off the analog network essentially as soon as they are able, which means midnight of Feb. 19, 2008, to most observers. "The industry has to assume that it's the whole analog network being turned off at the same time," said Shapiro. "We have no alternative."

Shapiro urges alarm company owners to do everything in their power to switch out the cellular radios before the deadline. He understands that many system owners are confused with the analog-to-digital switchover that will happen for televisions in 2009; many customers think the two switchovers are one and the same, and have been sold the 2009 date by their trips to Best Buy or other consumer electronics outlets trying to push digital television sets.

Companies can now point customers to the FCC site
http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/analogcellphone.html

Shapiro advised alarm companies to take any opportunity to switch out radios, even if they are at a location for a different service call.

Otherwise, "it's not inconceivable that there could be hundreds of thousands of radios that are not swapped out by 2008," he postulated. That's a lot of alarm systems in trouble mode, and that might mean the alarm industry is in trouble mode as well.

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ZIP Code Glitch on Mailing Confuses Alarm Customers

In attempt to notify clients of alarm permit fees, zip codes don't always point to the correct areas

10/26/07 Mark Ferenchik, THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH (Ohio)

If you live in Columbus and protect your home or business with an alarm system, you have to pay a $35 fee every two years for a city license.

But what if you don't live in Columbus, yet receive a letter saying you owe the fee?

That's what John Frencho wondered. The Minerva Park resident received a letter this week from a Pennsylvania company telling him he must register his alarm system with Columbus and pay the fee to the city.

"How many people were getting this?" asked Frencho, 84, who doesn't owe the fee because he lives outside Columbus. But he worries that people, especially older residents, will send in the money without checking whether they owe it.

About 1,000 letters were sent by Alarm Capital Alliance of suburban Philadelphia to customers of Pataskala-based Apollo Alarm Systems. Alarm Capital bought Apollo's customer accounts and processors' bills for the company.

Apollo customers in Bexley, Dublin and Westerville also received some of the letters, said Andre Gordon, Apollo's president. He said he had no idea the letters were sent.

"We've had a lot of phone calls about this," said Sharon Gadd, Columbus' license section manager. "It's confusing."

Alarm Capital's Ana Bottos said the city sent the company a list of ZIP codes and the company assumed Apollo customers who lived there were liable for the fee. However, the ZIP codes included customers who lived outside Columbus.

City officials thought Alarm Capital wanted the ZIP codes so it could update which Apollo customers live in Columbus and forward that information back to the licensing department.

Columbus notifies residents who buy police and fire alarms that they must pay the fee to obtain a permit. The notices include a disclaimer telling people to disregard it if they live outside the city. The letter from Alarm Capital did not include such a disclaimer.

Alarm Capital sent the letters only as a courtesy to customers, said John Steffanato Sr., one of its owners. "We're trying to back up what the town wants done."

The letters tell people to send the fee to the city, not the company.

Gadd said Columbus will refund fees mistakenly paid to the city. Until now, that has usually amounted to only two or three a year, she said.

The city started charging the fee in 1996 to help offset the cost of police and fire responding to false alarms. It collected $497,775 last year.

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What Do Fire Inspectors Look for During Final Inspection?

Keep inspectors abreast of your plans and check your points as you get ready for the final

SecurityInfoWatch.com- October 16th, 2007

By: Lt. Greg Hedrick, Olive Branch, MS, Fire Dept.

One of the most often asked questions among fire alarm installers working for the first time in a new jurisdiction is, "What is the fire inspector looking for during final inspection?" This question is also often asked amongst installers working in a large jurisdiction with multiple fire inspectors, some of whom they may have not had the privilege to work with before. I can understand that at times this might be uncomfortable or stressful, but hopefully I can help put you at ease with a few suggestions.

First of all we look for the system to be installed per the plan submittal that we received during the plan review period. In fact, from my experience, it is becoming more common during the final inspection for the inspector to bring a copy of the same plan submittal that you or your company submitted to the inspector for approval before installing the system. If the installation does not match the submittal or if there are discrepancies with unapproved locations of devices, then right there at the beginning of the inspection, you'll have already done a good job of getting under your inspector's skin.

Why do I say this? It goes right back to NFPA 4.5.1.1, which states: "The authority having jurisdiction shall be notified prior to installation or alteration of equipment or wiring. At the authority having jurisdiction's request, complete information regarding the system or system alterations, including specifications, shop drawings, battery calculations, and notification appliance circuit voltage drop calculations shall be submitted for approval."

Secondly we look for a system that actually works. There are many times when we arrive for your final inspection and there are some loose ends that have not been tied up; in other cases, you may have not completely tested your system. I can tell you first hand; this is what irritates fire inspectors the most. The best way to build a good relationship with your inspector is to build up his confidence in the system by testing and testing and testing again your system before he shows up. Again, if things do not seem to match what was submitted, you will dig deeper under the inspector's skin.

Again, consider NFPA 72, the National Fire Alarm Code, and focus your attention on section 4.5.1.2, which states: "Before requesting final approval of the installation, if required by the authority having jurisdiction, the installing contractor shall furnish a written statement stating that the system has been installed in accordance with approved plans and tested in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications and the appropriate NFPA requirements."

Next, consider how your points are configured. Many of the combination systems come with defaults set from the manufacturer such that all of the points beyond number two are burglar points. You or your download specialist will need to take the time to change them to fire or supervisory points. This is usually found during the final inspection and, again, has a negative effect on the inspector.

Take the time to walk through your entire system, testing every device and verify with your monitoring center that each device sent the correct signal. This isn't just important for your inspection, but it's important to your company's bottom line as well. Imagine your fire safety/alarm company eating $20,000 just because a fire pump run reported in to the monitoring center as a "trouble" and was not responded to properly by the owner or the fire and alarm contractor. If the signal isn't correctly identified, the pump could burn itself out after a day of running and might cause a damaging water flow in the pump room.

Finally, double check with your monitoring center that all of the information about the premises is correct. We do not like to send fire apparatus to the wrong address and I am sure the owner of the premises - your client - would not be pleased either. Ensure that the information on the call list is correct. Also make a point to ensure that the cross street is correct and that any that notes about the system which need attention are correct. And just to cover your bases, make sure you have a runner to respond in a timely manner for any alarm, supervisory or trouble condition.

Do not hesitate to become proactive with your installation. Take pride in what you do and the systems you install. You are part of the life safety community together with police and firefighters, and your work will impact people's lives on a daily basis.

As someone who has worked in your shoes and now works as an inspector, you should know that is our goal to ensure that the premises are protected by a good reliable system. In sum, we are here to work with you and not against you. By partnering with us during the fire systems installation and inspection process, we can better protect the people in our communities.

About the author: Lieutenant Greg Hedrick is a fire inspector with the Fire Department of Olive Branch, Miss., a town that is a part of the growing Memphis, Tenn., suburbs. He is NICET Level III certified and before serving as a fire inspector, amassed 10 years of experience in the fire alarm contracting industry with a large systems dealer.

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After All the Debate, Fontana Now on Verified Response

Active lawsuit could still derail city's ordinance, but for now, verified response in place

SIW Editorial Staff SecurityInfoWatch.com October 2nd

Fontana, Calif., made major industry news when it voted to turn to a verified response policy earlier this summer.

The decision, which was contested by the alarm industry, requires alarm activations to be verified before police dispatch response to those facilities or homes. The city allows such verification methods as audio recording, video surveillance, on-site verification from a security officer or verification from an eyewitness, employee or perhaps the homeowner.

And while the policy of using verification was set to start today in Fontana, there's still the possibility that a lawsuit from the Inland Empire Alarm Association – an association of alarm installing and servicing firms – might just derail Fontana's verified response policy. The lawsuit, which alleges the verified response policy doesn't align with city rules, was filed against the Fontana Police Department and is expected to be decided upon by a judge in the next few weeks.

Although Fontana had in place a fine-based system for deterring false alarms, the fines weren't particularly prohibitive. Under the previous system, the alarm system owner was fined $63 on the fourth false alarm call in a year (the first three were considered freebies). Many cities use deterrent policies that start fining alarm system owners after their first or second false alarm, and many of the newer policies have fine rates that increase significantly based on the number of false alarms from a given household or business.

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Dallas Police Will Respond to Business Burglar Alarms

City council repeals "verified response" policy

12:29 PM CDT on Wednesday, September 12, 2007
By DAVE LEVINTHAL / The Dallas Morning News
dlevinthal@dallasnews.com

Ignoring Police Chief David Kunkle's recommendations, the Dallas City Council on Wednesday repealed its "verified response" burglar alarm policy, meaning police officers will again automatically respond to all commercial alarm calls.

The 11-4 vote came as a majority of council members argued that cops - not business owners or private security guards who must first verify a sounding alarm's validity before police respond - should answer alarm calls. The council's decision is effective Oct. 1.

"We've got to be concerned about the policy and the wider message it sends," Mayor Tom Leppert said, noting that guaranteed police response to burglar alarms is one component in helping Dallas expand its tax base, thereby increasing funds available to police. "This is not a policy that allows us to continue to build the city of Dallas."

Chief Kunkle has repeatedly testified before the council that verified response allows him to use scant police resources to respond to more pressing emergencies. Last week, the chief told council members that he knows of no increase in crime attributable to verified response and that more than 97 percent of activated burglar alarms are ultimately ruled false.

"I'm worried about the 2.7 percent that's left … the citizens - they're the ones we're going to have to look after," Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Dwayne Caraway said Wednesday.

"We do not need to verify alarms. We as a city need to have the police to do their jobs. They need to protect our property and our safety," District 8 council member Tennell Atkins added.

Wednesday's vote comes 21 months after the council voted 8-5 to institute verified response for businesses, with then-Mayor Laura Miller arguing, "I believe in the chief. This makes sense."

Between February 2006 and March 2007, Dallas experienced a 45 percent reduction in burglar-alarm calls and directed $1.56 million in manpower costs spent on responding to false alarm calls on other work, according to city statistic. The statistics also indicate that city revenue obtained from fees charged for false alarms decreased by $1.19 million.

Business burglaries declined by 0.6 percent during a one-year period that ended Feb. 28, according to the presentation to the council.

Mayor Pro Tem Elba Garcia decried Wednesday's decision, saying it hurled Dallas back to the situation it found itself in earlier this decade, when most council members agreed that hundreds of police officer work hours were wasted responding to sounding burglar alarms.

"Today's choice is whether we back up our chief of police and the Dallas Police Department and continue to prepare to protect citizens from harm, or we cave in to the alarm industry," Dr. Garcia said.

"It's about the utilization of a scarce resource," District 5 council member Vonciel Jones Hill said. "Verified response has worked the way it was intended to work. It does not make sense to continue to send a scarce resource to false alarms when we have higher priorities."

District 14 council member Angela Hunt later argued, "Our police chief helped us use our scarce resources … to their highest and best use. Why are we taking them off the street? Why are we taking them out of our neighborhoods to cater to false alarms? We should listen to [Chief Kunkle's] guidance and not be swayed by politics."

During the meeting, Dr. Garcia offered a substitute motion to shelve Wednesday's verified response vote and task the council's newly constituted Public Safety Committee, of which she is chairwoman, with further studying verified response.

Her motion failed 9-6, and Mr. Leppert called for a vote on the original motion.

Voting to repeal the verified response policy were: Mr. Leppert, Mr. Caraway and council members Jerry Allen, Mr. Atkins, Carolyn Davis, Sheffie Kadane, Linda Koop, Ron Natinsky, Dave Neumann, Mitchell Rasansky and Steve Salazar.

Voting against repealing the policy: Dr. Garcia and council members Pauline Medrano, Ms. Hill and Ms. Hunt.

http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/dn/latestnews/stories/091307dnmetalarmresponse.c87ccdd3.html

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Ordinance in Mich. Would Charge Fire Systems Companies

Fees start at $1K, would be charged when F.D. is not notified before alarm test

SIW Editorial Staff SecurityInfoWatch.com October 29th

A new ordinance in Walker, Mich., will affect the bottom line of fire systems dealers if they don't properly notify authorities before testing commercial fire alarms.

Last week, the Walker, Mich., City Commission passed an ordinance which was subsequently approved by the mayor that requires that integrators and security dealers to give notice to the Walker Fire Department before testing commercial fire alarms as well as those used in apartment complexes.

The ordinance, which seeks to recover the expense of rolling fire trucks and personnel to the scene, will hit alarm companies where it hurts, charging them at least $1,000, a number The Grand Rapids Press indicated was linked to the cost of rolling three fire response vehicles. The fee could be more if the response from the department is higher than that standard response, and would be charged to the alarm firm, not the commercial property owner.

The chief of the department, Bill Schmidt told the newspaper that some 80 percent of false fire alarms are linked with failure to notify the department of tests.

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Alarm, Monitoring Executives Explain How They Coped as SoCal Fires Raged

Security Sales & Integration Nov 2, 2007, TORRANCE, CALIF.

As the October firestorms torched the Southern California landscape, forcing the temporary evacuation of nearly 1 million people, alarm companies and monitoring stations worked feverishly responding to unprecedented volumes of emergency calls and signals.

Pushed by winds clocked at more than 80 mph in some areas, 23 wildfires scorched more than 515,000 acres across seven counties. Almost 2,800 structures were destroyed, including 2,000 homes.

Security Sales & Integration spoke with several industry executives to discuss the impact on their alarm and monitoring operations and how they were able to cope with the unfolding crisis. As the number of fires continued to mount over several days and devastation spread relentlessly, monitoring stations were barraged by continuous waves of alarms.

 "It all just hits at once," said Morgan Hertel, vice president of the Command Center Inc., a contract central station in Corona, located about 50 miles southeast of Los Angeles. "Since we were dealing with such a huge area, it wasn't like it happened for a couple hours and stopped. It was sustained for a period of four days." Hertel said his normal daily volume of alarm signals and calls skyrocketed from roughly 1,800 to more than 7,000. Along with fire alarms, central stations were bombarded with multiple types of signals, including AC power failure, low battery and other system trouble conditions. Managing the massive volume of signals presented the biggest challenge for a majority of central stations affected by the fires. To cope with the flood of signals, station managers relied on added staffing and the latest monitoring technology. For example, the Command Center's automated system, which relies on software

used by many other monitoring stations, prioritizes inbound signals. "We were dealing with the fire and medical alarms ahead of the AC fails and the low batteries," Hertel said. While operators responded first to the highest priority alarms, automation systems soaked up low priority signals and placed them in a buffer where they sat until operators could work their way down the queue. "You might see 1,000 signals sitting in the buffer and you are working on them 10 at a time with the available staff until you get to the bottom," Hertel said. "You'll get caught up and then all of a sudden another area will have a power failure or a fire going through and before you know it, you're buried again." Hertel and other central station managers SSI spoke with reported throngs of evacuated homeowners also phoned around the clock asking if their systems were still functioning, and if not, when the last time a signal was received. "This catastrophe was unique in that we've never had subscribers calling in wanting to know if their alarm systems were still online," Hertel said. "They were trying to understand what was going on with their property and homes. There was a lot of panic going on, a lot of emotions."

In Lake Arrowhead, a mountain community located about 80 miles east of Los Angeles, Karen Baldwin, co-owner of Lake Arrowhead Patrol Inc., was on the phone nonstop with hundreds of evacuated customers as flames whipped near her own residence. "Notifying customers was the hardest part for us," Baldwin said. "Thousands of homes really weren't compromised [by the fires], but people didn't know it." During the mandatory evacuation in Lake Arrowhead from Oct. 22 to Oct. 28, Baldwin said she was in contact with her monitoring station, Aliso Viejo, Calif.-based National Monitoring Center. When the evacuation was lifted, Baldwin said there was no mystery for customers finding out if their home was still intact since constant communication was available. "I was able to check the alarm status of our customers, and we were getting mostly low batteries and power failures," she said. "We were able to get our customers accurate information and take that fear away."

For central stations situated in close proximity to fire danger, such as Central Monitoring Corp. in Poway, located about 20 miles north of San Diego, the ability to call all hands on deck was not a luxury available to them. "My biggest challenge was keeping my employees here," said Central Monitoring Corp. General Manager John Thompson. As firestorms raged through nearby open land and public spaces, major highways were closed. Some employees simply couldn't make it into work, while others were in the midst of evacuating their homes. "In certain situations like lightning and thunderstorms and strong winds, we flood the place [with extra staff]," Thompson said. "This situation was very different. You had fires raging everywhere. A lot of people's houses were being threatened and so their main concern was their family." Just as other monitoring stations were spurred into action, Central Monitoring Corp. implemented emergency policies and procedures when the fire danger became imminent. "We have the ability to toggle certain signals on and off," Thompson said. "If we are inundated with AC power loss signals I'll turn them off for a few hours or in this case a day or so." The imperative, Thompson said, is to work on handling high priority alarms only. "We stop notifying on trouble calls," he said. "We are responding strictly to fire, burglary, hold ups and medicals. You go into damage control mode."

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Protection One Lets Their Customers Go Mobile

Alarm firm provides customers Web, e-mail and SMS interfaces with e-Secure access

SIW Editorial Staff
SecurityInfoWatch.com

Oct. 5, 2007 -- Protection One is now offering its customers the option of web-enabled access to their security system. The company is marketing the service as e-Secure, and is offering it to both its residential and its commercial security systems customers.

The service is designed to target today's more mobile population, where being tied to an alarm panel near an exit door isn't always an option. The system uses SMS messaging (text messaging) and Internet-based web access to give its customer complete remote control over their security system. It seems to tie in well with today's focus in online services like online banking, where the user does their own account monitoring at some level. While some sensor-events (intrusion, for example) can go to the central station, others are simply directed to the alarm user.

The chief feature, of course, is that the e-Secure system allows for users to arm and disarm their system from either a cell phone or a web-enabled PDA or computer. And because the alarm system can be armed/disarmed from afar, the remote access functionality can be used to grant temporary access, such as to a service worker.

Additionally, users can predefine those non-alarm events that don't have to be monitored by the central station, but which can automatically send an email or message. The company suggests that such messages might be to notify parent when a child arrives home and disarms a system to enter, or if a water sensor in the basement or hot water heater closet detects moisture.

The online interface, which can use Honeywell's new system that actually shows a virtual alarm panel on the screen that matches the Honeywell unit in their home or business, provides an option for reviewing an event log, so that system owners/managers can review events like arm/disarm/stay, sensor detections and more.

More information: www.protectionone.com/esecure

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ADS Security Hosts Charitable Chili Cook-Off

Security Sales & Integration - Oct 17, 2007, NASHVILLE, TENN.

ADS Security, an independent electronic security provider, recently hosted its 3rd annual chili cook-off competition at its Nashville corporate offices in support of a local charity.

At the event, president and CEO Mel Mahler presented a contribution to Susan Hunter and Cliff Tredway, **representatives of the Nashville Rescue Mission's Family Life Center.**

Several hundred personal care items were also donated by ADS employees to benefit the center, which assists homeless women and their children by providing them with shelter, food, clothing and referrals.

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Parrot Mocks Fire Alarm; Alerts Family to House Fire

Security Sales & Integration - Oct 24, 2007, MUNCIE, IND.

A Muncie, Ind., family has a pet parrot named Peanut to thank for acting as its personal protector.

Shannon Conwell, 33, and his 9-year-old son fell asleep on the couch Oct. 19 while watching a late-night movie. The father was startled about 3 a.m. by the sound of a smoke alarm, which instead was the **family's shrieking parrot mocking the actual alarm, according to The Star Press.**

"He was really screaming his head off," Conwell told the newspaper.

And for good reason; the house was indeed on fire.

"I grabbed my son and my bird and got out of the house," Conwell said.

The Muncie Fire Department has released information stating the fire started in the back of the house, destroying the dining room, kitchen and bedroom, according to the newspaper.

Fortunately, the father and son fell asleep on the couch. Had they been in their bedrooms, Conwell says **they probably wouldn't have heard the alarm or t**he bird.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.

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Police Say Burglar Took Nap

Maybe this intruder should have had a good night's sleep. Police say an Elkton man returned to his apartment last week to find an intruder napping in his bed.

The accused burglar, Mark William of North East, didn't wake up until police placed handcuffs on him while he was snoozing. Police say the victim came home at 8 a.m. on October 2nd to find William asleep in his bed.

He called police. Authorities say William, who goes by the nickname "Weasel," jammed a chair to the back entrance of the apartment before bedding down. He was charged with burglary, theft and malicious destruction of property.

William also faces drug charges after police found a small package of suspected crack cocaine in his pocket. He's being held in the Cecil County jail on $15,000 bond.

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Doggie Door an Invitation for North Texas Burglar

Aug 14, 2007 (CBS 11 News) DALLAS

A warning for North Texas residents about a clever way burglars are getting into houses.

It's happened twice to the same homeowner in the Dallas neighborhood known as the 'M Streets' and word is spreading to pet owners about a cat burglar who lives up to the name.

Rachel Eaton still has a mess to clean up after a burglar ransacked her house near Southern Methodist University Tuesday morning.

The thief got away with more than $5,000 worth of electronics and jewelry. Eaton explained to CBS 11 News exactly what was stolen. "All these items were taken out of here - diamond bracelets, necklaces, rings and earrings," she said.

The 24-year-old soon realized that the burglar got inside the same way her Chihuahua named Walter goes outside.

"When he left he actually unlocked the door and walked out the backdoor, because I had deadbolts," Eaton said.

According to police, evidence left in the backyard shows that the doggie door was big enough for the burglar to get his paws on Eaton's valuables.

Even a small doggie door can be an invitation to burglars. CBS 11 News reporter J.D. Miles even demonstrated how someone could get inside a house, by squeezing his 6'0", 170-pound frame through Eaton's doggie door.

Now, Eaton is warning her neighbors with pets to be aware of the break-ins and how a doggie door could make their home appealing to thieves.

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'Duct Tape Bandit' Charged In Robbery

Alleged failed thief used silver adhesive to conceal identity in attack

AP- Updated: 11:05 p.m. ET Aug 15, 2007

ASHLAND, Ky. - A man accused of being the "Duct Tape Bandit" has gotten into a sticky situation. The man, who had his head wrapped in duct tape to conceal his identity, walked into a liquor store on Friday with an intent to rob the store, Ashland police said.

Shamrock Liquors store manager Bill Steele had some duct tape of his own, but his was wrapped around a wooden club that sent the robber fleeing, according to a report by WSAZ-TV in Huntington, W.Va.

Store employee Craig Miller said he chased the man to the parking lot, tackled him and held him in a choke hold until police arrived. A customer also helped, police said.

Kasey G. Kazee, 24, of Ashland, was charged with first-degree robbery, according to Ashland Police Sgt. Mark McDowell.

Kazee, in an interview with the TV station, denied he was the bandit. He pleaded not guilty Monday and bond was set at $250,000.

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Burglars Bungle 'Mission: Impossible' robbery

Thieves cut hole, climb down hose, crawl on stomachs but fail to get cash

AP- Updated: 5:01 a.m. ET July 31, 2007

MANNING, S.C. - **It wasn't exactly "Mission: Impossible," but three burglars managed to break into a** grocery store by lowering themselves through a hole in the roof, then eluded the alarm system for two hours by crawling on their stomachs, police said.

The thieves used a pickax to break open the hole in the roof of the Bi-Lo around 3 a.m. Friday, and **climbed down a garden hose to the store's floor, authorities said.**
The men then crawled around for two hours to avoid tripping the motion detectors, Manning Police Chief Randy Garrett said.

They tried unsuccessfully to break into the store safe. An alarm eventually went off, and they ran away with cartons of cigarettes and fistfuls of lottery tickets, police said.

The burglars tried to cash some of the winning tickets at a store about 40 miles away, but the clerk had been told about the theft and refused to cash them, Garrett said.

Investigators have found more tickets thrown out along local roads, Garrett said.

The grocery store's surveillance cameras captured images of the three men, but the quality of the video was poor, authorities said.

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Heck Support

October 29, 2007

ONE OF LIFE'S LITTLE LESSONS #34: Whenever you are using heavy electronic equipment, always read the instruction manual before you try to start using it or at the very, very, very least, learn how to read.

According to the IDG News Service via Computer World magazine, a man in Missouri who stole a printer **from a driver's license office got caught when he tried to call tech support asking for the software to run** it.

In his defense, computers are a pain to use. All those buttons and lights and dials, they make me dizzy just looking at them.

Apparently, he stole the printer but not the special computer that goes with since it was locked away, so he called the tech support line for help. They advised him to pick up the printer, go to the nearest police station and ask them for the software.

He reportedly told the tech support operator he didn't know how to operate a computer. Police said they believed they were looking for a Mac user.

Please Share Your Newsletters and Tips with Us

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

Please send your newsletters, tips and brochures to:

False Alarm Reduction Association
10024 Vanderbilt Circle, Unit 4
Rockville, MD 20850
bradshipp@4yoursolution.com

FARA Mission Statement

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

Contact Us

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