



InfoLink

Information for Public Safety False Alarm Reduction Professionals

FARA InfoLink December 2007

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Happy Chrismakwanzukkah!

It's that time of year again and the FARA Board would like to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season and a wonderfully prosperous New Year!

We hope you are all able to celebrate the holiday(s) of your choice with family and friends and that you enjoy the Holidays and the New Year to the fullest.

Happy Holidays from the FARA Board and Staff: Norma Beaubien, Jim Cogswell, Stan Hanson, Kerri McDonald, Steve Heggemann, Gerry Miller, Sally Schaffer, Joe Patterson, Kathleen Schraufnagel, and Brad Shipp.

Ontario, California Regional Training Well Received; Future Sites

Public safety and security industry professionals gathered in Ontario, California November 14-15, 2007 to learn how to develop and implement a successful alarm management program. Instructors Jim Cogswell and Amy Lobdell led FARA's regional training course over two days of lecture, interactive exercises and information sharing among students. Jim and Amy were fortunate to have Jon Sargent, President, California Alarm Association, attend and participate in the training, as he was able to provide specific information to attendees on laws and ordinances in effect in the State of California. The training was made possible by a sponsorship from the California Alarm Association, and FARA is extremely grateful to Jon and the association for their support.

The regional training course is an intensive two-day course, which is designed to teach attendees how to design, adopt, fund and implement a successful alarm management program. Various topics include common terms, determining the scope of the problem, false alarm causes and solutions, benefits of alarm management, successful programs, available resources, false alarm tracking and billing software needs and communication, among others.

Regional training courses are already scheduled for:

- Birmingham, Alabama – February 7-8, 2008
- Orlando, Florida – March 12-13, 2008
- Milwaukee, Wisconsin – June 11-12, 2008
- New England – October 22-23, 2008

Visit FARA's web site at www.faraonline.org, for more information on regional training courses. If you would like to host a regional training course in your area, please contact Sue Clark, Chair, Training and Certification Committee at susan.clark@montgomerycountymd.gov.

PDQ Entry Deadline Extended to December 31, 2007

The 2008 Police Dispatch Quality (PDQ) award program is accepting entries through December 31, 2007. The prestigious award is intended to promote and celebrate collaboration between police departments and installing and monitoring alarm dealers in reducing the number of false alarms and dispatches. Pittsburgh-based Vector Security captured the 2006 award (see May 2006 issue of Security Sales & Integration), while Brink's Home Security nabbed the award in 2007 (see May 2007 issue of Security Sales & Integration).

Do you know of a company that does everything right?

- Installs quality alarm equipment in a professional manner
- Has a structured false alarm management program in their company that has buy in from the bottom up and from the top down
- Believes in good customer service

- Utilizes best practices to reduce and/or eliminate false dispatches; i.e., Enhanced Call Verification, installation of CP-01 compliant alarm panels, contacts customers who experience false alarms, etc.

If you know of alarm companies that excel at reducing false alarms, have a high level of customer service and established good working relationships with area public safety agencies, please contact them and strongly suggest that they apply for the 3rd Annual PDQ Award. Remember, applications must be postmarked no later than December 31, 2007. Let's help reward those alarm companies that go above and beyond and help to make our jobs easier and more productive.

Security Sales & Integration and Honeywell Security are co-sponsors of the PDQ Award, along with the Security Industry Alarm Coalition (SIAC) and the False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA).

The winning alarm company will be recognized in a hometown ceremony along with a local law enforcement representative and receive \$1,000 to travel to Las Vegas for next year's ISC West to receive their award at the 2008 SAMMY Awards. SSI will also honor the victorious company with an article in the magazine.

For more information and to download an application and the "Getting Started" guide, visit www.siacinc.org or www.faraonline.org.

Board Seats Up For Election in Charleston; Two New Seats Up For Election As Well

During the 2008 training symposium, FARA members will elect a new President, Vice President-Fire, Treasurer, One At-Large Director, and an Electronic Security Associate Director. Members will also elect a Fire Alarm Associate Director and a Vendor Associate Director, both seats new to the FARA Board in 2008. 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.

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 FARA's Secretary Kerri McDonald (kmcdonald@riversideca.gov) no later than January 21, 2008. 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.

Recommended Bylaw Changes

The FARA Board of Directors is recommending specific changes to the association bylaws to allow for the creation of FARA chapters to better serve our members. Details, including specific language, follows.

Intent:

To create chapters as a way for groups of FARA members in a local area to network and organize to exchange information and enhance their communication with FARA.

Impact of Creating FARA Chapters:

- Communication with FARA membership is likely to increase.
- May increase number of members because members will be able to attend a local meeting.
- Should increase awareness of and enhance the impact on local issues.

Proposed Language:**ARTICLE 9. CHAPTERS**

Section 1. Purpose: The Board of Directors may create a Chapter to allow an appropriate level of local autonomy without the redundant legal structure and demand on resources. It may provide an easier and more effective way for groups of local members to network and organize.

Section 2. Creation: A group of FARA members in a specific area can apply to the Board of Directors to create a chapter. The application shall specify the counties, cities or area to be included in the Chapter. Each area shall only be served by a single Chapter. Existing FARA members in the area proposed to be included in the Chapter shall be polled by email, mail or vote at a meeting called with appropriate notice as specified in the FARA bylaws. The application to create a Chapter shall also name officers who would serve to lead the Chapter until an election could be held. A Chapter shall be formed upon approval by a majority vote of the Board of Directors.

Section 3. Management: Each Chapter shall elect a Chapter President and a Chapter Secretary and at least one director. Each Chapter shall be allowed to elect a board consisting of additional members including an associate representative. Each Chapter board shall have an odd number of members. Members of the Chapter board, with the exception of the Associate director, shall be FARA Public Safety members. The Associate director shall be a FARA Associate member.

Section 4. Chapter Membership: All FARA Public Safety members with paid memberships for offices located in the area assigned by the Board of Directors to the Chapter shall automatically become a member of that Chapter. Associate members located in the assigned area shall automatically become a member of that Chapter. Associate members located outside the assigned areas may join any Chapter as Associate Members.

Section 5. Chapter Duties: Each Chapter shall agree to meet at least once every three months; to participate on regional conference calls and to take minutes at every Chapter meeting.

Section 6. Chapter Officers Elections: Chapter Officers shall be elected for one year terms at a scheduled meeting of the Chapter or by a vote by mail with appropriate notice of the election. Members in good standing and eligible to vote, present at any properly called meeting of the Chapter's general membership, shall constitute a quorum.

Section 7. Duties of Chapter Officers: The Chapter President shall convene and run the board and membership meetings and represent the Chapter on Regional teleconferences. The Chapter Secretary shall take minutes of all board and membership meetings and forward

them to the FARA secretary within 10 days of their approval. Each Chapter must designate an alternate representative to serve if the Chapter President is unable to attend a conference call. Each Chapter will provide a written report, as defined by the Board, to the FARA Board of Directors on the activities of the Chapter.

Section 8. Chapter Positions/Policies: It may be beneficial at certain times for the local FARA Chapter to take a position on a local matter or other issue. Positions and/or policies that are consistent with published positions and policies of FARA are permitted. Any position or policy a local Chapter wishes to take that is outside a position or policy already published by FARA, or one that is not published at all, shall go to the Board of Directors for approval prior to publication.

Section 9. Regional Teleconferences: Regional Teleconferences shall be held at the discretion of the Board of Directors to allow the Chapters to give input to the Regional Board representative and to be informed about FARA activities.

Section 10. Chapter Finances: No dues are permitted to be collected and no monies shall be disbursed by local Chapters.

Section 11. Chapter Dissolution: A FARA Chapter may be dissolved either by a two-thirds vote of Chapter Board of Directors or by the FARA Board of Directors for inactivity over a period of time specified by the Board.

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. **Rooms are going fast, so book yours today!** 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 already been mailed to the entire FARA membership. If you haven't received one, you can download the informational brochure from the web site at <http://www.faraonline.org/html/symposium.asp>.

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 Charleston 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 Charleston. 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 Charleston 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 1, 2008 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. Past winners can be viewed at http://www.faraonline.org/html/success_stories.asp. 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 Christine Van Geest and Kelly Maceranka, Awards Committee Co-Chairs, at awards@faraonline.org no later than March 14, 2008.

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 2008 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.

Featured Bulletin- Before Activating Your Alarm System

This bulletin stresses the steps every user should take before they turn on the alarm system.

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 Develop and Implement a False Alarm Reduction Program

The purpose of this manual is to provide guidelines to assist jurisdictions in developing and implementing a successful false alarm reduction program. Not every guideline in the manual will be appropriate for every municipality, given unique politics, demographics, scope, and economic considerations. However, the guidelines will give a good idea of an effective approach to finally dealing with and reducing false alarms.

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.

Tips: Debugging Colds and Flus

WINTER may not officially arrive this year until Dec. 22, but cold and flu season is already in full swing.

There's good news, though: A few simple actions can greatly reduce your chances of getting a cold or the flu and help prevent your family, friends and coworkers from becoming sick as well, says Joanne C. Langan, Ph.D., R.N., coordinator of clinical resources at the Saint Louis University School of Nursing and a member of the university's Pandemic Response Planning Committee.

"These are common-sense steps everyone should take throughout the year, but it's especially important now that winter's here and cold and flu season is under way," Langan said.

"It's all about respecting yourself in order to stay healthy -- and respecting others so they can be healthy as well," Langan added. "No one wants to get sick or to pass along a cold or the flu to someone else."

Langan offers seven steps she says are crucial to staying well this winter and prevent spreading cold or flu germs to others.

No. 1: Get a flu shot. Unquestionably, this is the most important way to avoid getting the flu and to prevent or contain an outbreak of the illness, which kills hundreds of thousands of people around the world each year. Flu shots are particularly important for people at high risk for serious complications from influenza -- including young children, the elderly and those with weakened immune systems.

The best time to get vaccinated is October and November, but you can get a flu shot in December and January and still be protected. Flu season can last as late as May.

And contrary to popular belief, there's no chance of getting the flu from a flu shot, Langan said. That's because the viruses in the shot's vaccine are dead, not live.

No. 2: Wash your hands often. A recent study found that regular hand washing with soap and water was more effective than drugs in preventing the spread of respiratory viruses such as the flu. If you can't wash with soap and water, alcohol-based gels and wipes can be used, Langan said. The gel should be rubbed until it's dry.

No. 3: Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Those are "major points of entry" for all kinds of germs, particularly those that cause colds and the flu, Langan said.

No. 4: Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

No. 5: Practice other good health habits. To keep your immune system as strong as possible, get plenty of sleep, eat nutritious food, drink plenty of water and other fluids and learn how to manage your stress.

No. 6: Cover your nose and mouth. If you're about to sneeze or cough, put your hand or a handkerchief over your nose and mouth -- or sneeze or cough into your sleeve. It may prevent those around you from getting sick, Langan said.

No. 7: If you're sick, stay home, particularly if you're running a fever or sneezing or coughing a lot. You'll help prevent others from catching whatever you have.

For more information on preventing the flu, go to www.cdc.gov/flu/toolkit. To learn more about healthy habits and stopping the spread of germs, go to www.cdc.gov/germstopper.

From Occupational Health & Safety E-News. To subscribe visit <https://newsletters.1105pubs.com/nl/OHS.do?NL=6149&PC=OHSNLF>

Holiday Safety Tips

The holiday season is often a joyous time of giving, sharing and spending time with family and friends. Unfortunately, this time of year is also shared with a particularly high crime rate. The Texas Crime Prevention Association offers safety tips for a safe and happy holiday season.

At Home

- Be extra cautious about locking doors and windows when leaving home, even for a few minutes.
- Do not display holiday gifts where they can be seen from a window or doorway.
- Store gifts away before leaving for a holiday trip.
- Make sure burglar alarms are in working order and contact information is up to date. Test smoke detectors.
- Use only fire resistant ornaments on your holiday tree and make sure electric lights are in good working order with no frayed wires.
- Do not leave holiday lighting on overnight and consider using timers.
- Keep all outdoor security lighting on from dusk to dawn everyday.
- Never hang a wreath or decorations on a door that would block the view from the peephole.

The Mail

- Use Go Direct to switch your federal benefit paper checks such as Social Security or Supplemental Security Income to direct deposit to protect against identity theft and fraud; visit <http://www.godirect.org/>.
- When mailing gifts or gift cards to friends or relatives make sure to send them to a secure address and tell someone at the location that they are coming so they can monitor the mail for their arrival.
- Request that all package deliveries require a signature and are not left on your door step.

While Shopping

- Shop before dark when possible.
- Try to coordinate shopping trips with a friend.
- Never park in unlit parking areas, no matter how convenient it is.

- Lock all packages in your vehicle's trunk and hide any belongings that you leave in the vehicle.
- Keep vehicle doors locked and windows closed.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash. When possible, pay for purchases with a credit card or debit card. Monitor your credit accounts for unauthorized activity on a regular basis.
- Teach your children who to go to in case you become separated in a store, such as a store clerk or security guard. Children should never go into a parking lot alone.
- Never leave your purse, wallet or cell phone lying in a shopping cart or stroller while shopping.
- Take your keys out and lock your vehicle while fueling up.

Entertaining

- When hosting a holiday party, have non-alcoholic beverages available for your guests.
- Have alternate transportation available for intoxicated persons.
- If you are hosting, you are responsible. Don't let your guests drink and drive.

False Fire and Burglar Alarms Are Costing the City of Lufkin, TX

By [Tashun Chism](#) Resource: <http://www.ktre.com/Global/story.asp?S=7451256>

Alarm systems are important to prevent scenes like this one. But not every alarm city officials respond to is a real emergency.

"We have one institution that in the past two years has had about 85 false alarms. So you can imagine the amount of time and expense going to those types of responses, Lufkin City Manager Paul Parker told us.

That's why one of the main things on the agenda for Lufkin City Council meeting is a false alarm ordinance. If passed, the proposed ordinance would allow each institution 5 false alarms a year. After that, it will cost \$300 for each false alarm.

Lufkin Police and Fire dispatchers are no strangers to false alarms. The Lufkin Fire Department alone averages about 31 false alarms per month.

"From time to time someone will call warning us it's a false alarm and not to send anyone. However, we're not on the scene so we don't know what the situation is. So we must respond and send units out regardless," Keith Pickley, Communications Supervisor for the city of Lufkin said.

False alarms also put a huge drain on the city's manpower.

"On an alarm we tend to send three or even four stations. That's three fire engines, one med unit and a rescue truck to everyone of our false alarms because we assume the alarm is an active structure fire," Lufkin Fire Department EMS Coordinator Steve McCool said.

If the city council approves the proposal, they will provide local companies with a plan for the ordinance. It will then be voted on by city council members on a later date.

Stafford, TX Mulls False Alarm Fee Increases

08:34 AM CST on Wednesday, December 5, 2007

By Leticia Juarez / 11 News http://www.khou.com/news/local/stories/khou071205_ac_staffordalarms.6d013f3a.html

It's all because of false alarms that are costing the city millions.

The goal is to get residents and businesses with alarm systems to be more careful when it comes to reporting emergencies. Year-to-date, police and fire personnel have responded to nearly 2,000 false alarms.

Mayor Leonard Scarcella said the city spends \$4 million of its \$6 million budget for police and fire on false alarm calls.

The mayor and City Council are hoping to curb that number with a fee increase.

Currently, residents and businesses pay \$1 for false alarm responses.

This is the breakdown of how the new system would work, if approved:

- \$25 for new permits for residents and businesses
- \$15 for renewal permits

Residents and businesses will be allowed three false alarm responses:

- Police response: \$50
- Fire: \$175

The dollar amount will increase after seven false alarms to \$100 for police and \$250 for fire.

CSAA Video Verification Standard Nears Accreditation

By Leischen Stelter - 12.06.2007 SDN Newswire

VIENNA, Va.--On Nov. 28, the CSAA released a final draft of CS-V-02 Video Verification Procedures for Burglar Alarms for committee review before the document enters the final stages of public review and ANSI accreditation.

"This standard should be up for public comment by the end of February and assuming nothing more needs to be changed, we hope to announce this standard at the ESX show in June," said Jim McMullen, CSAA chairman of the video verification committee and president of C.O.P.S.

"The essence of this standard is primarily how to use video to verify and visually identify the source of an alarm event, which will lead to the reduction of false dispatches," said McMullen. "One of the caveats of this standard is that it's not designed to be used by itself for verification of false alarms, it's designed to work in conjunction with other verification methods such as two-call verification."

This standard primarily addresses application issues, such as cameras being aligned with an alarm event and the ability of monitoring facility personnel to reasonably deduce from video images the source of an alarm, as opposed to issues of technological specifications. Although the standard requires a minimum of five frames of captured video be transmitted to the monitoring facility (two frames of video before the alarm event, one at the time of the event, and two after the event), it does not specifically address technological requirements, said McMullen.

"This standard doesn't box anyone into a corner based on today's technologies; it doesn't talk about transmission modes or compression size, because at the end of the day it's a dispatcher looking at a video and they should be able to make a reasonable judgment about whether or not the event was triggered by a person or dog," said McMullen. "If we wrote standards around technological items, we'd actually be hindering the industry from further enhancements."

To read this standard, visit the CSAA's Web site at www.csaaul.org/CSAASStandards.htm

42-Foot-Tall Inflatable Snowman Stolen

The Associated Press- TYLER, Texas – Information assist from KLTV-TV & Tyler

"Frosty" the snowman has been swiped. The 42-foot-tall inflatable holiday decoration was taken from a tree farm. Officials at Dixon Farms say Frosty, worth about \$10,000, was last seen Friday night.

So far no arrests.

Lot owner Royce Wisenbaker believes Frosty was hoisted over a fence. A \$1,000 reward has been posted for the safe return of the towering decoration. Frosty is described as a white male, sporting a red hat and scarf, with a pipe in his mouth.

Hmmm. Something's Different About You

The Associated Press- STOYSTOWN, Pa.

Police said a Somerset County man fled a traffic stop, went home, shaved his mustache and changed his clothes, and reported the truck he was driving as stolen.

Conemaugh Township police said they stopped Robert Sadlon, 50, for a broken taillight on Thanksgiving night and he ran off. Later, the same officer went to Sadlon's home near Stoystown to investigate the reported theft. There, he found a just-shaven Sadlon in different clothes.

Sadlon is charged with drunken driving, escape and related charges.

Burglary Ring Had Wide Reach

phillyBurbs.com December 2, 2007 6:47 AM

It is the biggest car burglary ring to hit Bucks County in 20 years — maybe ever — and police say the Mr. Big behind it, Bryan Jason Landis, 24, had the chops for running a business.

"He had quite a sophisticated operation," said Sgt. Chris Barry of the Bensalem police.

Landis had at least six accomplices, and perhaps as many as 10, Barry said, noting each was assigned a task, from assisting him in busting into cars and trucks, to fencing the stolen goods, to selling the stuff on eBay, at flea markets. At least 500 vehicles in Bensalem were burgled since January.

"Some of them knew other shady characters willing to purchase stolen items," Barry said.

Landis was arrested last week.

Veteran cops said they have never seen such a sprawling operation. Police estimate the ring made as much as \$100,000 cash by pawning dashboard GPS units, laptop computers, compact discs, cell phones, radios, jewelry and watches.

The motive: drugs.

"He would steal, sell it, get 30 bucks and then go buy a bag of heroin," said an undercover officer who interviewed Landis about how the ring operated. "[Landis'] drugs of choice were Oxycontin and heroin, so it kept him busy."

Unlocked cars were the ring's first choice, police said, but it really didn't matter if the vehicle had an alarm set. "They'd smash, grab, run, gone, in about 30 seconds," Barry said.

If a burglary ring's success can be gauged by the number of victims, this ring was tops. Between 300 and 400 people stood in the cold outside the Bensalem Police station Thursday night to see if any of the recovered goods were theirs.

Among those in line was a young woman who identified herself as Landis' girlfriend. She said she cannot believe he was capable of such a wide-ranging theft operation.

"He's a great guy. He was set up," the woman said.

She said the police mistakenly confiscated some of her purses and other personal items when they raided the Landis home in Croydon last week. She was there to get them back.

She met Landis a year ago. He worked for her family's home remodeling business, before it went bust. He did landscaping work after that. He had been in jail before on a gun rap, but that was a setup, too, she said.

"He was a great boyfriend. He took care of me. He bought me clothes, jewelry. See this necklace? It didn't come from the dollar store," she said. "It came from Wal-Mart.

"Any time I would need my nails done, or my hair, he would pay for it," she said, bursting into tears.

"I know he didn't do this. He's on two bowling teams, one in Levittown and in Bristol. He's good. He's like, a 180 average. Did you see those pink [rear-view mirror] dice with the skulls on them in there? Those weren't stolen. He won them for me in one of those crane machines. He's really good at those machines," she said.

"I can't believe this. I just can't. We had plans. He talked about getting his barber's license. He cuts his own hair and his dad's. He's really good," she said. "He just wanted to have kids, maybe get married. I can't believe he would do this."

Cops said more arrests are pending, and the ring may be tied to numerous house break-ins throughout neighboring Bristol Township, too.

Fish Frying On Stove Sets House Ablaze After Dog Shuts Woman Out Of Home

AP- 12/5/07 TOPEKA, Kan.

Firefighters said a grease fire that left \$50,000 in damage to a Topeka home erupted after a dog shut a woman out of the house while fish was frying on the stove.

Authorities said the woman was taking garbage outside Tuesday evening when the dog somehow shut the door behind her. Firefighters arrived to find heavy smoke with flames shooting from the roof of the home.

Topeka Fire Department Capt. Greg Degand said residents tried to douse the blaze, which started on a stove in the kitchen. But the flames spread to the attic and fully engulfed the house.

The woman's husband said the important thing is that everyone made it out safely, including the dog and their pet bird.

Criminal Genius? A Drive-Through Bank Robbery

Florida woman attempted robbery at S.C. bank's teller window

Daniel Brownstein, The Island Packet, Hilton Head Island, S.C.

HARDEEVILLE -- A Florida woman is in custody after attempting a timid, and not very well planned, bank robbery Tuesday morning, according to authorities.

She slipped a note into the tube at the drive-through at the South Carolina Bank & Trust on U.S. 17 and waited for a response from the teller, said city spokesman Paul Floeckher. The teller was able to inform the manager, who called 911.

Police Chief Richard Nagy said the woman did not wear a disguise or conceal the tags on her vehicle during the attempted robbery. It appeared she randomly chose the bank and didn't do much homework.

Because the bank is just down the road from the police station, three officers arrived in less than a minute. She took off without any cash, leading the officers on a brief chase through the parking lots of two stores before stopping on Paynesville Road, said Floeckher.

Barbara Joyner, 59, of Callahan, Fla., was arrested without incident, authorities said. "We think she was just passing through and she selected that exit to get off," the chief said.

Most bank robberies are prosecuted federally, but Joyner faces state charges on bank robbery and failure to stop for blue lights. That decision was made after a couple hours of questioning.

"The collective mindset of the authorities involved was that she might be better served in the state system, where she'd have access to mental health services," said Kevin McDonald,

spokesman for the U.S. Attorney's Office in Columbia. Joyner remained in the Jasper County Detention Center on Tuesday night. Her bond had not been set.

Robbing a bank from a drive-through window is rare, but does happen on occasion. In 2006, 78 of the 7,272 bank robberies nationwide occurred from a drive-through or walk-through window, according to special agent Steve Kodak, a national spokesman for the FBI. That's about 1 percent. And, even more surprisingly, some of them were successful.

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