

FARA InfoLink

June, 2008

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Maryland Chapter Holds First Meeting

The Maryland Chapter of FARA held its first official meeting in Baltimore, Maryland on May 8, 2008. The following officers were elected:

- President: Pamela Lambird, City of Greenbelt False Alarm Reduction Unit
- Secretary: Sue Clark, Montgomery County Police False Alarm Reduction Section
- Director: Eileen Skidmore, Howard County Police False Alarm Reduction Unit

The group also toured a local central station and received updates on the FARA Symposium in Charleston, South Carolina, as well as Maryland Burglar & Fire Alarm Association activities. They also discussed efforts to pass a statewide requirement for enhanced call verification and outreach to the Maryland Banker's Association. Fees, fines, record retention policies and dealing with holdup alarms were also discussed.

The Chapter will hold its next meeting on July 24, 2008.

FARA Changes Fees

The FARA Board continually strives to provide responsible leadership and is constantly re-evaluating the fiscal position of the organization for the benefit of all its members, including making appropriate changes to raise or lower fees as situations dictate.

As a result of this review, which began in April and concluded at the June Board Meeting, the FARA Board has adopted several changes.

For a complete list of the new fees, visit www.faraonline.org.

Summer Sales Teams Create Problems

Across the country, homeowners are being approached by illegally operating and unlicensed alarm companies to buy an alarm system. Through the use of door-to-door sales staff, usually out-of-state alarm companies have allowed over-zealous representatives to misrepresent vital contractual elements in order to pressure and mislead homeowners into signing a long-term monitoring contract with hidden fees. In exchange, the homeowner receives nothing more than a poorly installed security system.

Lots of Activity in Texas

"Unfortunately, we have seen a tremendous rise this summer across the state of homeowners who have been misled into buying one of these rogue alarm systems," said Chris Russell, Texas Burglar and Fire Alarm Association President. "If approached by a door-to-door salesperson, consumers should first check for references on the company and ask to see the salesperson's 'pocket card' issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety, Private Security Bureau. If the salesperson does not have a card, which will include their picture, they are not licensed to sell alarm systems in the state of Texas."

As part of their blatant misrepresentation and deceitful tactics, the door-to-door salesperson may also wear a reputable manufacturer's company shirt with logo.

Russell advises, "By capitalizing on large numbers of college students seeking summer employment, out-of-state alarm companies are sending teams of salespeople to cities across Texas. Most teams work on commission, incentives and contests. As they speak to homeowners, they keep the pressure on in order to make the sale. While licensed alarm representatives will complete the process ethically and responsibly, these representatives will not."

To rein in illegal and unethical activity by some unnamed summer model companies working in this state, the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) is working with the Texas Burglar & Fire Alarm Association and issued a public warning June 17.

In a press release, DPS warned "any Texan who is considering hiring an alarm company or installer to check whether the sales person and company are licensed to work in the state."

Capt. RenEarl Bowie of DPS said there are properly licensed summer model alarm companies who "routinely do business in the state." This warning, he said, is aimed at companies who are not complying with licensing laws and whose sales people are particularly aggressive and who mislead consumers.

Capt. Bowie said there have been no citations issued or arrests made, but that several door-to-door sales people had been questioned in Houston. "The investigation is ongoing and we are gathering evidence. We are still trying to figure out who these people and companies are."

Bowie encouraged security system installers across the country to learn who "the enforcement branch is for this type of activity [in their respective states] and to contact them with information about illegal activity" if they're witnessing similar activity.

Louisiana Fire Marshal's Office issues "cease and desist" order.

According to Baton Rouge station WAFB - The Louisiana Fire Marshal's Office is investigating an alarm system company out of Utah. Some customers who live in the Baton Rouge area say salesmen for APX alarms are knocking on their doors and insisting they try their product. One woman says her husband fell for the company's propaganda.

"They got one on this street. They tried to get my neighbor, but he didn't want it." Shiny, reflective signs advertising APX Security Systems are popping up in Grace Wilkerson's neighborhood. She says so-called traveling salesmen with the company are begging folks to let them into their homes to talk about their alarm systems. "I saw them three days straight," she says.

Grace says sales representatives are telling potential customers they have the best deal in town and they can take advantage of it only if they sign up that day. Grace's husband fell for it. "I don't know what all they told him to get him to sign that contract. They didn't give him time to think." By the time Grace got home from running errands, it was too late. Her old alarm system was boxed up and replaced with the APX edition, and a \$99 installation fee and a first month service fee of \$44 had been drafted from her bank account.

What's worse, she tells us her husband signed a five-year contract because he was impressed with the system's bells and whistles. "He said they do this cell phone thing; if they cut your phone line, they can call you by cell." However, when the couple went to test the system, they were very disappointed. In the test run, it took more than a few minutes for the alarm to sound and Grace says it took even longer for the company to call and check on them. The Wilkersons called to cancel their contract with APX, but the company says it will take 30 days for them to uninstall the system. The couple didn't cancel their contract with their previous security system provider. So now, the Wilkerson's face two monthly bills for what appears to be exactly the same thing.

The state fire marshal's office issued APX an order to "cease and desist" until its investigation is complete. So far, investigators found the firm had 15 unlicensed employees who installed nearly 325 systems across the state. An attorney for the company says APX is complying with the agency's request and will have everything in order by Monday.

For more information

- TBFAA Press Release-
- <http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/06-16-2008/0004833166&EDATE>

- TX- Department of Public Safety Release-
http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/director_staff/public_information/pr061708.pdf
 - Utah Business Journal article
http://www.utahbusiness.com/parser.php?nav=article&article_id=7127
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Court rules Fontana must respond to alarms - *Security Systems News 05.2008*

By Leischen Stelter - 05.2008 - FONTANA, Calif.--The San Bernardino Superior Court ruled May 8 that the City of Fontana Police Department must respond to alarm events, regardless of whether they are verified or not, the result of a suit filed by the Inland Empire Alarm Association (IEAA) against the City of Fontana Police Department on Sept. 24, 2007.

IEAA argued that the city's verified response policy contradicted the City of Fontana Burglar Alarm Ordinance, which had been enforced since its enactment in 1968. "Essentially the court has said that the police have to respond to alarms and the court's position is that the police must comply with the municipal ordinance," said attorney Lessing Gold, of Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp, which represented IEAA.

"The intention of this suit was not for the industry as much as for the citizens of Fontana," said Morgan Hertel, vice president of the Command Center and a member of the IEAA. "Government agencies simply can't make policy that trumps ordinances and laws in this country and that's the basis of this lawsuit and why we won. The association won their part, but the real winners are the citizens and the public at large."

Hertel said he believes the court's ruling sets a precedent. "It means that any other city that wants to enact any kind of policy, whether it's a false alarm or a how-to-mow-your-lawn, you can't just make a policy if there's already a law that governs it," he said.

He also said that he hopes there's no bad blood between the two parties and said the association will reach out to the police department in upcoming days.

It remains unclear whether the city will be required by the court to take immediate action to resume alarm response. The city has 60 days from the entry of judgment to appeal the court's decision. "What happens now is anybody's guess," said Hertel.

NESA Elected New Officers

At a recent meeting, the National Electronic Security Alliance (NESA) Board of Directors elected new officers.

- President – Rex Adams
- Vice President – Jordon Brown
- Secretary- Dan Locke
- Treasurer- Howard Simons

Dave Simon was appointed as legislative chairman, and Dean Coburn of ADI was selected to serve as the associate director.

[Dave Simon](#) is senior manager of industry and public relations for Brink's Home Security, and currently serves on the Texas Burglar and Fire Alarm Association Board as the President of the North Texas Alarm Association.

[Dean Coburn](#) has been in the industry for 22 years, including 7 years spent with a security company in Texarkana. He started in installation, service and then moved to General Manager. His last 15 years have been spent with ADI in sales and as a branch manager.

[Rex Adams](#) of American Security Devices in Richardson, Texas was reelected as President. Prior to serving as NESA's first president, Rex has served as president of the Texas Burglar and Fire Alarm Association and North Texas Alarm Association.

[Jordon Brown](#) of Guard Tronic, Inc. in Fort Smith, Arkansas was elected as Vice President. Jordon previously served as a NESA Director and currently Chairs NESA's Training Committee. Jordon is a NESA certified training instructor and has served on the boards of the Arkansas Security Alarm Association and/or Arkansas Burglar and Fire Alarm Association for several years.

[Dan Locke](#) of Key Security, Co. in Newton, Kansas was reelected as Secretary. Dan is a NESA certified training instructor and has served on the boards of the Kansas Electronic Security Alarm Association and/or Kansas Burglar and Fire Alarm Association for several years.

[Howard Simons](#) of Snowis in Bowie, Maryland was reelected as Treasurer. Howard is a NESA certified training instructor and has served on the board of the Maryland Burglar and Fire Alarm Association for several years.

For more information about NESA and pictures of the board members visit www.nesaus.org.

Tips: False Alarm Prevention - *Security Products- June 2, 2008*

Most often alarm owners set off their alarms while attempting to activate or deactivate their systems. Other examples of false alarms are employees or persons without proper codes, pets, balloons or any object that can be moved by air currents from devices such as heat or air conditioning systems.

The Seattle Police Department offers the following false alarm prevention tips.

Remember, an alarm system only detects motion, not criminal intent.

When working with an alarm system, remember that all monitored alarm systems must go through a third party monitoring center. There are no direct connections to the police or 911 centers.

The monitoring center is only relaying a mechanical signal to the police on your behalf. Be sure to update your phone numbers and contact list. This will assist the monitoring center in the verification process.

Alarm systems may be a deterrent and are most useful when used as a part of a layered security system instead of a stand-alone security device. The foundation of layered security begins with:

- Physical security (i.e. doors, locks, lights. etc).
- Active block watches.
- Additional security measures such as additional phones and/or buddy system .
- Alternative security practices such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

If you are going to use an alarm system consider the use of private guard response for alarm signal verification. Your alarm company should have a guard company on retainer and be able to set this up. This typically gives you a more timely economical response and greatly assists the police in reducing unnecessary calls for service.

Preventing False Alarms

- Once the alarm has been tripped there are ways to prevent the false alarm from reaching the police.
- Know what to do if you accidentally set-off the alarm system.
- Call your monitoring center. Not the police. Even if considerable time has elapsed. Only your monitoring center can cancel a request for police regarding your alarm signal that may prevent a false alarm fee.
- Write down the procedures for activating and deactivating the system and make them available near the control panel.
- Place the alarm monitoring center's phone number near the phone and/or control panel.
- Have immediate access to your code or password but do not leave it with the instructions or in unsecured places.
- Make sure your emergency contact names and phone numbers are updated with the alarm monitoring center.
- Alarm owners are required to train all other authorized users to properly operate the system. Authorized persons should have their own separate password.
- Local alarms (those without monitoring companies) are required to have emergency contact phone numbers posted near the front door of the premise.

NENA Master Glossary of 9-1-1 Terminology, v11, Released

5/19/2008 - The latest update of the NENA Master Glossary of 9-1-1 Terminology, Version 11, May 16, 2008 includes new and updated Acronyms and Definitions from 15 separate Operations and Technical Standards and Information documents including many new acronyms and definitions for VoIP services. It also includes a new column which indicates if an acronym or definition is New or Updated. To access the Glossary web page, [Click here](#).

Featured Bulletin – Thunderstorm + Lightning + Power Outage = False Alarm?

This bulletin stresses the steps every user should take to avoid costly false alarms that may occur during inclement weather. 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.

We encourage you to use these informational bulletins as bill stuffers, hand outs at meetings or to send to individual problem alarm users.



Thunderstorm + Lightning + Power Outage = False Alarm?



The answer is NO!

Thunderstorms, lightning and power outages do not equal false alarms.

Consider the following:

- Power surges and lightning strikes **do not** cause false alarms!
- False alarms caused by lightning strikes are **avoidable** through the proper grounding of alarm systems and the use of power **AND** phone line surge suppressors.
- Use of surge suppressors greatly reduce false alarms by redirecting and dissipating electrical current to the ground.
- Power outages or interruptions of power **do not** cause false alarms!

In order to avoid costly false alarms that may occur during inclement weather, contact your alarm dealer and follow these simple steps:

- Repair loose fitting doors and windows.
- Ensure that all alarm contacts are firmly in place.
- Use wide-gap door and window contacts.
- Use surge protection equipment on both the alarm system and the phone line sending the alarm signal to the monitoring center.
- Ensure that the battery back-up protection is in good working order, is fully charged and will hold that charge for a minimum of four hours.
- Ensure that your alarm system is properly grounded.

REMEMBER . . . Properly designed, installed and maintained alarm systems will not generate false alarm activity (AND FINES) due to power surges or power interruptions!

Featured Manual – Alarm Management Software

The purpose of this manual is to help FARA members identify the major issues that should be addressed when acquiring or assessing False Alarm Reduction Program Management Software. This manual will help FARA members address issues from who should build the software to what things the software should do to what information the software should capture.



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.

False Alarm Updates

- **N.C. town to enforce false alarm penalties** - *SecurityInfoWatch.com- June 12th, 2008*
The town of Kannapolis, N.C., is set to begin cracking down on false alarms by home and business owners. According to an article published by SalisburyPost.com, false alarms have reportedly made up just slightly more than 99 percent of all alarm calls that the Kannapolis Police Department has responded to in recent years. For third and subsequent false alarm offenses, residents and business owners, who are required to register their alarm systems with the city, will now face a series of fines ranging from \$50 to \$250. Those who have 10 or more false alarms at their location will be fined \$500, have their alarm permits revoked and response by police to their address suspended for alarm calls.
- **Reno amends alarm ordinance** - *US States News- June 10th, 2008*
Changes in the City of Reno's alarm ordinance went into effect June 1. The new ordinance reduced the \$105.00 residential false alarm fee and the \$138.00 commercial false alarm fee to \$75.00 each. Those fees go into effect once an officer has been dispatched to a call, however, there is no charge for alarm calls that are cancelled prior to an officer being obligated to the call. Robbery, panic and duress false alarms have a \$200.00 service fee. Each alarm user is allowed three false alarms within their annual permit period, and prior to being actually suspended, the user and alarm company both are given a 30-day period in which to correct the problem. After that, the alarm user can pay a reinstatement fee and provide a letter from the alarm company outlining the false alarm problem and how it was repaired or corrected, and successfully take a free online alarm school. An annual alarm permit fee of \$25.00 is required for both residential and commercial alarm users, while senior residents age 60 and older have a discounted fee of \$10.00 for residential alarm sites.
- **False fire alarms frustrate Canadian fire chiefs** - *CBC News- June 12th, 2008*
B.C.'s fire chiefs are frustrated by the number of false alarms coming from smoke detectors wired to automatically call them. District of Hope Chief Tom DeScorcy of the Fire Chiefs Association of B.C. is asking security companies not to wire residential smoke alarms to automatically call the fire department.

- Maryland county to crackdown on false alarms-** *The Baltimore Sun- June 9th, 2008*
 A draft bill which was expected to be introduced to the Anne Arundel County Council on Tuesday June 10, 2008 could impose penalties on residents and business owners responsible for repeated false alarms. The draft bill would also require households and businesses to pay a registration fee upon installation of an alarm system, which would allow the county to better track repeat offenders. "There's a direct financial benefit with fees and penalties, but the real benefit is that it will keep police doing real police work," said Alan R. Friedman, director of government relations for County Executive John R. Leopold, who said the county worked closely with other jurisdictions to come up with the draft bill.
- Scottsdale Ariz. may crackdown on false alarms-** *SecurityInfoWatch.com- June 2nd, 2008*
 City officials in Scottsdale, Ariz., will consider this week whether or not to increase fines and impose other penalties for false alarms at area residences and businesses. In addition to increasing fines the Scottsdale City Council will consider imposing several other measures, including revoking alarm permits for those who garner seven or more false alarms within a 180 day period, imposing property liens on those who don't pay false alarm fees, requiring security companies to institute Enhanced Call Verification (ECV), and increasing response time for police from 20 minutes to 30 minutes.
- Decline in false alarms credited to police effort-** *The Baltimore Sun- June 13, 2008*
 The number of false alarms from security systems in Howard County Maryland has decreased significantly since police mounted a reduction effort - except at schools and other government-run buildings. A recent audit of the Police Department's False Alarm Reduction Program showed that more than 50 alarm sites accounted for more than 25 percent of all false alarms - and half of those are government buildings. Despite the recurring problem at some sites, the auditors found overall that the program has "undoubtedly been instrumental in reducing the number of false alarms." For commercial and residential sites, the number of false alarms has decreased 30 percent since the program began. Last year, there were 746 false alarms at 130 government or school locations, according to the police. One reason for the disparity might be that county-run buildings aren't required to register their alarm systems, as businesses and homeowners are. They also don't have to pay the fines that go along with false alarms in private buildings.
- LA alarm rate drops-** *Security Systems News 05.2008*
 The Los Angeles Police Department reported that false alarms in 2007 were reduced nearly 50 percent since 2003, according to the Los Angeles Times. In 2007, the police department reported 59,482 calls, down from 109,295 in 2003. Those results mean the City of Los Angeles has an alarm dispatch rate of approximately .25, or one false alarm per system every four years.

Industry News Briefs

- More alarm communications going wireless-** *SecurityInfoWatch.com -June 6th, 2008*
 Researchers: 7.5 million alarm system connections to be wireless by 2013. Sam Lucero, analyst with ABI credited "the continuing decline of landline voice services and the increasing utilization of second phone lines for DSL broadband services" as driving alarm connections over cellular networks. But he also cautioned alarm dealers, noting that the cellular connection modules are typically more expensive than standard POTS dialers and hard-wired Ethernet/web connectivity. Lucero also noted that many technicians also still need training on how to deploy cellular connections for alarm systems.

- **Chicago ordinance proposes security systems in vacant buildings-** [Security Systems News- 6-12-08](#)

An ordinance due to hit the Chicago City Council this week would require owners of buildings vacant for more than six months to install and "maintain a working burglar alarm system." The ordinance was proposed by Mayor Richard Daley in an effort to clean up the city. Under the ordinance, owners of buildings vacant for more than six months would be required to register the building with the city, install a working security system and have an active account with a third-party monitoring company. Other requirements under the ordinance include property maintenance like mowed lawns and properly secured windows and doors.

- **Legislation proposes Medicare coverage for medical monitoring services-** [Security Systems News- 5-08](#)

The Medicare Remote Monitoring Access Act of 2008 was introduced to the House of Representatives on April 14, which, if passed, would require Medicare to cover remote health monitoring services for patients with certain chronic health conditions. The legislation, H.R. 5765, was introduced by Representative Anna Eshoo (D-CA) and would amend the Social Security Act allowing coverage by the Medicare program. The proposed bill would provide Medicare coverage of health monitoring costs for patients suffering from congestive heart failure and cardiac arrhythmia. The bill also establishes a demonstration program to evaluate coverage for patients with diabetes, epilepsy and sleep apnea.

Alarm Company News Briefs

- **Brink's Home Security to go away by 2012-** [Security Systems News- 06.12.2008](#)
Brink's Home Security is going to have to find a new name by 2012. Industry watchers were taken by surprise by the news, included in a lengthy May 30 SEC filing, that Brink's Home Security has been paying royalties (7 percent of revenue--roughly \$33 million in 2007) to sister company Brink's, Inc., to use the Brink's Home Security name and will lose that privilege three years after the two companies are spun off into independent firms by The Brink's Company at the end of this year.
- **Gun manufacturer enters security industry-** [Security Systems News- 05.2008](#)
Major gun manufacturer Smith & Wesson announced on May 1 a licensing agreement with NationWide Digital Monitoring Co., a division of New York Merchants Protective Co., to design and sell Smith & Wesson-branded security systems.
- **COPS earns Five Diamond Certification** - [Security Systems News-05.2008](#)
COPS Monitoring, a large third-party contract monitoring company, on April 9 announced its central station located in Scottsdale, Arizona has earned Five Diamond Certification from the Central Station Alarm Association. Five Diamond Certification requires that all dispatchers in the facility successfully complete the CSAA Central Station Operator Training Level 1 course as well as demonstrate proficiency in alarm verification. The central must also commit to inspections by third-party laboratories such as UL or FM, among other CSAA requirements.
- **LaserShield acquires partner NextAlarm.com** - [Security Systems News- 05.2008](#)
LaserShield, developer of a plug-and-go instant security system, in April completed the acquisition of NextAlarm.com, an alarm monitoring and technology development company based in Ojai, Calif.
- **Stanley to acquire Sonitrol, sell off CST-Berger-** [Security Systems News- 06.12.2008](#)
The Stanley Works announced June 11 two separate agreements to acquire monitoring and installation firm Sonitrol for \$275 million and sell off its CST/Berger laser leveling and measuring business, based in West Lafayette, Ind., to Robert Bosch Tool Corporation for \$205 million.

- **Making Niscayah** - *Security Systems News- 06.08*
Securitas Systems is changing its name to Niscayah, effective July 1, 2008.
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Please Share Your Newsletters and Tips with Us

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

Please send your newsletters, tips and brochures to:
False Alarm Reduction Association
10024 Vanderbilt Circle, Unit 4
Rockville, MD 20850
bradshipp@4yoursolution.com

FARA Mission Statement

It is the mission of the False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA) to provide a forum for local government alarm ordinance 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 law enforcement, the alarm industry and the alarm users.

Contact Us

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Comments and suggestions regarding FARA's InfoLink are both encouraged and welcomed. If you would like to submit an article for publication, or if you have any questions or concerns about this newsletter, please contact the FARA Board of Directors at 301/519-9237, or by e-mail at: info@faraonline.org

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