Preventing False Alarms
or
How to Prevent False Police & Fire Dispatches

False Alarm Prevention
- According to the Security Industry Association Coalition *Model Alarm Ordinance* a false alarm dispatch is:

  *an alarm dispatch request to the police department when the responding officer finds no evidence of a criminal offense or attempted criminal offense after having completed a timely investigation of the alarm site.*

Regulations
- City, County, State
- Local Ordinances

State Rules & Regulations
- There are no rules established for central station operations by the state.
- The rules for operation are established by Underwriters Laboratories
- Personnel in a Central station are governed by Florida Statutes (F.S. 489)
- You are in this class to comply with state regulations for required training

Local rules
(Local government ordinances)
- Best example is Boca Raton, and Delray Beach, FL:
  - In Boca and Delray, unless the alarm company is UL listed, and the central station is approved by the city:
    *you may not install or monitor alarms within city limits*

Industry Standards
- CPO1
- Enhanced Call Verification
9 [ ] National Rules
(NFPA Codes)
- Monitoring of Fire Alarms are governed by NFPA codes.
- The National Fire Alarm Code, NFPA 72, 1996 edition requires a certain response to various types of signals

10 [ ] Industry Standards, Accepted Practices, & Approved Procedures
- NFPA UL FS489 FS633
- SIAC Model Alarm Ordinances
- Local Building Codes
- Local Police and Fire Alarm Regulations

11 [ ] Emergency Forces Dispatching Requirements & Techniques
- Florida law now requires every Burglar Alarm signal to be verified
- You may not delay a dispatch to a commercial fire alarm signal
- You may verify a residential fire alarm signal
- You must comply with other rules as they are established

12 [ ] Rules for dispatching
Police & Fire Officials
- Police and Fire officials risk their lives everyday to provide emergency services to the residents of their communities

13 [ ] Operating Procedures
- Your operating procedures must compliment the local rules and regulations
- Customers may not override state law, or local ordinances

14 [ ] Industry Programs
- Local Installation Service Company
- Mass Marketing
- Authorized Dealer Program
- Purchase and Lease
- Third Party Monitoring
Company policy
- Every company establishes their own rules and regulations for handling emergencies
- UL merely provides guidelines for the basic operations of a central station
- Central Station Manager should develop and implement these policies

Requirements of the customer
- Response to certain signals is mandated by the customer
- State law sometimes supercedes the requirements of the customer
  - Example-commercial fire alarm-we are required to notify the authorities even if the customer says they don’t want us to dispatch (NFPA 72, 1996 Edition)

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) estimates that each alarm system generate 2 alarms per year.
- 98% of these dispatches are determined to be false alarms
- A survey by the CSAA indicated that monitored systems filter out 90% of false activation's

Communications
- Telephone Lines
- Cellular
- Radio Relay
- Line Monitor
- Line Protection

The Duties of a Central Station
• Provide the safety and security their customers expect
• To act responsibly
• To help avoid unnecessary alarm dispatches
• Help reduce false alarms

21 □ Training
• Most Central Stations train their new employees for at least 40 hours before allowing them to handle alarm signals.
• Underwriters Laboratories requires record keeping of all on going training
• Florida now requires training for anyone selling, installing or servicing alarm systems

22 □ Why alarm companies are concerned with false alarms
• Additional Cost
• Appearance of degraded reliability
• Safety
• Customer Good Will
• Attrition

23 □ Why alarm users should be concerned with false alarms
• Increased cost due to false alarm fines
• Possibility of being placed on: "No Response"
  • Police may lose faith in the quality of alarm system placing themselves, and the users in danger

24 □ Effects of False Alarms
• Increased central station activity
• Increased follow up costs for
  • service department
  • sales department
  • customer service department
  • productive time diverted to non income producing projects

25 □ Non Response
• Some authorities have enacted ordinances that stop responses after a certain number of false alarms
• Several area have eliminated response to alarm signals entirely
Methods of Reducing False Dispatches

- Verify burglar alarms before dispatching
- Proper data entry of information prior to system “going on line”
- Proper education on the use of system to all who will use the system at the time of installation
- Offer additional training if needed
- Make repairs at no charge

Alarms Reduce Crime!!

- Residences with alarm systems were 6 times less likely to be burglarized than homes without security systems
- Monitored systems reduce police dispatches

Interaction with Police and Fire Officials

- Attitudes of the Police
  - Industry is getting rich on their service
  - Audible alarms do not decrease crime, silent alarms do.
  - Alarm systems increase police workload
  - Alarm industry is not trying to solve the crime
  - Failure rate of alarms is 98%

Example of Alarm Companies and Police Working Together

- Palm Beach County, Florida
  - An Alarm ordinance has been in effect since 1988.
  - In 1993 the ordinance was revised
  - In 1999 the ordinance was revised again
  - In all instances the Alarm Community played an important part in the development of the ordinance.
  - As alarm installations increased the number of police & fire dispatches decreased

Recognition

- In 1995 SIAC recognized the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office for having the lowest false alarm rate in the country.
- Since that time alarm companies working in conjunction with PBSO have reduced false dispatches by more than 30%.
So now let’s look at the specifics of the local alarm ordinance and what requirements must be followed in your town:

Reasons for False Dispatches
- 80-95% of all false alarms are caused by the system user.
- 5% due to equipment malfunction
- And the remaining 5% from:
  - Weather
  - System Maintenance
  - And undetermined causes

So now -- how can you help?
- By following some very simple procedures, you can reduce false alarms responses to your home and business:

Power
- Batteries
- Transformers
- Power Supplies
- AC Outlets

Proper Emergency Information
- Make Sure your central station has:
  - An up to date password list (and make sure everyone who will use the alarm knows their password)
  - Proper phone numbers to enable a verification call to your home or business
  - List of emergency people to notify should the alarm activate

Around your home/business
- Keep pets out of areas secured by motion detection devices
- Increase your entry/exit delay times (your alarm company can provide assistance with this feature)
- If new employees are hired, train them on the use of the alarm system—don’t assume they know how it works.
Your Security or Fire System

- Update antiquated equipment
- Get additional training if needed from the security company
- Keep your system properly maintained (this is different from updating a system)
  - Replace batteries
  - Have the system checked at least once per year by a licensed alarm contractor

Annunciators

- Exterior Sirens
- Interior Sirens
- Bells
- Strobe Lights

Installation – Service -- Maintainance

Only permit a licensed alarm contractor to perform any alarm installations, service or maintenance.

An unlicensed contractor may save you a few dollars now, but it will cost you in the long term