



CITY OF LOS ANGELES
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

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April 14, 2003

To: Honorable Members, Los Angeles City Council
Honorable Members, Board of Police Commissioners

From: Ronald F. Deaton *RFD*
Chief Legislative Analyst

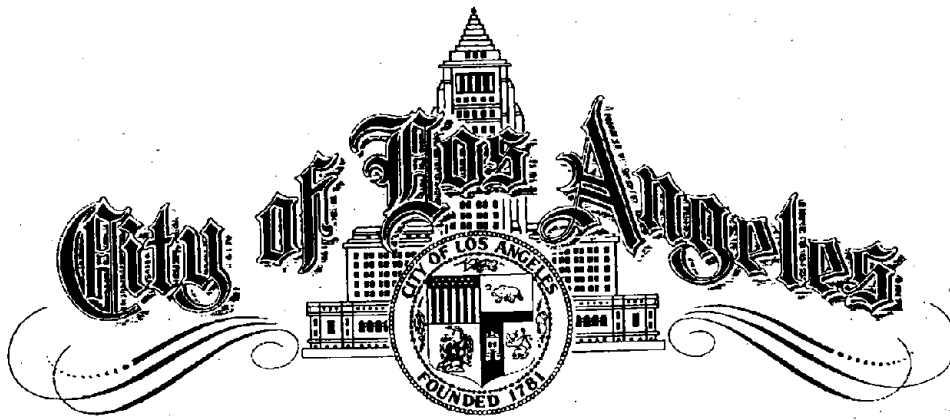
Subject: **BURGLAR ALARM TASK FORCE REPORT**

Transmitted under separate cover is the Burglar Alarm Task Force report dated April 11, 2003, pursuant to Council action (C.F. 03-0028). The recommendations contained in the report are endorsed by a majority of the Task Force members, not all of whom were available to sign the transmittal page.

This Office believes the recommendations of the Task Force provides the necessary balance between the public safety concerns of the citizens of Los Angeles and the deployment resources of the Los Angeles Police Department. However, successful implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force is dependent upon the City knowing all the alarm users in the City. Only then can the Task Force's proposed policy be implemented in an equitable fashion.

During the Task Force hearings, the Greater Los Angeles Security Alarm Association (GLASAA) agreed to provide their customer database on a confidential basis to assist the City in getting all alarm users permitted. The City Attorney's Office advised that this information may be subject to the California Public Records Act and that the City could not sign a confidentiality agreement as requested by GLASAA. With the assistance of the City Attorney, we are still exploring a number of options relative to this issue and we are hopeful that it will be resolved.

It is imperative for the City to have the customer database of all alarm monitoring companies operating in the City in order to implement the Task Force recommendations. If not, then further consideration must be given to the Police Commission's Verified Response Policy or response policies in other cities. The present situation with the high number of false alarm responses in this City is unacceptable and we must address the issue of preserving limited police resources for the most critical calls for service.



CITY HALL
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012-4886

April 11, 2003

TO: Honorable Members, Los Angeles City Council
Honorable Members, Board of Police Commissioners

FROM: Burglar Alarm Task Force

As directed by the vote of the Los Angeles City Council, the Burglar Alarm Task Force has conducted a thorough inquiry into the issues related to the policy adopted by the Board of Police Commissioners calling for LAPD response to home or commercial burglar alarms only when they have been verified (Council File 03-0028).


Task Force members include representatives of the alarm industry, Neighborhood Councils, Community Police Advisory Boards, citizens and appropriate City Departments. They participated in a series of eight weekly meetings, starting Thursday, February 20, 2003 and concluding Friday, April 11, 2003. Discussions focused on a number of issues, including the methods used to verify home and commercial burglar alarms, possible changes to the Municipal Code, analysis of burglar alarm fees and the permitting process, the fines levied for false alarms and concerns raised regarding the need for a balanced policy that provides for public safety and makes maximum utilization of LAPD resources. The Task Force heard reports and presentations from representatives of the alarm industry, the Police Commission, the Police and Fire Departments, the City Administrative Officer, the Chief Legislative Analyst, Neighborhood Council and Community Police Advisory Board members as well as from the general public.

The Task Force implemented a comprehensive public outreach program to ensure that all interested parties could stay fully informed about the progress and have ample opportunity to offer their views. The City's Home Page, www.lacity.org, offered a link to a special Burglar Alarm Task Force site where the viewer could review all Task Force agendas and reports. In addition, the link featured taped proceedings of each meeting in the first use of an 'audio archive' program developed by Information Technology Agency. Members of the public were welcome to attend all meetings, where they could offer their comments. Those unable to attend the meetings could listen to them live by Council Phone.

A majority of the members of the Task Force have endorsed the findings and recommendations set forth in the Burglar Alarm Task Force Report, which will be presented to the Public Safety and Education and Neighborhoods Committees of the Council and to the Police Commission.

Respectfully submitted:

BURGLAR ALARM TASK FORCE



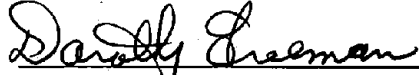
Jill Barad, Citizen Member



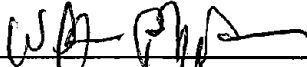
Curt Curtiss, Citizen Member



Jim Dellinger, Citizen Member



Dorothy Freeman, Citizen Member



William T. Fujioka, CAO

 (for)

Joe Gunn, Police Commission



Timothy Kerbrat, Fire Department

Styles Logan, Citizen Member

Candido Marez, Citizen Member

Jim O'Sullivan, Citizen Member

Leonard J. Shaffer, Citizen Member

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Don Youngblood, Sonitrol Security



Inez Broussard, Citizen Member

Rhonda Dejean, Citizen Member

Bill Evans, Citizen Member

Andrew Friedman, Citizen Member

Ken Gerston, Citizen Member

George Gunning, USA Alarm

Laurie Layine, Citizen Member

Sherry Lopez, Citizen Member

James McDonnell, Police Department

Eric Ortiz, Citizen Member

Stacey Siegel, Citizen Member

Chris Williams, Citizen Member

Ronald F. Deaton, Chair
Chief Legislative Analyst

Burglar Alarm Task Force Report

Date: April 11, 2003

To: The Honorable Members of the City Council
The Honorable Members of the Board of Police Commissioners

From: Burglar Alarm Task Force

Subject: Recommendations Relative to the Proposed Verified Alarm Response Policy

The Burglar Alarm Task Force (Task Force) was charged with the responsibility of reviewing the Police Commission's Verified Alarm Response policy. The desired goal was to develop a policy which balances the public safety concerns of the citizens of Los Angeles with the deployment resources of the Police Department. We believe the following proposal provides a comprehensive solution to the burglar alarm issue, particularly in that it preserves crucial police resources, responds to the public safety needs of our citizens, and provides additional and more effective penalties for chronic abusers. Successful implementation of the Task Force recommendations will depend, in part, upon the collection of data and information that the City does not currently have, but which could be provided through the cooperation of the alarm industry. This information is needed to ensure that all alarm users have permits so that responses may be tracked and that we have accurate information to implement the following proposed dispatch policy in an equitable manner.

Summary of Proposed Policy

During eight weeks of public hearings and fact finding, the Task Force considered a variety of issues relative to the Los Angeles Police Commission's proposed Verified Alarm Response policy. The information was assembled into seven major categories for final consideration. The categories include:

- Police Response/Dispatch
- Verification Protocols
- False Alarm Fees
- Burglar Alarm Permits
- Public Education
- Fire Department
- Other

The Task Force recommends that the Los Angeles Police Commission adopt a dispatch policy permitting up to three false alarm activations on a non-verified basis per 12-month period for a single location. This policy will require the Information Technology Agency to enhance the Police Department's dispatch system. In this way, the Communications Division will be able to ascertain the number of false alarm activations at a single location, and provide police units with the appropriate response protocol. We believe this dispatch policy provides the necessary balance between crucial police resources and the public safety concerns of the citizens of Los Angeles.

Figure 1 below displays data from the Los Angeles Police Department's False Alarm System for calendar year 2002. Based on the Task Force policy proposed above, the Police Department's workload in responding to false alarms may be reduced up to 43%.

Figure 1
Calls-Per-Address Analysis, Summary

Source: False Alarm System, 01/01/02-12/31/02

Calls Per Address	Number of Addresses	Total Number of Calls to Calls Per Address Category	Percent of Total Calls
10 or more	999	16,609	16 %
4-9	5,511	29,179	27 %
3	4,442	13,326	12 %
2	10,065	20,130	19 %
1	27,396	27,396	26 %
TOTAL	48,413	106,640	100 %

Prepared by the Office of the Chief Legislative Analyst, March 6, 2003

In an effort to reduce false alarm activations, an escalating disincentive fee schedule will be applied to all false alarms. There will be no "free" false alarms allowed. The disincentive schedule will include a minimum fee for the first infraction; a mid-level fee for the second infraction; and, a greater cost recovery fee for the third and any subsequent infractions. After a location collects more than three false alarms during a 12-month period, that location will require eyewitness, video or other Commission-approved modes of verification to determine suspected criminal activity before a police unit is dispatched to a burglary alarm (verified response). In order to establish an appropriate escalating fee schedule, which must be based upon City costs, the Task Force recommends the formation of a City working group to determine the false alarm fee structure, as outlined above, as well as appropriate penalties and interest charges for delinquent alarm permits and false alarm fees.

The Task Force recognizes that additional modes of verification may be acceptable to the Police Commission and therefore strongly recommends that the Commission evaluate

additional modes of verification including enhanced telephonic, audio, cross-zoning, and impact-activated stored audio devices. Moreover, the Task Force recommends, per the Greater Los Angeles Security Alarm Association, that alarm monitoring companies refrain from requesting dispatch of Police Department resources for the first seven days after a new alarm installation.

The Task Force recommends that all alarm users be advised of this modified dispatch policy through a written notification, which should include an explanation of the escalating disincentive schedule and the existing appeals process for individuals who wish to contest a determination of a false alarm. A similar notice outlining the escalating disincentive schedule should also be included in all billings for false alarms. Additional public outreach recommendations include the use of the City's homepage www.lacity.org, Channel 35 public service announcements and the distribution of information electronically to the network of Neighborhood Councils and Community Police Advisory Boards.

Analysis of data obtained from the Police Department's False Alarm System regarding the 106,640 false alarm dispatches for residential and commercial properties in calendar year 2002 indicated that an excessive number of false alarms took place at certain addresses. For example, the analysis indicated that 27% of the total false alarm calls involved addresses that experienced 4 to 9 calls each and 16% of the total calls were in the 10 or more calls category. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that the Police Commission develop a pilot program that targets locations with excessive amounts of false alarms.

To address the issue of permit compliance, the Task Force recommends that the City Attorney draft an ordinance to require possession of an approved burglar alarm permit prior to the installation of a new burglar alarm system, as well as requiring that alarm companies collect the initial permit fee. The recommended cost for the initial permit fee is \$40, with a \$20 annual renewal fee. The Task Force also recommends that the Office of Finance, with the assistance of the Police Commission, develop on-line registration and payment processing for burglar alarm permits to improve service delivery to the general public. The Office of Finance and Police Department are also requested to review the assignment of alarm permit numbers and determine the feasibility of including on the permit the year the permit is active, whether the location is residential or commercial, and the Alarm Company Operator number associated with a particular permit, with the intent of improving the tracking and analysis of data. Based on this information, the Office of Finance and Police Department are further requested to send delinquent unrenewed permits to the appropriate alarm company operators so that they may determine whether an alarm is still active at that location or if there are new owners operating the alarm system, so that the City may update its records accordingly. The Task Force requests that alarm company operators cooperate with the above request by responding to the City's inquiries and providing the necessary information. Finally, it is recommended that the Police Commission include an alarm permit application in all false alarm billings to further increase municipal code compliance.

The City does not presently assess additional penalties and/or interest charges for delinquent alarm permits and false alarm fees. The Task Force believes that assessing penalties and interest charges may encourage permit compliance and payment of these fees since the recipient would continue to be penalized for non-payment. However, to mitigate the economic impact this initiative may have on citizens and to further increase compliance with City law, the Task Force recommends that the City Attorney draft an ordinance to provide for an amnesty program that will allow citizens to pay their permit and false alarm fees, if applicable, under the current fee structure for a set period of time, as opposed to any new and/or increased permit fees, penalties or interest that the City may adopt in the near future. Further, all false alarm fees incurred prior to the previous 12 months would be waived during the amnesty period for those who come forward to comply with the permit requirements.

As stated above, successful implementation of the Task Force recommendations will depend, in part, upon the collection of data and information that the City does not currently have, but which could be provided through the cooperation of the alarm industry. Although the Task Force has included many "requests" for alarm company operators to provide the City with information, the City's ability to regulate the alarm companies is unclear. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that the City sponsor or support State legislation to exempt the alarm companies' customer information lists from the California Public Records Act.

The Task Force has recognized the need for the Police Commission to enhance their data collection to improve code compliance and the recovery of false alarm fees. Therefore, it is recommended that police dispatchers request alarm companies to provide their State "Alarm Company Operator" permit numbers when they call to request Police Department response. This recommendation will require that the Information Technology Agency develop computer system changes to track this data. Lastly, it is recommended that the Police Commission refer delinquent false alarm billings to the appropriate collection agencies that are currently under contract with the City.

The issue of false burglar alarms and the Police Commission's proposed Verified Alarm Response policy was also approached from the perspective of the Los Angeles Fire Department. Of great concern was the potential shift in dispatch requests from the Police Department to the Fire Department in an attempt to circumvent the Police Commission's proposed Verified Alarm Response policy. Based on reports and testimony provided during the Task Force deliberations, it is recommended that the Fire Department and the City Attorney's Office draft policies and/or regulations that 1) require monitored burglar alarm systems with fire alarm devices and/or medical alert devices be regulated to minimize false alarm activations and response of the incorrect type of emergency resource; 2) prevent Fire Department resources from being dispatched to burglar alarms; and, 3) provide for a police response to "dual" alarm activations to help ensure firefighter safety. The Task Force also recommends that alarm monitoring companies be able to determine if the device type is for fire, medical or burglar before requesting the Fire Department and that residents who use a burglar alarm system with fire alarm devices and/or medical devices be provided with simple directions for its use on a periodic basis.

Finally, the Task Force recommends that the Police Commission prepare periodic status reports to the City Council, Neighborhood Councils and Community Police Advisory Boards on the implementation of the burglar alarm policy changes.

Recommendations

Police Response/Dispatch

1. Request the Police Commission to adopt a dispatch policy based on the number of false alarms per year for a single location. Any further requests for dispatch after the threshold has been reached will require verification as defined by the Police Commission. The Task Force recommends a dispatch policy permitting up to three false alarm activations on a non-verified basis per 12-month period for a single location.
2. Request the Police Commission and Information Technology Agency to take the necessary steps to design, acquire and implement a false alarm computer tracking system that may be integrated with the City's dispatch system.
3. Request the Greater Los Angeles Security Alarm Association, as well as other alarm monitoring companies operating in the City of Los Angeles, to advise their membership to not request dispatch of Los Angeles Police Department resources for alarm calls for the first seven days from the time an alarm installation is completed.
4. Request that alarm companies be requested to provide their State "Alarm Company Operator" (ACO) permit numbers when they call to request Los Angeles Police Department dispatch and that the Information Technology Agency be directed to develop system changes to track the ACO data.

Verification Protocols

5. Endorse the Police Commission's proposed policy requiring visual or video verification of any alarm activation prior to dispatch of police resources beginning with the fourth false alarm in a 12-month period, as well as providing for an adequate appeals process.
6. Strongly recommend that the Police Commission evaluate additional modes of verification, including enhanced telephonic, audio, cross-zoning and impact-activated stored audio devices.

False Alarm Fees

7. Request the City Attorney to draft an ordinance to amend the Los Angeles Municipal Code to eliminate "free" false alarms.
8. Approve the concept of an appropriate escalating fee schedule based on the number of false alarms and request the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance for approval by the City Council and Mayor.

9. Request the Police Commission, in coordination with the Office of Finance and the City Attorney, to refer uncollectable false alarm billings that are older than 120 days to the collection agencies under contract with the City.
10. Request the City Attorney to draft an ordinance to amend the Los Angeles Municipal Code to establish penalties and interest charges for delinquent permits and false alarm fees.
11. Request the City Attorney to draft an ordinance to provide for an amnesty program for (a) penalties and interest on both delinquent permits and false alarm fees and (b) all false alarm fees incurred prior to the previous 12 months for those who come forward to comply with the permit requirements. Further, request the Police Commission to conduct a public education on the amnesty program. This amnesty program would encourage permit compliance by allowing these citizens to pay under the current fee structure as opposed to any new and/or increased permit fees, penalties or interest that the City may adopt in the near future.
12. Request the City to sponsor/support legislation to exempt alarm companies' customer information lists from the California Public Records Act.

Burglar Alarm Permits

13. Request the Police Commission to send an alarm permit application when billing an address and/or individual for a false alarm.
14. Request the City Attorney to draft an ordinance to amend the Los Angeles Municipal Code to require that an approved alarm permit must be on file with the City prior to the installation of any new burglar alarm system; or, for any existing alarm systems, require an approved alarm permit prior to the connection of the system to an alarm monitoring company.
15. Instruct the Office of Finance and the Police Department to develop the capability of on-line registration and payment processing for burglar alarm permits.
16. Form a City staff working group to determine the appropriate permit and false alarm fee structure to ensure cost recovery to implement the recommendations contained in the Task Force Report.
17. Request the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance to amend the Los Angeles Municipal Code to impose a \$40 fee for an initial burglar alarm permit and \$20 to renew the permit on an annual basis, and to provide that each alarm company will provide a notice in its billing statements at least once each year to remind its customers the date on which the alarm permit fee renewal is due.
18. Request the Office of Finance, with the assistance of the Police Department, to review the assignment of alarm permit numbers to determine the feasibility of

including the year the permit is active, whether the location is residential or commercial, and the Alarm Company Operator number associated with a particular permit, to improve tracking and analysis of data.

19. Request the Office of Finance, with the assistance of the Police Department to send delinquent unexpired permits to the appropriate alarm company operators so that they may determine whether an alarm is still active at that location or whether there are new owners, and that the alarm company operators be requested to cooperate by responding to these inquiries.
20. Request the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance to amend the Los Angeles Municipal Code to require alarm companies to collect the initial permit fee prior to installation of any new alarm system.

Public Education

21. Endorse the planned public information campaign as outlined by the Police Commission and request the Commission, with the assistance of the Information Technology Agency, to expand the effort to include the use of the City's web site, Channel 35, and electronic distribution to the network of Neighborhood Councils and Community Police Advisory Boards.
22. Request the Los Angeles Police Department to develop a pilot program which focuses on locations with excessive numbers of false alarms with the goal of determining the causes of the false alarms and assisting those locations in developing appropriate measures to mitigate the problem.

Fire Department

23. Request the Los Angeles Fire Department and the City Attorney to draft policies or regulations that require monitored burglar alarm systems with fire alarm devices and/or medical alert devices be regulated to minimize false alarm activations and response of the incorrect type of emergency resource. This may require a new fire permit process or affidavit process which ensures that the fire alarm devices, medical alert devices and burglar alarm devices are on separate alarm zones.
24. Require that alarm monitoring companies be able to easily determine if the device type is for fire, medical or burglar before requesting the Fire Department, and that all residents with burglar alarm systems with fire alarm devices and/or medical devices be provided with simple directions for its use on a periodic basis.
25. Request the Los Angeles Fire Department and the City Attorney to draft policies and/or regulations that prevent Fire Department resources from being dispatched to burglar alarms.

26. Request the Los Angeles Fire Department, Police Department and the City Attorney to draft policies and/or regulations that provides for a police response to "dual" alarm activations to help ensure firefighter safety. Include in those policies or regulations provisions that will reduce potential abuses or intentional dual alarm activations.

Other

27. Request the Police Commission to prepare periodic reports for the City Council, Neighborhood Councils and Community Police Advisory Boards regarding the impact of alarm policy changes recommended by the Burglar Alarm Task Force. At a minimum, the report should be prepared on a semi-annual basis and include statistics regarding calls for service and false alarms, administration of the permit process, collection of fees, and dispatch policy implementation.
28. Request the City to investigate the feasibility of implementing a dedicated telephone line for the cancellation of burglar alarm dispatches. Further, that the City address all staffing and funding issues relative to this proposal.
29. Recommend that alarm companies, as recommended by GLASAA, to perform enhanced telephone verification.
30. Recommend that no person should request service from police dispatch for an address that has more than 3 false alarms in a 12-month period without visual, video or other verification, as defined by the Police Commission.
31. Recommend that multiple false alarm activations at the same address within a 24 hour period shall be subject to the false alarm fee schedule, but shall count as a single incident with regard to the proposed dispatch policy, provided that the multiple false alarms were due to the same cause.

Fiscal Impact Statement:

Unknown at this time. The fiscal impact will depend on costs to implement the recommendations contained in this report, offset by improved cost recovery through the proposed escalating fee schedule, which is to be determined by the City working group; increased permit compliance; the future rate of false alarms; the collection of false alarm fees; and, the elimination of "free" false alarms.

Background

On April 9, 2002, the Board of Police Commissioner's adopted a Verified Alarm Response policy for the Los Angeles Police Department, and directed the Department to prepare an implementation plan. On January 7, 2003, the Police Commission approved the Verified Alarm Response policy Special Order, and a draft amendment to the City's Alarm Ordinance, Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 103.206.

The Police Commission's Verified Alarm Response policy requires that a burglary alarm be verified by private guard response, remote video electronic monitoring, or an eyewitness confirmation of potential criminal activity, from the homeowner, business owner or other responsible party before police are dispatched to that location.

Robbery, panic, duress alarms, and alarm activations that occur at a licensed firearms dealer would be exempt from the verification requirement. Alarm activations at any location monitored by the Police Department, Communications Division (e.g. City Council offices), temporary alarms monitored by Burglary Auto Theft Division and all other City Departments would also be exempted.

According to the Police Department, the scope of the false alarm problem has been consistent over the last six years. From 1997 through 2002, the Police Department reports a false alarm rate of over 90%, respectively. In 2002, the Department reported that out of a total of 121,973 alarm dispatches, 112,146 were determined to be false alarms (92% false alarm rate).

As directed by a vote of the Los Angeles City Council (Council File 03-0028), the Burglar Alarm Task Force was organized to address issues related to the Verified Alarm Response policy, as adopted by the Board of Police Commissioners. The Task Force focused on a variety of issues, including the methods used to verify home and commercial burglar alarms, possible changes to the Los Angeles Municipal Code, analysis of burglar alarm fees and the permitting process, and concerns raised regarding the need for a balanced policy that provides for public safety and makes maximum utilization of Police Department resources. The Task Force was further directed to present its findings and recommendations to the Public Safety and Education and Neighborhoods Committees within a 60-day period.

The Task Force comprised twenty-six participants and included representatives of the alarm industry, Neighborhood Councils, Community Police Advisory Boards, citizens and appropriate City Departments. Eight weeks of public hearings were held dating from February 20 through April 11, 2003. The meetings were well attended by members of the public and representatives from the alarm industry. For participatory and public education purposes, the Task Force developed a web site (www.lacity.org/batforce/batage.htm), which is currently available through the City's home page and provides the public with the reports that were presented to the Task Force members, individual audio links broadcasting each of the meetings, and an e-mail link for submitting public comments,

among other interactive features. A listing of the reports presented to the Task Force is provided under Attachment A at the end of this report.

Findings

During eight weeks of public hearings and fact finding, the Task Force considered a variety of issues relative to the Los Angeles Police Commission's proposed Verified Alarm Response policy. The information below is assembled into the following categories: I. Police Response/Dispatch; II. Verification Protocols; III. False Alarm Fees; IV. Burglar Alarm Permits; V. Public Education; VI. Fire Department; and VII. Other. Each recommendation is followed by a "findings" section that derives from testimony and reports provided to the Task Force members during their various meetings.

I. Police Response/Dispatch

Recommendation 1: Request the Police Commission to adopt a dispatch policy based on the number of false alarms per year for a single location. Any further requests for dispatch after the threshold has been reached will require verification as defined by the Police Commission. The Task Force recommends a dispatch policy permitting up to three false alarm activations on a non-verified basis per 12-month period for a single location.

Findings:

The Police Commission's proposed policy, while preserving police resources wasted on false alarm dispatches, also left citizens feeling vulnerable and concerned for their safety. The Task Force believes that their proposed dispatch policy provides the necessary balance between crucial police resources and the public safety concerns of citizens. Burglar alarm dispatches without verification will continue to be provided until the threshold for false alarms is reached, while reducing police resources on dispatches to locations with chronic false alarms. Based on the Task Force recommendation above, the Police Department's workload in responding to false alarms may be reduced up to 43%.

Figure 1
Calls-Per-Address Analysis, Summary

Source: False Alarm System, 01/01/02-12/31/02

Calls Per Address	Number of Addresses	Total Number of Calls to Calls Per Address Category	Percent of Total Calls
10 or more	999	16,609	16 %
4-9	5,511	29,179	27 %
3	4,442	13,326	12 %
2	10,065	20,130	19 %
1	27,396	27,396	26 %
TOTAL	48,413	106,640	100 %

Prepared by the Office of the Chief Legislative Analyst, March 6, 2003

Recommendation 2: Request the Police Commission and Information Technology Agency to take the necessary steps to design, acquire and implement a false alarm computer tracking system that may be integrated with the City's dispatch system.

Findings:

During the Task Force deliberations, the Information Technology Agency (ITA) was requested to investigate the interfacing of data between various systems used for dispatch, false alarm billing, permit system, and other relevant computer systems. In a verbal report on March 21, 2003, a representative from the ITA indicated that it was possible to integrate these systems at relatively little cost to the City and within a time frame of less than six-months.

Recommendation 3: Request the Greater Los Angeles Security Alarm Association (GLASAA), as well as other alarm monitoring companies operating in the City of Los Angeles, to advise their membership to not request dispatch of Los Angeles Police Department resources for alarm calls for the first seven days from the time an alarm installation is completed.

Findings:

Point number three of GLASAA's six-point plan addresses a "seven-day education period." GLASAA recommends amending the Los Angeles Municipal Code to provide that on new installations of intrusion alarm systems, the alarm company will not dispatch the Police Department for a period of seven days after completion of the installation, unless in case of emergency where the Police Department may give special dispensation.

This proposal will require the cooperation of the alarm companies since the LAPD will not know if the location has recently received an alarm installation.

Recommendation 4: Request that alarm companies be requested to provide their State "Alarm Company Operator" (ACO) permit numbers when they call to request Los Angeles Police Department dispatch and that the Information Technology Agency be directed to develop system changes to track the ACO data.

Findings:

During Task Force deliberations, the Task Force found that the City's lack of accurate, uniform and complete information regarding alarm companies, their customers, and their rate of false alarms inhibit the City's ability to enforce the alarm ordinance and to achieve a good collection rate. One way to collect better information regarding the alarm companies could be to request that they provide their State Alarm Company Operator permit number (ACO) when they call to request dispatch from the LAPD and develop a tracking system utilizing CAD (Computer-Aided Dispatch) and FAS (False Alarm System) computer systems. This information would be in addition to what is currently provided, such as the name of the alarm company that is calling in the alarm, their representative and telephone number. The Information Technology Agency indicates that this can be done within the existing framework of the CAD and

that the CAD system would be the most appropriate system to capture and track the ACO permit number.

II. Verification Protocols

Recommendation 5: Endorse the Police Commission's proposed policy requiring visual or video verification of any alarm activation prior to dispatch of police resources beginning with the fourth false alarm in a 12-month period, as well as providing for an adequate appeals process.

Findings:

Currently, the City of Los Angeles requires "verification" of an alarm prior to dispatch of a LAPD officer to an alarm activation. The current practice is to require the alarm company to telephonically verify the validity of the alarm before requesting an LAPD response. These calls are then classified as "Code 30" calls by the LAPD, for which the average response time is 45 minutes. According to the LAPD, in 2002, 92% of all alarm dispatch requests (112,146 out of 121,973 calls) were false alarms. The LAPD anticipates that implementation of the Police Commission's proposed policy will decrease the call load by 15%.

Recommendation 6: Strongly recommend that the Police Commission evaluate additional modes of verification, including enhanced telephonic, audio, cross-zoning and impact-activated stored audio devices.

Findings:

Currently, the City of Los Angeles requires verification of an alarm prior to dispatch of a LAPD officer to an alarm activation. Specifically, LAMC Section 103.206(f)(6) prohibits the operation of an alarm system that "causes a request for service to be placed with the Police Department prior to the verification of the need for such service whether by physical inspection of the scene of the activation, remote electronic inspection of the scene, or an attempt has been made to verify the need for service by telephonic means. The general practice of alarm companies is to call a single authorized number to attempt to telephonically verify the validity of the alarm before requesting an LAPD response. The Task Force strongly recommends that additional modes of verification be evaluated, which are described below:

a. Enhanced Telephonic

Under an enhanced telephonic verification system, the alarm company would make a second call to a separate contact number in cases where the first call goes unanswered. The intent of this proposal is to increase the likelihood of reaching an authorized party to verify the validity of an alarm activation.

The LAPD does not support enhanced telephonic verification because they believe that the current telephone verification is not working, so a second call would not improve the verification process.

b. Audio

There are system currently available on the market that provide one-way and two-way audio that will allow the central alarm station to “listen” to the activities at the location to verify the need for a police response. With two-way systems, the alarm company agency can communicate with individuals at the location. The intent of the audio verification system is to provide additional information for the alarm company to determine the need for a police response.

c. Cross-Zoning

“Cross-zoning” refers to criteria whereby more than one component of an alarm system is triggered at a single site during a particular incident. For example, an alarm activation caused by an open window and an infrared system at the same location would be considered a ‘cross zoned’ activation since two or more components of the same alarm system indicated activity at the site. Cross-zoning is intended to reduce the incidence of single-cause false alarms, such as those caused by the wind or other non-emergency situations. The theory is that two independent incidents at one location are a better indicator of criminal activity occurring at a site.

The LAPD and GLASAA have both reviewed the option of cross-zoning as a form of verification, but do not support using this as the sole method to verify the need for a police response to an alarm activation.

d. Impact-Activated Stored Audio

According to information provided to the Task Force, “impact-activated stored audio” provides ten times more “true” alarms and is lower in cost than video monitors or the need to hire private security guards.

III. False Alarm Fees

Recommendation 7: Request the City Attorney to draft an ordinance to amend the Los Angeles Municipal Code to eliminate “free” false alarms.

Findings:

The current false alarm fee is \$95. It is assessed on the third false alarm for permitted alarms and on the second false alarm for non-permitted alarms on a calendar year basis. The CAO reported that if the free alarms were eliminated, approximately 48,000 additional alarms may be billed for false alarm fees. The Task Force recommends the elimination of “free” false alarms as a means of lowering the rate of false alarm activations.

Recommendation 8: Approve the concept of an appropriate escalating fee schedule based on the number of false alarms and request the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance for approval by the City Council and Mayor.

Findings:

The current false alarm fee is \$95. It is assessed on the third false alarm for permitted alarm users and on the second false alarm for non-permitted users on a calendar year basis. The same \$95 fee is assessed whether it be the third false alarm or the thirtieth false alarm.

An escalating penalty schedule would more fairly allocate the cost of false alarms to those commercial and/or residential users who are most responsible for excessive alarm calls. Analysis of data obtained from the LAPD's False Alarm System regarding 106,640 false alarm dispatches in calendar year 2002 showed that an excessive number of false alarms were experienced at certain addresses. For example, 19% of the total false alarm calls involved addresses which experienced 5 to 9 calls each and 15% of the total calls were in the 10 or more calls category. The analysis also showed that the LAPD responded to 381 false alarm calls at a single address (with multiple businesses) in the 12-month period.

Higher false alarm fees may also encourage alarms users to be more responsible in deterring false alarm activations. According to the City Attorney, there could essentially be a fee plus a fine (for the excessive false alarm activations). Alternatively, the fee for a minimal number of false alarms could be based on partial cost recovery (as is the case today), while the fee for excessive false alarms could be based on full cost recovery.

Recommendation 9: Request the Police Commission, in coordination with the Office of Finance and the City Attorney, to refer uncollectable false alarm billings that are older than 120 days to the collection agencies under contract with the City.

Findings:

According to the CAO, the Police Commission collects approximately 50 percent of false alarm bills. Part of the problem in collecting these fees is due to a lack of complete and essential information required to identify the responsible party such as legal name and mailing address. A collection agency may be better equipped to handle this task and may improve the collection rate.

Recently, the City approved a two-year contract with two collection agencies, in which City departments will have the opportunity to refer delinquent accounts with a value of \$1,000 or less for outside collection. Compensation will be set in the contracts on a contingency fee basis with rates ranging from 14 percent to 20 percent depending on the recommended company (See Council File 00-2094).

Recommendation 10: Request the City Attorney to draft an ordinance to amend the Los Angeles Municipal Code to establish penalties and interest charges for delinquent permits and false alarm fees.

Findings:

Currently, alarm users who are not monitored by an alarm company or other monitoring device are exempt from paying an annual permit fee. Otherwise, the cost for alarm users is \$31 for the initial permit application and \$30 for the annual renewal.

The current false alarm fee is \$95. It is assessed on the third false alarm for permitted alarm users and on the second false alarm for non-permitted users on a calendar basis.

The City does not presently assess additional penalties and/or interest charges for delinquent permits and false alarm fees. Assessing penalties and interest charges may encourage permit compliance and payment of false alarm fees since the recipient would continue to be penalized for non-payment. A coordinated amnesty program, which would waive penalties and interest for non-compliance with permit requirements and non-payment of false alarm fees, may also encourage individuals to come forward to comply with the permit requirements and pay false alarm fees that are due.

Recommendation 11: Request the City Attorney to draft an ordinance to provide for an amnesty program for (a) penalties and interest on both delinquent permits and false alarm fees and (b) all false alarm fees incurred prior to the previous 12 months for those who come forward to comply with the permit requirements. Further, request the Police Commission to conduct a public education on the amnesty program. This amnesty program would encourage permit compliance by allowing these citizens to pay under the current fee structure as opposed to any new and/or increased permit fees, penalties or interest that the City may adopt in the near future.

Findings:

As noted above in Recommendation 10, the Task Force believes that assessing penalties and interest charges may encourage permit compliance and payment of these fees since the recipient would continue to be penalized for non-payment. However, to mitigate the economic impact this initiative may have on citizens and to further increase compliance with City law, the Task Force recommends that the City Attorney draft an ordinance to provide for an amnesty program that will allow citizens to pay their permit and false alarm fees, if applicable, under the current fee structure for a set period of time, as opposed to any new and/or increased permit fees, penalties or interest that the City may adopt in the near future. Further, all false alarm fees incurred prior to the previous 12 months would be waived during the amnesty period for those who come forward to comply with the permit requirements.

Recommendation 12: Request the City to sponsor/support legislation to exempt alarm companies' customer information list from the California Public Records Act.

Findings:

During the Task Force meetings, it became clear that local agencies have limited power to regulate alarm companies due to State laws. The only way to solve the issue

of alarm industry accountability is through the State legislative process. This proposal is intended to improve accountability of alarm companies, enable local agencies to properly administer permitting and enforcement functions, and ultimately reduce the number of false alarms.

IV. Burglar Alarm Permits

Recommendation 13: Request the Police Commission to send an alarm permit application when billing an address and/or individual for a false alarm.

Findings:

While researching the topic of false alarms, the CLA found that alarm permit applications were not being mailed with false alarm billings. A change in this practice would potentially increase permit compliance and assist in the enforcement of future false alarm fees.

Recommendation 14: Request the City Attorney to draft an ordinance to amend the Los Angeles Municipal Code to require that an approved alarm permit must be on file with the City prior to the installation of any new burglar alarm system; or, for any existing alarm systems, require an approved alarm permit prior to the connection of an alarm monitoring company.

Findings:

Currently, there are no regulations that would require that an approved alarm permit be on file with the City prior to the installation of any burglar alarm system.

Analysis of data obtained from the LAPD's False Alarm System regarding 112,146 false alarm dispatches in calendar year 2002 indicated that 66% of the total number of false alarm calls were received from sources that wither did not provide a permit number or had no permit. Further analysis of the data revealed that approximately 33% of the false alarms are at non-permitted locations.

This recommendation will assist the City in obtaining permit compliance for new installations of burglar alarm systems and assist in future enforcement of false alarm fees. In the City Attorney letter to the Task Force, dated March 20, 2003, they find that this type of requirement would not constitute a regulation of alarm companies and would not run afoul of any provision of State law. California State and Los Angeles City laws pertaining to the regulation of permit requirements are listed below:

California Business and Professional Code Section 7592.8:

The provisions of this chapter shall not prevent the local authorities of any city, county, or city and county, by ordinance and within the exercise of the police power of the city, county, or city and county from...

d) Requiring persons who own, lease, rent, or otherwise possess an alarm system to obtain a permit to operate the alarm system.

LAMC Section 103.206:

(b) Permit Requirement.

No person shall operate or use an alarm system on any premises under that person's control or without first having obtained therefor from the Board.

Recommendation 15: Instruct the Office of Finance and the Police Department to develop the capability of on-line registration and payment processing for burglar alarm permits.

Findings:

Currently, the Office of Finance provides alarm permit applications through their web page. An applicant may type their information directly on the electronic form; however, the form must then be printed and mailed to the City with the \$31 fee. The permit is then processed and mailed to the applicant.

Providing on-line registration and payment processing for burglar alarm permits will encourage permit compliance and improve service delivery.

Recommendation 16: Form a City staff working group to determine the appropriate permit and false alarm fee structure to ensure cost recovery to implement the recommendations contained in the Task Force Report.

Findings:

The City's alarm permit fee (\$31 for initial permit, \$30 for each annual renewal) has remained constant since 1987. Currently, alarm users with permits are allowed two "free" false alarms in a 12-month period and assessed a \$95 fee for each subsequent false alarm. Users without permits are allowed one free false alarm and assessed a \$95 fee for each false alarm thereafter in a 12-month period.

During the Task Force deliberations, it has become apparent that some of its final recommendation will focus on the need to enhance the City's ability to collect and process the information that would be essential to improving its poor collection rate and lax enforcement of the alarm ordinance. It is appropriate that the permit and false alarm fee structure be adjusted to ensure recovery of the cost of implementing these recommendations.

Recommendation 17: Request the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance to amend the Los Angeles Municipal Code to impose a \$40 fee for an initial burglar alarm permit and \$20 to renew the permit on an annual basis, and to provide that each alarm company will provide a notice in its billing statements at least once each year to remind its customers the date on which the alarm permit fee renewal is due.

Findings:

The intent of this recommendation is to encourage continued permit compliance by establishing a fee that is more affordable for the general public. The current permit fee is \$31 for the initial permit, and \$30 for the annual renewal. Also refer to Recommendation 16 for additional information on City fees.

Recommendation 18: Request the Office of Finance, with the assistance of the Police Department, to review the assignment of alarm permit numbers to determine the feasibility of including the year the permit is active, whether the location is residential or commercial, and the Alarm Company Operator number associated with a particular permit, to improve tracking and analysis of data.

Findings:

During the Task Force deliberations, it became clear that the existing data related to the occurrence and source of false alarms was limited. Further, representatives from the alarm industry testified that they could not determine when an existing burglar alarm permit had expired, since the expiration date is not currently listed on an alarm permit.

Initial analysis of data obtained from the Police Department's False Alarm System regarding 112,146 false alarm dispatches in calendar year 2002 indicated that 66% of the total number of false alarms calls were received from sources that either did not provide a permit number or had no permit. Further analysis of the data revealed that approximately 33% of the false alarms are at non-permitted locations. The Task Force believes that capturing this information will improve tracking, analysis and accountability.

Recommendation 19: Request the Office of Finance, with the assistance of the Police Department to send delinquent unexpired permits to the appropriate alarm company operators so that they may determine whether an alarm is still active at that location or whether there are new owners, and that the alarm company operators be requested to cooperate by responding to these inquiries.

Findings:

During the Task Force deliberations, the members discussed the issue of homes and businesses that are equipped with alarm systems, which are later sold and thereby transfer the existing alarm system to the new owner. Further, representatives from the alarm industry testified that they could not determine when an existing burglar alarm permit had expired, since the expiration date is not currently listed on an alarm permit. The Task Force members believe that, with the cooperation of the alarm industry, permit compliance could be improved with the above recommendation.

Recommendation 20: Request the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance to amend the Los Angeles Municipal Code to require alarm companies to collect the initial permit fee prior to installation of any new alarm system.

Findings:

The Greater Los Angeles Security Alarm Association supports amending the City's alarm ordinance to require alarm companies, on the sale or installation of an alarm system to a new customer, to obtain the permit application and the initial permit fee from the new customer, and file both with the City before the alarm system is activated.

V. Public Education

Recommendation 21: Endorse the planned public information campaign as outlined by the Police Commission and request the Commission, with the assistance of the Information Technology Agency, to expand the effort to include the use of the City's web site, Channel 35, and electronic distribution to the network of Neighborhood Councils and Community Police Advisory Boards.

Findings:

One of the concerns voiced when the City Council voted to establish the Burglar Alarm Task Force was that the public should be informed regarding such important citywide issues as the LAPD's policies regarding responses to burglar alarms.

The Police Commission has advised the Task Force that a comprehensive public information campaign is in progress, pending consideration of the Task Force recommendations by the City Council and Police Commission, and implementation of the Department's alarm response policy. The campaign will include an informational insert in bills to customers of the Department of Water and Power and letter to be sent to alarm companies and burglar alarm customers known to the Police Commission.

Additional measures which could be incorporated into the public information campaign at little cost include updates on the City's home page, www.lacity.org, news items and public announcements broadcast on the City's Channel 35, and distribution of the information electronically to the network of Neighborhood Councils and Community Police Advisory Boards.

Recommendation 22: Request the Los Angeles Police Department to develop a pilot program which focuses on locations with excessive numbers of false alarms with the goal of determining the causes of the false alarms and assisting those locations in developing appropriate measures to mitigate the problem.

Findings:

CLA analysis of data obtained from the LAPD's False Alarm System regarding 106,640 false alarm dispatches in calendar year 2002 showed that an excessive number of false alarms were experienced at certain addresses.

For example, 27% of the total false alarm calls involved addresses which experienced 4 to 9 calls each and 16% of the total calls were in the 10 or more calls category. The analysis also showed that the LAPD responded to 381 false alarm calls at a single address (with multiple businesses) in the 12-month period. The next highest totals for single addresses were 170 calls, 141, 104, 97, 96, 92, 91, 90 and 81 calls.

Facing a similar excessive alarm problem with roughly one-third of its false alarms, the Los Angeles Fire Department is developing a pilot program. Through a collaborative effort between the building owner, fire alarm company and the Fire Department, the program seeks to determine the cause of the excessive false alarms and agree on appropriate solutions to minimize the problem.

VI. Fire Department

Recommendation 23: Request the Los Angeles Fire Department and the City Attorney to draft polices or regulations that require monitored burglar alarm systems with fire alarm devices and/or medical alert devices be regulated to minimize false alarm activations and response of the incorrect type of emergency resource. This may require a new fire permit process or affidavit process which ensures that the fire alarm devices, medical alert devices and burglar alarm devices are on separate alarm zones.

Findings:

The Fire Department responds to approximately 4,500 false fire and/or medical alarms in single family dwellings each year. These occupancies are not regulated at this time in the City of Los Angeles. Many of these alarm systems are actually burglar alarms with fire alarm devices and/or medical alert devices. Alarm monitoring companies are not always able to distinguish between burglar alarm devices, fire alarm devices and medical alert devices. When this occurs, some alarm monitoring companies request both the Fire Department and the Police Department to respond. False alarms in single family dwellings also occur because the residents are not required to be familiar with their alarm panel. These unregulated alarm systems have historically been prone to numerous false alarms and ineffective use of valuable resources.

Recommendation 24: Require that alarm monitoring companies be able to easily determine if the device type is for fire, medical or burglar before requesting the Fire Department, and that all residents with burglar alarm systems with fire alarm devices and/or medical devices be provided with simple directions for its use on a periodic basis.

Findings:

Same as above.

Recommendation 25: Request the Los Angeles Fire Department and the City Attorney to draft policies and/or regulations that prevent Fire Department resources from being dispatched to burglar alarms.

Findings:

The Fire Department is concerned that there may be a transfer of workload if the Police Department does not respond to unverified burglar alarms in the future. The Fire Department is occasionally requested to respond to report fire alarms when a burglar alarm is activated. This may be caused by confusion of the public, erroneous information obtained by the alarm companies and/or the Fire Department is simply requested to obtain a faster response time than provided by the Police Department. Requesting Fire Department resources when Police resources do not respond may occur more frequently in the future if the proposed Police Commission's Verified Alarm Response policy is implemented without preventative measures to address this issue.

Recommendation 26: Request the Los Angeles Fire Department, Police Department and the City Attorney to draft policies and/or regulations that provides for a police response to "dual" alarm activations to help ensure firefighter safety. Include in those policies or regulations provisions that will reduce potential abuses or intentional dual alarm activations.

Findings:

Firefighters rely on the Police Department to provide a safe environment which allows the Fire Department to aggressively perform their duties. In some cases, however, the Fire Department has responded to fires where criminals were on scene upon their arrival. At location where there are "dual" alarm activations (burglar and fire alarm activation), there is the potential of criminal activity taking place at the alarm location. Firefighters may be placed in a vulnerable situation without Police Department protection.

VII. Other

Recommendation 27: Request the Police Commission to prepare periodic reports for the City Council, Neighborhood Councils and Community Police Advisory Boards regarding the impact of alarm policy changes recommended by the Burglar Alarm Task Force. At a minimum, the report should be prepared on a semi-annual basis and include statistics regarding calls for service and false alarms, administration of the permit process, collection of fees, and dispatch policy implementation.

Findings:

The Task Force has developed a number of recommendations regarding the polices and programs of the City of Los Angeles with regard to the enforcement of the City's alarm ordinance and the response policy proposed by the Police Commission. The Task Force found that the false alarm problem is a complex issue, requiring a comprehensive set of recommendations regarding the permitting process, false alarm fees and police dispatch operations. Once the changes have been implemented, it would be most beneficial for the Police Department to prepare periodic reports for the City Council, Neighborhood Councils and Community Police Advisory Boards regarding their impact. The report should include statistics regarding calls for service and false alarms, administration of the permit process, collection of fees, and dispatch policy implementation.

VIII. Additional Recommendations Proposed at the April 11, 2003 Meeting

At the final meeting of the Task Force, the following recommendations were adopted.

Recommendation 28: Request the City to investigate the feasibility of implementing a dedicated telephone line for the cancellation of burglar alarm dispatches. Further, that the City address all staffing and funding issues relative to this proposal.

Recommendation 29: Recommend that alarm companies, as recommended by GLASAA, to perform enhanced telephone verification.

Recommendation 30: Recommend that no person should request service from police dispatch for an address that has more than 3 false alarms in a 12-month period without visual, video or other verification, as defined by the Police Commission.

Recommendation 31: Recommend that multiple false alarm activations at the same address within a 24 hour period shall be subject to the false alarm fee schedule, but shall count as a single incident with regard to the proposed dispatch policy, provided that the multiple false alarms were due to the same cause.

IX. Cities Requiring Visual Verification

As directed by the City Council, the Task Force was requested to review the verification policy in other cities. The Office of the Chief Legislative Analyst presented three reports on this issue, as well as follow-up information that included burglary statistics, population size, and the number of sworn officers, among other issues. The reports relative to cities requiring visual verification are included under Attachment B.

Attachment A

February 20, 2003

Original City Council Action

Los Angeles Police Department: Policy Paper

Los Angeles Police Department: Alarm Response Presentation

Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 103.206: Alarm Systems

False Alarm Guide

Effective Alarm Management

Greater Los Angeles Security Alarm Association (GLASAA): Statement

Insurance Company Letters

February 28, 2003

Los Angeles Police Department: Modes of Verification

GLASAA Comments: Modes of Verification

City Administrative Officer: Alarm Fee Structure and Permitting Process

Chief Legislative Analyst: Verified Response Policies

GLASAA: Six-Point Plan; Additional Comments and Requests

Mitchell, Silberberg & Knupp, LLP (for GLASAA): Special Order Clarification

Task Force: Projected Meeting Schedule

March 7, 2003

Audio, Video Verification Technologies

Chief Legislative Analyst: Eight Cities Requiring Visual Verification; Burglar Statistics

Los Angeles Police Department: Policy Implementation Process

City Administrative Officer: Potential Revenue Impact of Free False Alarms

Chief Legislative Analyst: Burglar Alarm Data

Southern California Security Association: Comments

Los Angeles Fire Department: Report on False Alarms

March 13, 2003

Mitchell, Silberberg & Knupp, LLP (for GLASAA): Legal Issues

Chief Legislative Analyst: Burglary Statistics

Chief Legislative Analyst: Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department Procedural Order

GLASAA: Response to Alarm Dispatches and Other Issues

Chief Legislative Analyst: Subject Areas and Potential Action Items

Southern California Security Association: Comments on Modes of Verification

March 21, 2003

City Attorney's Office: Various Legal Issues

GLASAA: Response to Various Questions

Task Force: Potential Action Items

Attachment A
(continued)

March 28, 2003

Los Angeles Police Department: Alarm Permit Information

Chief Legislative Analyst: Additional Alarm Data

Information Technology Agency: Including ACO Numbers in Data Fields

GLASAA: Press Release: Lawsuit to Halt Implementation of Verified Response Policy

Task Force: Updated List of Potential Action Items

Chief Legislative Analyst: Memo Relative to Public Comments

April 3, 2003

Mitchell, Silberberg & Knupp, LLP (for GLASAA): Response Relative to Client Lists

Task Force: Draft Report and Updated List of Action Items

April 11, 2003

Task Force: Final Draft Report

Attachment B

**Status Report on Verified Response Policies
February 28, 2003**

**Status Report on Cities Requiring Visual Verification
March 7, 2003**

**Status Report on Las Vegas Procedural Order
March 13, 2003**

**REPORT OF THE
CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST**

DATE: February 28, 2003
TO: The Honorable Members of the Burglar Alarm Task Force
FROM: Ronald F. Deaton, Chair *RFD*
Chief Legislative Analyst

STATUS REPORT ON VERIFIED RESPONSE POLICIES

In response to instructions from the February 20, 2003 meeting of the Burglar Alarm Task Force ("BAT Force"), the following information is presented for informational purposes to show the verification requirements currently implemented in other cities, and proposed for implementation in the City of Los Angeles. This report will help to fulfill the instructions in Motion (Miscikowski - Hahn) asking the Task Force to "...define verification protocols, create a public education program, suggest revisions to the Los Angeles Municipal Code with respect to Alarm Systems, review the verification policies in other cities, and other actions as may be appropriate." In a followup report, this office will analyze the impact of these verification policies on the number of false alarms and the impact on public safety resources in those cities, and provide the Task Force with recommendations for consideration.

The following are 9 cities that currently, or will soon, require verification prior to dispatch, followed by summary details on the specific policies and procedures of the three largest cities (Las Vegas, NV, Salt Lake City, UT, and Eugene, OR). We note that most of the cities on this list require visual verification of a crime in progress prior to dispatching police resources. However, the criteria for visual verification used by these cities to determine when a dispatch is needed varies in that some require more detailed confirmation of the situation before committing personnel to that incident.

Cities with a Visual Verification Requirement:

Las Vegas, NV	Implemented in 1991
Lane County, OR	Implemented July 15, 1999
Arvada, Colorado	Implemented in 2000
West Valley City, UT	Implemented in May, 2000
Salt Lake City, UT	Implemented Dec.1, 2000
Taylorville, UT	Implemented in 2001
Henderson Nevada	Implemented in 2001
Eugene, Oregon	Implemented Nov 15, 2002
Victoria, British Columbia	To be implemented beginning April, 2003

City	Ordinance or Policy	Visual Verification	Audio Verification	Video (CCTV)	Cross Zoning	Enhanced Telephonic
Las Vegas, NV	LV Muni Code Sect. 6.18 & Clark County Code Sect. 6.76	Yes	No	No	No	No
Salt Lake City, UT	SLC Code Section 5.08.095	Yes	No	No	No	No
Eugene, OR	Eugene PD Policy	Yes	No	No	No	No
LAPD (proposed)	Proposed Ordinance	Yes	No	Yes	No	No

Varying Definition of Verification:

Attachment A provide excerpts from the governing documents for each of the City's noted above, whether it be the relevant code sections or language from the department's policy. The following summarizes the essential components of each City's verification policy.

The Las Vegas Police Department requires the alarm company to dispatch a company employee to the site when there is an alarm activation. Only when the alarm company has "reason to believe there is a valid alarm" are they allowed to notify the Las Vegas Police Department.

In Salt Lake City, police are dispatched to an alarm activation "only after a private guard responder has confirmed that an attempted or actual crime has occurred at the alarm site." According to the City's Alarm Administrator, alarm company security guards must complete a 4-session training program on false alarms, where they are trained to call police "on any sign of criminal activity." The alarm company may be penalized for reporting false alarms or for reporting an alarm at a location without a permit.

In Eugene, Oregon, a private guard or someone designated by the property owner must verify that an alarm "is, in fact, signaling a crime in progress" before police officers will be dispatched to the location. This standard is the highest of the three surveyed in that the person reporting the incident must describe for the dispatcher the current situation at the location to determine if, in fact, a crime is in progress. An open window or door does not necessarily signal the need for a police response.

In Los Angeles, the proposed ordinance will require that the alarm user, a person near the scene, a private guard responder, or the alarm company must verify that an "unauthorized entry or attempted unauthorized entry" of the premises has occurred before a police dispatch may be requested. Unlike the policies in other cities, the proposed LA ordinance will specifically allow verification via a remote visual inspection using a video camera or other device that captures and transmits video images.

Excerpt from Chapter 6.18 of the Las Vegas Municipal Code

6.18.060 Terminus of alarms--Notifying Police of valid alarms.

All alarm devices installed by the licensee shall terminate in an office of the licensee. The licensee, having reason to believe a valid alarm has been set off, shall immediately notify the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and dispatch his employee or employees to the location of the alarm. For the purpose of notifying the police, the maximum equipment allowed shall be a direct line to the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's switchboard.

(Ord. 2297 §§ 2 (part), 1982: prior code §§ 5-31-3 (part))

6.18.090 Dispatch of employee for ringing alarm.

Upon notification by the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department or other source that a ringer-type alarm is ringing, the licensee shall immediately dispatch an employee or employees to the location.

(Ord. 2297 §§ 2 (part), 1982: prior code §§ 5-31-3(C))

6.18.100 Alarm information required by Police.

When notifying the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department of an alarm, the licensee shall state his business name and furnish the exact address from which the alarm originated, the name and type of establishment, and, if more than one floor or department, the precise location of the alarm shall be given and the type of alarm, such as silent robbery, silent burglary, or ringer-type alarm. (Ord. 2297 §§ 2 (part), 1982: prior code §§ 5-31-3 (D))

Excerpt from Chapter 6.76 of the Clark County Code

6.76.110 Alarm service.

All alarms installed by the licensee shall terminate in an office of the licensee. The licensee, having reason to believe there is a valid alarm, will immediately notify the sheriff and dispatch his employee or employees to that location. For the purpose of notifying the sheriff, the maximum equipment allowed shall be a direct line to the sheriff's switchboard, but such line shall only be voice actuated and no mechanical or electronic actuation shall be permitted.

Every licensee maintaining an alarm device shall post a framed notice containing the name, address and telephone number of the person to be notified to render repairs or service during any hour of the day or night that the alarm rings. Such notice shall be posted near the alarm in such a position as to be legible from the ground level adjacent to the building.

No alarm with a sound similar to that of any emergency vehicle or civil defense siren shall be installed. Upon notification by the sheriff or other source that a ringer-type alarm is ringing, the licensee shall immediately dispatch an employee or employees to the location.

When notifying the sheriff of an alarm, the licensee shall state his business name and furnish the

exact address from which the alarm originated, the name and type of establishment and, if more than one floor or department, the precise location of the alarm shall be given and the type of alarm, such as silent robbery, silent burglary, or ringer-type alarm.

It shall be the responsibility of the licensee to install and maintain a trouble-free alarm system, and clearly instruct his subscribers in the use and operation of the alarm, and especially those factors which can cause a false alarm. Periodic inspections shall be made by the licensee or his employee to reeducate the subscriber and his employees to obtain compliance.

Licensees using an answering service for their alarm service other than a central office service under their immediate supervision, shall be responsible for giving proper instructions to the answering service personnel for their compliance. (Ord. 354 (part), 1970)

Excerpt from Salt Lake City Code Chapter 5.08

5.08.020 Definitions:

M. "False alarm" means the activation of an alarm system, which results in an arrival at the alarm site by the police department where an emergency does not exist. It includes an alarm signal caused by conditions of nature, which are normal for that area. "False alarm" does not include an alarm signal caused by extraordinarily violent conditions of nature such as tornadoes, floods and earthquakes.

5.08.095 False Alarms:

A. Except for alarms at a wholesale or retail firearms business, intrusion alarm response shall be dispatched by the police department only after a private guard responder has confirmed that an attempted or actual crime has occurred at the alarm site.

B. A one hundred fifty dollar (\$150.00) penalty per incident shall be charged to a central station or alarm company for each request for police response from a duress, panic or holdup alarm where no valid alarm user permit is provided to police dispatch by the central station. Police response to duress alarms shall be limited to alarms originating from a stationary building structure.

C. Any false information provided to the alarm administrator or to police dispatch by any alarm user, central station, alarm company, or private guard responder may be a crime under section 11.04.090 or 11.04.100 of this code and shall be dealt with accordingly.

D. Activation of a duress, panic, or holdup alarm which is determined to be false by the police department shall result in an assessment of a penalty of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) for the first, one hundred fifty dollars (\$150.00) for the second, two hundred fifty dollars (\$250.00) for the third, three hundred fifty dollars (\$350.00) for the fourth, and four hundred fifty dollars (\$450.00) for the fifth, and each additional false alarm within each three hundred sixty five (365) day period. Each false intrusion alarm shall result in an assessment of a one hundred dollar (\$100.00) penalty. The alarm user shall be responsible for false alarms caused by any person having authorized access to the premises from the alarm user.

E. All penalties assessed under this chapter shall be due and payable on the date written notice of any penalty due is issued. Any penalty, which is paid within thirty (30) days of the due date, shall

be reduced by fifty dollars (\$50.00). Any penalty, which is paid after thirty (30) days and within sixty (60) days of the due date, shall be reduced by twenty five dollars (\$25.00). Any penalty paid after sixty (60) days from the due date shall not be reduced. If any penalty is not paid within ninety (90) days of the due date, the city may use such lawful means as are available to collect such penalties. In the event the city files an action in court to recover such penalties, the city shall be entitled to recovery of its costs and attorney fees in addition to the penalties due and owing.

F. The alarm administrator may implement a false alarm prevention course. The course shall inform alarm users of the problems created by false alarm dispatches and how users may operate an alarm system without generating false alarm dispatches. Users who complete the course shall be issued a certificate worth the dismissal of one false alarm penalty of up to one hundred dollars (\$100.00). No permittee shall be entitled to take such course and receive a penalty waiver more than once per year. (Ord. 64-00 §§ 1, 2000)

Excerpt from Eugene Police Department "Policy Change Regarding Intrusion Alarm Systems"

"Following a critical review of the Eugene Police Department's fiscal and resource management goals, the department has determined that a change in policy regarding intrusion alarms must be made. Eugene will join over 40 other cities throughout the nation with the implementation of a verified response policy. The effective date for the verified response process has been set for October 1, 2002. At that time, alarm monitoring centers will be required to verify that an intrusion alarm is, in fact, signaling a crime in progress before police officers are dispatched to the location. This verification can be provided by a private security company or someone that the property owner designates. Beginning in August 2001, the City of Eugene call priority for officer dispatch to intrusion/security alarms will be lowered to a level that is more consistent with the definition of calls for service that "do not require an emergency response."

[note: verified police response subsequent implemented November 15, 2002]

Excerpt from 11/22/02 LAPD Report "Dispatch Policy for Verified Burglary Alarms"

Sec. 103.206 ALARM SYSTEMS.

(a) Definitions

...

(5) **False Alarm.** The activation of an alarm system resulting in a response by the Department where an emergency or hazard of the kind for which the alarm system was designed to give notice does not exist.

...

(7) **Verification.** Verification shall be accomplished by a confirmation by the alarm system user, a person at or near the scene of the activation, a private guard responder or alarm company operator, of an unauthorized entry or attempted entry upon the premises protected by the system. Verification shall be based on a physical observation or inspection of the premises, or by remote visual inspection of the premises. For the purposes of this section, verification is not required at activations which occur at

premises, buildings or facilities controlled or monitored by federal, state or local agencies, or the location of a licensed firearms business.

(8) Remote Visual Inspection. A visual inspection of the premises protected by the alarm system which is accomplished through the use of a video camera or other similar device to capture and transmit visual images of the premises to the alarm system user, alarm company operator, private guard responder, or person or entity authorized by the alarm system user. The visual images must be sufficiently discernable to permit the viewer to confirm that an unauthorized entry, attempted unauthorized entry, or other crime has [appears to have] occurred at the premises protected by the alarm system.

(9) Verified Burglar Alarm. A verified burglar alarm is an alarm activation where the need for a Department response to the scene of the activation has been independently verified before Department officers are dispatched.

...
(f) Impermissible Systems and Uses.

...
(6) No person shall operate or use a burglar alarm system which causes a request for service to be placed with the Police Department prior to the verification of the need for such service.

**REPORT OF THE
CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST**

DATE: March 7, 2003
TO: The Honorable Members of the Burglar Alarm Task Force
FROM: Ron Deaton, Chair *RD*
Chief Legislative Analyst

STATUS REPORT ON CITIES REQUIRING VISUAL VERIFICATION

On February 28, 2003, the Office of the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) presented a report relative to other municipalities that have adopted visual verification requirements in response to the activation of commercial and residential alarms. At that time, various task force members requested additional information about those cities, including 1) the percentage of false alarms; 2) the percentage of homes and commercial buildings with alarms; 3) the number of police resources responding to false alarms; 4) the number of homes over \$500,000; 5) the percentage of fine art and jewelry schedules; and, 6) the number of officers per 100,000 population. In addition, there was a question as to whether the two larger cities, namely Las Vegas and Salt Lake City, experienced an increase in burglaries since adopting policies requiring visual verification prior to police dispatch.

Our office contacted or attempted to contact each of the cities to obtain the information requested by the task force members. Moreover, our office researched information available via the internet to include other pertinent data for each of the cities. It should be noted that the cities included in this report vary significantly from the City of Los Angeles in terms of population, number of sworn officers and size of jurisdiction, among other factors. Inasmuch as these cities have adopted verification policies in response to the issue of false alarms, it will be difficult to draw conclusions on the information gathered below.

Las Vegas, Nevada

Policy Implemented	Population	Sworn Officers	% of False Alarms
1991	1,148,350	1,749	Unavailable

% with Alarms	Police Devoted to False Alarms	Homes Over \$500K	% Fine Art / Jewelry Schedules
Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable

The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department serves both the City of Las Vegas and the unincorporated areas of Clark County. In total, the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Police Department is 7,554 square miles, with a service population of 1,148,350.

As Las Vegas is one of the larger cities that has adopted an on-site verification policy, our office has included that department's burglary statistics from 1985 through 2001 (See Attachment A).

Salt Lake City, Utah

Policy Implemented	Population	Sworn Officers	% of False Alarms
December, 2000	181,700	413	Unavailable

% with Alarms	Police Devoted to False Alarms	Homes Over \$500K	% Fine Art / Jewelry Schedules
Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable

As Salt Lake City is one of the larger cities that has adopted an on-site verification policy, our office has included that department's burglary statistics from 1985 through 2001 (See Attachment B).

Lane County, Oregon

Policy Implemented	Population	Sworn Officers	% of False Alarms
July, 1999	322,959	400	See Below

% with Alarms	Police Devoted to False Alarms	Homes Over \$500K	% Fine Art / Jewelry Schedules
Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable

Lane County has a jurisdiction of 4,620 square miles.

Below is a breakdown of the number of alarm responses and the percentage of those reported as false from the Lane County Sheriff's office.

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Residential	743	793	604	815	916
School	117	88	57	37	45
Non-Residential	517	493	365	339	409
Unknown	30	39	33	23	29
Total	1407	1413	1059	1214	1399
% False	99.3	98.3	98.1	99.2	98.5

Arvada, Colorado

Policy Implemented	Population	Sworn Officers	% of False Alarms
2000	104,150	137	Unavailable

% with Alarms	Police Devoted to False Alarms	Homes Over \$500K	% Fine Art / Jewelry Schedules
Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable

West Valley City, Utah

<u>Policy Implemented</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Sworn Officers</u>	<u>% of False Alarms</u>
May, 2000	108,896	120	Unavailable
<u>% with Alarms</u>	<u>Police Devoted to False Alarms</u>	<u>Homes Over \$500K</u>	<u>% Fine Art / Jewelry Schedules</u>
Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable

Taylorsville, Utah

<u>Policy Implemented</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Sworn Officers</u>	<u>% of False Alarms</u>
May, 2000	58,818	33	Unavailable
<u>% with Alarms</u>	<u>Police Devoted to False Alarms</u>	<u>Homes Over \$500K</u>	<u>% Fine Art / Jewelry Schedules</u>
Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable

The City of Taylorsville was incorporated on June 28, 1996.

Henderson, Nevada

<u>Policy Implemented</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Sworn Officers</u>	<u>% of False Alarms</u>
2001	207,640	150	Unavailable
<u>% with Alarms</u>	<u>Police Devoted to False Alarms</u>	<u>Homes Over \$500K</u>	<u>% Fine Art / Jewelry Schedules</u>
Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable

Eugene, Oregon

Policy Implemented	Population	Sworn Officers	% of False Alarms
November, 2002	140,000	170	Unavailable
% with Alarms	Police Devoted to False Alarms	Homes Over \$500K	% Fine Art / Jewelry Schedules
Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable

ATTACHMENT A

**LAS VEGAS METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT
BURGLARY STATISTICS ¹**

YEAR	MONTHS REPORTING	POPULATION	ACTUAL BURGLARIES	RATE PER 100,000 POP.
1985	12	456,749	9,975	2,183.9
1986	12	463,158	9,077	1,959.8
1987	12	481,393	9,395	1,951.6
1988	12	510,941	8,965	1,754.6
1989	12	536,148	9,019	1,682.2
1990	12	616,243	10,176	1,651.3
1991	12	656,391	10,743	1,636.7
1992	12	678,385	10,337	1,523.8
1993	12	717,441	9,783	1,363.6
1994	12	752,577	11,657	1,548.9
1995	12	793,432	12,219	1,540.0
1996	12	831,303	11,656	1,402.1
1997	10	869,696	10,990	1,263.7
1998	12	908,596	11,428	1,257.8
1999	12	922,450	10,130	1,098.2
2000	12	1,060,541	9,535	899.1
2001	12	1,148,350	10,083	878.04

¹ U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Data for 2001 was obtained directly from the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department.

ATTACHMENT B

**SALT LAKE CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT
BURGLARY STATISTICS ²**

YEAR	MONTHS REPORTING	POPULATION	ACTUAL	RATE PER 100,000 POP.
1985	12	164,216	4,002	2,437.0
1986	12	166,182	3,714	2,234.9
1987	12	159,839	3,997	2,500.6
1988	12	162,005	3,594	2,218.5
1989	12	154,304	3,854	2,497.7
1990	12	159,936	3,501	2,189.0
1991	12	164,313	3,460	2,105.7
1992	12	168,304	3,394	2,016.6
1993	12	170,380	2,823	1,656.9
1994	12	174,827	3,025	1,730.3
1995	12	175,765	2,950	1,678.4
1996	12	180,180	3,015	1,673.3
1997	12	185,553	2,911	1,568.8
1998	12	178,579	2,831	1,585.3
1999	12	177,010	2,244	1,267.7
2000	12	181,743	2,169	1,193.4
2001	12	181,700	2,202	1211.8

² U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Data for 2001 was obtained directly from the Salt Lake City Police Department.

Item II

**REPORT OF THE
CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST**

DATE: March 13, 2003
TO: The Honorable Members of the Burglar Alarm Task Force
FROM: Ronald F. Deaton, Chair
Chief Legislative Analyst

STATUS REPORT ON LAS VEGAS PROCEDURAL ORDER

During the course of the previous meeting, the Task Force received a 1992 Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department procedural order. The procedural order outlined Las Vegas police response to burglar alarms (See Attachment A). Our office was requested to obtain a more recent procedural order, which is included in this report and is dated February 1994 (See Attachment B).¹

Please note that the current policy for Las Vegas police officers when responding to "Non-Verified Alarms" is to provide the patrol officer with the option of responding to the location. For example, when a Las Vegas dispatcher receives a call indicating that there is a non-verified burglar alarm, the dispatcher will broadcast that information to the appropriate patrol officers. Afterward, the dispatcher immediately closes the event. If the patrol officer does not have a higher priority call pending or is otherwise available to report on the call, the officer will notify the dispatcher as such. The dispatcher will then "re-open" the event and the officer is responsible for updating and closing the event with the appropriate disposition.

¹ According to Jose Montoya, Public Information Officer for the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, the 1994 procedural order is the most current policy on the issue of police response to burglar alarms.

ATTACHMENT A

**1992
PROCEDURAL ORDER**



JOHN MORAN, SHERIFF
PROCEDURAL ORDER

November 4, 1992

Reference: PO-50-92

TO : ALL PERSONNEL

SUBJECT : ALARMS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this order is to revise the Alarm procedure to address panic alarms. This order is in compliance with Accreditation Standard 81.2.13, is effective immediately, and revises Department Manual section 5/107.32. Changes appear in *italics*.

POLICY

It is the policy of this Department NOT to respond to non-verified commercial or residential burglar alarms received from alarm companies, except under the conditions outlined below.

DEFINITIONS

- Confirmed Alarm** - A burglar alarm where the alarm company guard, the owner, or a responsible party has arrived at the scene and confirmed that a point of entry exists.
- Non-Verified Alarm** - A burglar alarm which has not been verified as an actual burglary by an alarm company guard, the owner or a responsible party.
- Panic Alarm** - *An alarm specifically designed to be activated by a person to indicate an immediate life-threatening danger is occurring.*

PROCEDURE

Confirmed Alarm

Upon notification of a confirmed burglar alarm or *panic alarm*, an event will be created and a unit dispatched in accordance with normal operating procedures.

Non-Verified Alarm

Upon notification by an alarm company of an activated commercial or residential burglar alarm, the Communications Bureau will create a priority three event for broadcast. The event will be canceled with an "R" disposition and no further action taken, as long as no units indicate that they are responding.

If a unit indicates that they will be responding to conduct a perimeter check, the dispatcher will "re-open" the event and assign the unit accordingly. The responding unit will then be responsible for updating the event with any pertinent details and closing the event with the appropriate disposition.



Page Two

PO-50-92

Upon notification of a burglar alarm or panic alarm from a citizen, an event will be created and a unit dispatched.

JOHN MORAN, SHERIFF


BY: ERIC S. COOPER
UNDERSHERIFF

JM:ESC:SM

ATTACHMENT B

**1994
PROCEDURAL ORDER**

*Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department
Partners with the Community*

5/107.28 POLICE LINE PASSES

Police lines (barricades) may be established to prevent persons from entering the area of a serious police incident or crime scene, or to establish a perimeter during any hazardous material incident, natural disaster, or other extreme emergency. Dependent on the situation, and the likelihood of jeopardizing police or rescue operations, employees of certain organizations will require access to certain properties.

Several organizations have prepared line passes to allow entry of certain personnel into restricted areas under specific conditions. Hotel/Resort Executives, Department of Aviation personnel, Clark County Fire Department personnel, Las Vegas Fire Department, and Henderson City employees currently have such line passes. Common sense and reasonable judgment will determine who will have access to barricaded areas during any emergency. For example, if an emergency were to occur at McCarran International Airport, it is reasonable to assume that the hotel/resort executives will not require access. In the same manner, if the emergency were at a strip resort, McCarran Airport officials would probably not be granted access.

When in doubt, department members should confer with their supervisor or contact the command post of the incident involved. (12/89, 11/91)■

5/107.32 ALARMS A.S. 41.2.1, 81.2.13

It is the policy of this department NOT to respond to non-verified commercial or residential burglar alarms received from alarm companies, except under the conditions outlined below.

DEFINITIONS

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Confirmed Alarm | A burglar alarm where the alarm company guard, the owner, or a responsible party has arrived at the scene and confirmed that a <u>point of entry exists</u> . |
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| Panic Alarm | An alarm specifically designed to be activated by a person to indicate an immediate life-threatening danger is occurring. |

PROCEDURE

Confirmed Alarm

Upon notification of a confirmed burglar alarm or panic alarm, an event will be created and a unit dispatched in accordance with normal operating procedures.

Non-Verified Alarm

Upon notification by an alarm company of an activated commercial or residential burglar alarm, the Communications Bureau will create a priority three event for broadcast. The event will be canceled with an "R" disposition and no further action taken, as long as no units indicate that they are responding.

If a unit indicates that they will be responding to conduct a perimeter check, the dispatcher will "reopen" the event and assign the unit accordingly. The responding unit will then be responsible for updating the event with any pertinent details and closing the event with the appropriate disposition.

Exception: If the location of the alarm is a firearms dealer (including pawn shops), or there is a reported entry point at any other location, an event will be created and a unit dispatched in accordance with normal operating procedures.

Upon notification of a residential or commercial burglar or panic alarm from a citizen, an event will be created and a unit dispatched. (11/92, 2/94)■