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IACP/PSLC Position Paper – Verified Response

For a number of years the International Association of Chiefs of Police Private Sector Liaison Committee has been an active leader in partnership with the security industry in strategies to reduce dispatches of law enforcement resources to false intrusion alarms.

Over the years a number of initiatives have proven successful. The NBF/AA/FARA Model Ordinance, developed jointly by law enforcement and the security industry, takes into account the resolution of the IACP and the National Sheriffs Association and has been extremely effective in managing the alarm function when adopted and enforced by law enforcement. Agencies have reported alarm dispatch reductions from 40 to 60 plus percent.

Other successful strategies include:

- Charging a fee for a permit registration and service fee or fine for chronic abusers. A full cost recovery can be achieved by the law enforcement agency, recapturing all expenditures.
- Outsourcing the administration of a false alarm reduction program, resulting in minimal personnel costs for the law enforcement agencies.
- Implementing and enforcing the Model Ordinance based on the best practices of the Model States Program to substantially reduce false alarms over a sustained period of time.
- Allowing citizens the choice of having sworn law enforcement personnel respond to their alarm activations or contracting with a private security firm to provide this response.

Recently Salt Lake City adapted a “verified response” posture, which means that law enforcement will not respond to a residential or commercial burglar alarm without prior verification that a crime has been committed at that location. This strategy is now being considered by other jurisdictions, and though it may be suitable in some cases, it should be cautiously approached after weighing a number of factors. We believe that a dialog between elected officials, law enforcement agencies, the alarm industry, and citizens should take place to explore the following considerations:

- Ten states currently do not have hiring standards for private responders (Alabama, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming).
- Three states do not currently have criminal record background check requirements (Massachusetts, New Hampshire and West Virginia). Requirements of other states vary.
- The cost of private responders may unduly impact the elderly on fixed incomes and others who are economically disadvantaged.
- Unlike local law enforcement, private companies and responders have no obligation to service all areas of the community. High-risk areas with high crime rates may have to pay a higher rate or possibly not receive the service at all.
- Although there may not be a legal requirement for the police to respond to alarm activations, there may be a legal implied duty in tort laws involving 9-1-1 and PSAP establishment. A code or law requiring third party verification does not eliminate any liability.
- Private responders may not pass the “headline” test. Can law enforcement departments handle the publicity and hindsight scrutiny? How does the media cover events involving police departments?
- Studies have shown that 80% of false alarms are caused by 20% of alarm owners. Is it fair to penalize all those that typically do not have false alarms, and expect a fully trained officer to respond when they are in need?
- Citizens install an alarm system to protect their property, families, and to provide peace of mind. Law enforcement response is an essential element of this public safety tool. How would that be affected by private patrol response policies?
- Private response is not economically feasible in all areas of the country. Large geographic areas with low population density are unlikely to enable successful implementation of private patrol services.
- A private responder requires a significant amount of initial training and a commitment to consistent ongoing training to maintain skills, as well as account for changes in service needs, new laws, and response procedures. Adequate time should be allowed for private companies to staff to a level capable of handling the response load.
- Law enforcement agencies that recover costs for the first response may have funding for maintaining a larger uniform patrol compliment.

If a community agrees to proceed with private response to alarm activations, the IACP - Private Sector Liaison Committee recommends reviewing and utilizing the “Non-Sworn Responder Guidelines” as a baseline for qualifying private security personnel.

This position paper was approved by the IACP/PSLC full committee on October 6th 2002.