

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: BURGLAR ALARM TASK FORCE
SUBJECT: FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ISSUE:

Should the City Council adopt a Burglar Alarm Response Policy proposed by the Salem Police Department (SPD)?

RECOMMENDATION:

The Burglar Alarm Task Force recommends that the Salem City Council:

- (A) Adopt a policy that continues the current method of SPD patrol unit response to burglar alarm calls with the following modifications:
 - (1) Broadcast unverified burglar alarm calls via an "all-units bulletin," which allows any SPD patrol unit the discretion to respond.
 - (2) Dispatch SPD patrol units to verified burglar alarm calls.
- (B) Adopt an ordinance to revise applicable sections of the Salem Revised Code to:
 - (1) Eliminate the permit system, including the permit fees for all alarm owners.
 - (2) Increase the fine/bail up to \$ 150 per occurrence to the alarm holder for an SPD response to a false verified alarm dispatch. Fine to be issued using a standard citation form and at the discretion of a responding SPD Police Officer.
 - (3) Require the alarm industry to conduct enhanced (two-call) verification prior to placing an unverified burglar alarm call to the Willamette Valley Communications Center/Salem Police Department dispatch.
 - (4) Define the types of alerts (human, electronic) that result in a particular (verified and unverified) alarm call response.
 - (5) Provide for a "call-off" procedure for false burglar alarm calls.

- (6) Establish standards for Private Security Responder companies responding to alarm calls.

BACKGROUND:

The Council appointed a thirteen-member task force (Attachment A) consisting of ten (10) citizens at large and three (3) Councilors on August 11, 2003 for the purpose of reviewing a proposed Burglar Alarm Response Policy proposed by the Salem Police Department. (Attachment B) As a result, the Burglar Alarm Task Force convened a series of meetings to receive information from citizens, alarm installation/sales/monitoring companies, electronic call centers, private security response companies, other jurisdictions facing similar problems with high false alarm rates, and a representative of the Coordinated Alarm Reduction Effort (CARE).

The information presented provided task force members with a general understanding of the following issues:

- (1) Contributing factors to Salem's false alarm rate of 98.7% (2002).
- (2) Alarm notice procedures used by the Willamette Valley Communications Center (WVCC) and the Salem Police Department dispatch desk.
- (3) Alarm permit issues (use, accuracy, renewal, fees collected)
- (4) False alarm fines and collection efforts.
- (5) Ordinances from other jurisdictions and the alarm industry (Eugene, Tacoma, Model Alarm Ordinance).
- (6) Current protocol of Police Officer response to false alarms.
- (7) Wide array of types of alarms, sales and installation methods, and types of monitoring equipment.
- (8) Required certifications and licenses for alarm system installers.
- (9) Repeat false alarm offenders; issues surrounding false alarms at businesses and homes.
- (10) Variety of notification procedures used by the alarm industry.
- (11) Contrast and comparison to monitoring and alert procedures when responding to fire, panic, intrusion alarm systems.
- (12) Historical relationship between crime rate and false alarm response.

The membership of the BATF felt that including the various alarm industry representatives in all of the fact-finding and deliberations was important in making its recommendation(s) to City Council. We want to thank the alarm industry representatives and the California Alarm Reduction Effort (CARE) organization for their close involvement with and invaluable assistance rendered to the BATF.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

- (1) The 5,688 alarm calls that Salem Police Officers were dispatched to in 2002 represents almost one-twelfth or one month's worth of total dispatched calls in a year. Of these, 46 or 1% were the result of suspected criminal action. In 2001, there were 5,756 alarm calls and currently, this trend appears to holding at about the same rate. Statistics for the City of Salem's False Alarm Responses are found at Attachment C.
- (2) A comprehensive listing (Attachment D) of all of the false alarm calls received (2643 sites) by the WVCC/Salem Police Department Dispatch indicates the following trends: (a) most of the repeating false alarms calls are at business locations, (b) the "high-repeaters" were in malls or multiple business locations, (c) 43% of the false alarm sites (1146) only had one false alarm call in 2002, (d) Most of the 1,2,3 false alarm call sites (total of 1783) were homes or small businesses, (d) the 1,2,3 false alarm call sites represent 67% of all false alarm call sites. A majority of household false alarm calls were distributed across a large number of households that had only 1, 2 or 3 total number of false alarm calls in a year. The BATF concluded that the overall false alarm call problem exists due to a high number of infrequent false alarms at households and small businesses and a smaller number of frequent false alarms at businesses.
- (3) Nationwide, cities are recognizing the need to adopt ordinances to address this problem. While the alarm industry has promoted its "Model Alarm Reduction Ordinance," there is no uniform method that cities are adopting to address the high number of false alarms. The City of Eugene has recently completed its first six months of a Verified Response method. The initial report from the Eugene Police Department is found in Attachment E. There is disagreement between the alarm industry and the law enforcement jurisdictions about how various forms of alarm ordinance affect crime rates and reduction in the number of false alarms in the larger-sized cities that have adopted various ordinances (Attachment F). Where alarm response ordinances (regardless of response method employed) have been enacted, a decrease in the number of false alarm calls has occurred.
- (4) There are no existing City of Salem ordinances governing alarm providers or private security responders.
- (5) Salem's current practice of issuing permits to citizens and businesses at a cost of \$25 per year does not recover the costs of administration or the cost of responding to alarm calls. With the alarm permits processed through the City's outdated automated permit system, tracking and enforcement of expired permits is haphazard at best. The information contained in active permits may not be current or may not be available at the time of alarm response dispatch, which relegates the alarm permit

- to simply an administrative function with little or no real value in responding to alarm calls.
- (6) The alarm industry indicates that it is promoting a number of self-help ideas for alarm owners and for city police dispatch departments including: enhanced call verification, "three-strikes" policies for repetitious false alarms, higher fines for false alarm calls, and education and training for alarm holders. Some of the larger, nationwide alarm industry and lobbying firms have indicated that these efforts are in the development phase. Currently, a number of alarm monitoring companies have not yet adopted or implemented these methods of call verification or more outreach training for alarm holders.
 - (7) The current practice of imposing false alarm fines does not effectively deter false alarm calls under the current method of responding to unverified alarm calls.
 - (8) Currently, Salem Police Officers only respond to alarm calls when not dispatched to calls with a higher priority. Currently, there is no use of the "all-units bulletin" for alarm calls. An "all units bulletin" would enable dispatch to notify all units on patrol of the alarm call. Currently, when an alarm call is received, dispatch notifies an officer who is working within the district where the alarm originates. An "all units bulletin" would notify all patrol officers of the alarm, regardless of their assigned district. This enables any available officer to respond at the officer's discretion.
 - (9) Most monitoring alarm companies use a "call-center" to actually process the alert and to contact the WVCC. Some alarm companies may attempt to locate the alarm holder or their contact designee, many call dispatch first and then attempt to locate the alarm holder. Some alarm industry firms make no effort to contact or follow-up with more information on an alarm call.
 - (10) The alarm industry has a wide range of products available, including audio monitored, audio with video monitored, multi-zoned electronically monitored alarms, audible alarms, panic (human-activated) alarms, single-zoned alarms, and "plug-in" alarms (requiring no wiring or electrician). All of the alarm systems use a telephone line to trigger the alert signal, with systems having a separate dedicated line and some systems sharing the same line as the voice and data (computer, fax) equipment in the business or home. Many of the current false alarm calls are a result of triggering a single- or a multiple- (or cross-) zoned electrically monitored alert system.
 - (11) Upon arrival at the alarm site address, the responding police officer will perform an inspection of the outside of the premises to verify or to find indication that a crime may be in progress. If the responsible person or the alarm holder is not present or does not appear after a reasonable amount of time, the responding police officer will leave a false alarm response card and will forward a copy of this form to the finance department to process the false alarm fine. The amount of time the responding police officer spends on these calls is approximately 40 minutes.
 - (12) In many cases, the responsible person or alarm holder appear at the alarm site location and await the arrival of the responding police officer (or vice-versa). The alarm holder may have disarmed the alert. Few of these disarmed alerts are ever passed onto the dispatch center to "call-off" the alarm response call.

- (13) Currently, the K-9 unit is frequently dispatched to respond to alarm calls, particularly to businesses or homes that are large or difficult to search. To-date, of the calls responded to by the K-9 unit comprising 40 plus years of experience, approximately four have been actual crimes. This situation causes the need to "re-train" the police dog; the frequent activity of looking for nothing causes the dog to start to believe it is looking for nothing. As a result of a number of false alarm calls in a week, the handling police officer must conduct re-conditioning drills with the police dog in order to maintain its sensitivity to looking for humans or evidence it is instructed to locate. Additionally, the process of searching is physically taxing on the K-9 rendering him less effective when needed at a verified crime.
- (14) No conclusive evidence or trend analysis exists (that is acceptable to both law enforcement and alarm industry managers) to confirm or to deny a direct impact of police response methods upon the burglary or overall crime rate in a city. BATF members agreed that an announcement in the Statesman Journal or made by alarm companies would not, by itself, cause persons to commit a crime: too many other factors (economic situation, drugs, propensity, aptitude) exist that would more than likely be the incentive to commit burglary or unauthorized entry than a change in police response methodology.
- (15) SRC 38.045, Effect of Permit on Emergency Response, states: "The City of Salem shall not, by virtue of the issuance of an alarm system permit, be obligated to respond, nor accord any priority in response to an alarm from a licensed system. (Ord No. 1-89)"
- (16) BATF member Chuck Huggins (independent full service insurance agency owner) presented information that the method of police response to burglar alarms is not a factor used by insurance carriers to deny coverage or to increase premium costs. Some insurance carriers offer a discount to the premium cost for theft coverage where a burglar alarm is installed and operating. (Attachment G)
- (17) The cause of most false alarm alerts is human error (70-75%) such as: failure to properly disarm or to reset the alarm (alarm owners, residents, untrained employees) and the triggering of the alarm by pets, power interruptions, wind, or environmental problems. (Attachment H)
- (18) Alarm industry firms responded to an informal survey (Attachment I) that revealed the following facts regarding monitored alarm systems from the responding companies: (a) they serve about 4000 customers, with approximately 600 businesses and 3400 households, (b) monthly charges ranges from \$22.50 to \$40.00 for basic service. Given that there are approximately 20,000 separate business and households in the city limits, it is estimated that about 20% of the sites in Salem may be monitored by burglar alarm systems.
- (19) There are currently at least eight (8) companies that offer private security response within the city limits. Based upon information provided by a provider, it is estimated that if all alarm response was by a private firm, that 10-15 employees per shift would be required. BATF members felt that this number of providers could meet this need if required. Salem Police Department does not provide alarm call response to school district and many higher education locations, private security responders are

contracted by those entities to provide all response (Salem Police and Fire departments respond to verified alarm and fire calls). Information regarding the certification requirements for unarmed private security response employees is found at Attachment J.

- (20) The City of Salem currently collects a portion of its false alarm fines for an average monthly revenue gained of approximately \$ 3,200. The established fines for false alarms have not been changed within the past few years. The affect of altering the amounts or the method of collecting the fines on revenue stream cannot be determined. Given the annual revenues of \$38,150, BATF members did not feel by only increasing the amount of the false alarm fine, that this action alone would only recover a small portion of the costs for police response and would not have a significant impact in reducing the number of false alarm calls.
- (21) The BATF received numerous publications from a variety of industry and joint police-alarm industry associations that indicated successes in reducing false alarms through a variety of dispatch call verification methods, tougher enforcement (higher fines), repeat offender remedies, and requirements for alarm holder training, supplier qualifications, and mandating the use of modern alarm monitoring equipment and systems. (Attachment L)

METHODS OF ALARM RESPONSE CONSIDERED

The BATF agreed that the City of Salem should adopt a Burglar Alarm Response Policy for the SPD and also revise applicable Salem Revised Code sections. The BATF determined that the first consideration in making its recommendation was to determine the type of alarm call response method most appropriate to the impact on public safety. Secondly, administrative and financial resources to support the implementation of the type of selected call response method must be considered. Also, the BATF felt that additional revisions should be adopted to further reduce the frequency and causes of false burglar alarm calls.

The seven basic methods (Attachment K) of alarm call response include:

- (1) Unverified Calls Response – Police (current method)
- (2) Verified Calls Response - Police
- (3) Discretionary Response - Police
- (4) Coordinated Response- Police
- (5) Contracted - Provider
- (6) Limited False Alarm - Police
- (7) Pre-Paid Contracted - Provider

A brief description of each method of response is as follows:

Unverified Calls Response – Police: All calls are responded to regardless of how they are triggered: type of alarm, presence of a responsible person at the alarm site, or ability to verify

likelihood of a crime or threat to a person. Currently, these calls are assigned by district and are the lowest priority, which results in many not being responded to by Police Officers.

Verified Calls Response – Police: Known as “verified response”. Police respond to calls if the likelihood of a crime or personal injury exists. Defined triggers include: witness on-site, video only, and video with audio. Other triggers discussed but not included in the definition were: cross-zoning (multiple trips), audio with two-way, and audio without video.

Discretionary Response – Police: This method uses the all-units bulletin to announce a burglar alarm call to the entire shift on patrol. Not currently used. Can be employed with other alarm call responses. Allows for response by patrol unit (within or outside of the district with the alarm call) based upon officer judgment and availability. Response would be for all calls, regardless of method of triggering the alarm call.

Coordinated Response – Police: This method mandates the presence of a responsible person at the alarm site before patrol unit will enter or investigate the alarm call. Requires greater effort by alarm monitoring company and alarm holder to locate a responsible person and to coordinate link-up with patrol unit when available. Allows for greater ability to reduce false alarms by use of a responsible person to “call-off” the false alarm before patrol unit arrives at the alarm site.

Contracted – Provider: Issue city contract(s) to private security provider(s) to perform all alarm call response in lieu of the Salem Police Department. This would require an additional revenue component (permits, licenses) and a database component if the city wanted to outsource the permit and database system to the contractor(s).

Limited False Alarm - Police: This is the “three-strikes and you’re out” procedure. Upon the occurrence of a third false alarm call in a given period, the Police would no longer respond for any further false alarm calls at that site until a time certain or cure process were implemented at the site with the frequent false alarm calls. This method would require robust administrative support and potential additional assistance to an alarm holder and alarm monitoring company at the occurrence of the third false alarm call. At larger business sites with multiple alarm systems and alarm holders, there may be difficulty distinguishing between the frequent and infrequent false alarm call locations.

Pre-Paid Contractor – Provider: Same as Contracted – Provider above, except that the city- or contractor-issued permit would be increased to allow for a certain number of false alarm calls without penalty in a given period. Some alarm monitoring and private security companies now structure their monthly fees with this as an option to the various monitoring and security plans they offer to alarm system owners.

ANALYSIS OF BURGLAR ALARM POLICY (A)

The BATF evaluated the response methods above and determined that the two most likely methods discussed to meet the criteria listed above were the Coordinated Response (6 votes) and the Verified Response (7 votes). The criteria that the BATF weighed and used in voting for its final recommendations included each method's ability to:

1. Reduce the tendency to place false alarm calls,
2. Reduce the number of false alarm calls, reduce impact on SPD patrol operations,
3. Provide similar or greater SPD availability,
4. Lessen the amount of administrative requirements, and
5. Be cost-effective (administration, SPD officer time, alarm company costs)

Upon further analysis, the BATF majority voted to include the Verified Response method [(**Recommendation (A)(1)**)] to the City Council. The BATF also felt that the SPD should still continue to provide response to unverified alarm calls via the Discretionary Response or the "all-units bulletin" method. The BATF unanimously voted to also include this method [**Recommendation (A)(2)**] in its overall recommendations.

ANALYSIS OF BURGLAR ALARM ORDINANCE – RECOMMENDATION (B)

City staff would need to identify the applicable SRC affected by these recommendations. BATF feels that new sections may need to be created to encompass the items below that would require actions by alarm industry firms, alarm owners, and private security response companies.

(1) Permit System. In considering Finding # 4, the BATF concluded that the permit system does not provide a benefit to the public, the alarm owners, the alarm industry firms, or to the person (SPD patrol unit, private security company) responding at the alarm site due to a number of factors, which includes:

- Many false alarm calls are made to un-permitted sites. Neither SPD nor the alarm industry firms have any method to verify or to enforce that all sites with alarms have a current and accurate permit on file.
- Permits are managed within the City's Permit Application Center (PAC) database, which is antiquated and has limited capabilities and access.
- The revenue of approximately \$ 48,000 per year does not recover the costs for administering (issuance, database entry, monitoring, collections, renewal processing) the permits.

SPD Dispatch attempts to use the information contained on the permit to contact the alarm owner or a designated responsible person to meet the responding SPD patrol unit. The inaccuracy of the information and additional phone calls that Dispatch must make to locate the alarm owner or a designated responsible person frequently results in the SPD patrol unit having to wait until either no one or someone appears at the alarm site or until a higher priority call is assigned to the SPD patrol unit. (Finding # 10)

(2) Fine for False Alarm Call Response. In considering Findings # 5 and # 20, the BATF considered that SPD patrol units (under the verified response method) could be dispatched to alarm calls that were false or that they did not otherwise qualify as "verified" as defined in Recommendation (B)(4). Without an ability to understand all of the costs involved, the BATF felt that the responding SPD patrol unit should have the same flexibility to issue a citation in this instance up the fine/bail limits they use for other minor or traffic infractions. Currently, the SPD patrol unit may issue, and the municipal judge may impose, up to \$ 150 per occurrence for similar infraction of city ordinances. Also, the BATF felt, regardless of the event(s) or error(s) made to cause the call to the false alarm site, that the alarm owner must be held responsible for exercising a reasonable standard of care in the operation and maintenance of the alarm alert system.

(3) Enhanced (Two-Call) Verification. As depicted in Finding # 5, this additional effort (advocated by the alarm monitoring industry) could be a helpful tool if the alarm monitoring company is required to make a minimum of two calls to responsible persons. The BATF felt that this extra step (some companies do this, some do not) by the alarm industry would provide a pre-emptive manner to reduce the tendency to place false alarm calls to the SPD Dispatch.

(4) Definition of types of burglar alarm calls that are verified and unverified. In considering Findings # 8 and # 9, the BATF conducted three separate votes to discern that verified call response triggers included: witness on-site, video with audio, video, and private security. Cross-zoning and audio without video were discounted by majority vote in that these alert triggers were deemed as unreliable. There was concern by some BATF members that we should have defined what triggers qualify for verified response prior to voting on the methods of response. The majority of the BATF indicated that this concern would not have altered their vote for verified response.

(5) "Call-off" Procedure. In considering Finding # 11, and Recommendation (B)(3), the BATF felt that alarm industry, alarm owners, and responsible persons should be required to follow-up and notify the SPD Dispatch that a false alarm has been "cleared." The call-off procedure would reduce SPD patrol unit dispatches and all-units burglar alarm notices. If an SPD patrol unit is already responding, the officer wait time would be eliminated or reduced at the false alarm site. This would not be an enforceable item, but rather, an incentive to reduce an alarm owner's chance of being cited with a fine/bail for a false alarm call.

(6) Standards for Private Security Companies. While private security companies should support and comply with all of the recommendations above, specific standards for qualifications, background checks, and mandatory training (initial, continuing) should be adopted into city ordinance. While State law mandates minimums in these areas, the City of Salem should enact additional requirements unique to its policies for public safety. A few examples of why standards should be set for a private security responder company include: when acting as the primary responder for a burglar alarm call sent directly from the alarm monitoring company, when armed or unarmed, or when acting as the Responsible Person for a verified response burglar alarm call coordinated through the SPD Dispatch.

ISSUES CONSIDERED AND DISCUSSED BUT NOT INCLUDED IN THE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

These include:

- (1) City issues license or franchise to alarm monitoring companies.
- (2) Dedication of revenues (fines, fees, permits) to either the General Fund or to the Police Department.
- (3) Notification requirement by real estate transfer entities at the time of sale or lease for a property with an installed burglar alarm system.
- (4) Enhancements to the City's permit system.
- (5) The validity of statements about the effect that verified response by a police department has in relation to the level of crime in a city.
- (6) "Three-strikes and you're out" policy.

SUMMARY

The Burglar Alarm Task Force discovered, with current shortfalls in the number of available police officers on any one shift and the rising rate of crime throughout Salem that available funding provides only a limited response to preventing and reacting to crimes that are: more likely prevalent and more likely serious than the current trend in false burglar alarm calls.

Currently, the SPD patrol units on any one shift are not reacting to most of the burglar alarm calls due to higher call priorities consisting of verified crimes and the simple reality that most alarms are clearly false. Burglar alarm call response should realistically balance the resources against the known threat for the greatest number of people. Approximately 20% of the households in Salem have installed and operating burglar alarm systems – 80% do not.

Current Salem Revised Code 38. 045 impels that the City of Salem **shall not** accord any priority or obligation to respond to burglar alarm calls. The perception that the Salem Police Department must respond to burglar alarm calls has not been true since this SRC was enacted in 1989-1990.

The alarm industry advocates for the adoption of a Model Burglar Alarm ordinance as a means of reducing false alarms with stiffer penalties, education, enhanced call verification, and limited response policies. The BATF adopted most of these in our final recommendations to City Council.

By responding to unverified alarm calls when SPD patrol units are available (and believe that a crime may be occurring) with verified alarm calls that are prioritized, the majority of the BATF feels that more police officers will be available to prevent or to react to crime in Salem.

The enhanced (two-call) verification system, the "call-off" procedure, the elimination of the permit system, adding standards for private security response companies, and increasing the fines for false alarms to "verified" calls will, with the adoption of the recommended response methods, reduce the number of false alarm calls.

Currently, many alarm industry firms are offering, at additional cost of \$6 to \$40 per month to the alarm owner, private security response for alarms. While the BATF considered the presence and ability of private security response companies, the BATF did not feel that it would or could take a position to advocate or require alarm industry firms to offer services of a private security response company. The BATF felt that the decision to purchase services from a private security responder company is left best up to the alarm subscribers, the selling private security responder, and the alarm industry. Our recommendations to modify the current burglar alarm response policy and city ordinance were made irrespective of the market for private security response.

The BATF elected Ms. Anna Peterson to present this Final Report and Recommendations to the Salem City Council. The report was prepared by city staff, in coordination with the Chair of the BATF, Councilor Dan Clem. This report includes edits made by BATF and has the general concurrence of the BATF voting members at the November 18, 2003 meeting.



Attachments:

- A - Council Appointment of the Burglar Alarm Task Force (Aug 11, 2003)
- B - Salem Police Department Proposed Response to Burglar Alarms (May 12, 2003)
- C - FAQ/Statistics About False Alarm Response in Salem (Sep 2003)
- D - False Alarm Calls Listing for 2002
- E - City of Eugene's Six-Month Review of Verified Response (Jun 3, 2003)

- F - Various Jurisdictional Ordinances Adopted (Sep 2003)
- G - Insurance Company Alarm Credits (Sep 2003)
- H - National Study of False Alarms for the Security Industry Association
- I - BATF Alarm Industry Questionnaire (Sep 5, 2003)
- J - DPSST Private Security Unarmed Instructor's Training Manual (2001)
- K - Minutes for BATF Meetings (8/19, 9/9, 9/16, 9/30, 10/14, 10/28, 11/18)
- L - Alarm Industry Publications (various)

For Council Meeting: August 11, 2003

Agenda Item: 4.2.x

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
THRU: ROBERT D. DELONG, CITY MANAGER 
FROM: LINDA BERMAN, PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER 
SUBJECT: APPOINTMENT OF BURGLAR ALARM TASK FORCE

ISSUE:

Appointment of the Burglar Alarm Task Force.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Mayor will appoint three Councilors to the Task Force.
2. The Council will appoint 12 public/industry members.

The recommended appointees are listed below in the Facts and Findings section.

BACKGROUND:

The Council has requested that a Task Force be appointed to review the proposed Burglar Alarm Response Policy proposed by the Salem Police Department. Requests for appointment were reviewed by Mayor Taylor and Councilor Clem.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

Recommended Council representatives: Councilors Bennett, Clem and Quillinan.

Recommended public/industry representatives: Marin Arreolla (small business owner), John Baker (Real Estate business owner), Keith Butler (SCS Communications and Security), Bob Burton (alarm homeowner), Amanda Dalton (citizen), Byron Hawkins (local security system employee), Chuck Huggins (Insurance), Steve Margreaves (alarm company owner), Vince Milligan (retired), and Anna Pederson (public safety advocate).

Non-voting members: Leon Wheeler from the Independent Fire and Burglar Alarm Dealers Association, representatives from ADT, Brinks, Sonitrol, and a representative from the Alarm Industry Advisory Group to be named later.

For the Council Meeting of May 12, 2003

Agenda Item No.: _____

TO: Mayor and City Council

THROUGH: Robert D. DeLong
City Manager

FROM: Walter E. Myers
Chief of Police

SUBJECT: Salem Police Department's Response to Alarms

ISSUE:

Should the Salem Police Department change their response policy regarding alarm calls and amend Chapter 38 of the Salem Revised Code related to alarms?

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council approve option #1 as listed and that the Salem Police Department no longer respond to alarms other than manually activated silent panic, duress, hold-up alarms, and those alarms where apparent criminal activity has been "verified" by third party confirmation. Response to all other alarms will be the responsibility of the alarm company and/or a "Private Security Responder" employed by the alarm provider or other designee of the alarm subscriber.

The Salem City Council should amend Chapter 38 of the Salem Revised Code to set forth specific duties of "Alarm Providers" and duties of "Private Security Responders"

BACKGROUND:

It has long been the policy of the Salem Police Department to respond to all silent and audible alarm reports received through Willamette Valley Communications Center (WVCC). Requests for response to alarms comprise approximately 8% of all calls for police service.

In 2001 officers were dispatched to 5,756 alarm calls. 17 or less than 1% of the alarm activations were the result of suspected criminal activity. In 2002, officers were dispatched to 5,688 alarm calls, 46 or 1% were the result of suspected criminal action.

Not only do these false alarm calls have a drastic impact on police services but they also have a significant impact on Willamette Valley Communication Center. The average alarm call involves three phone calls, an incoming call which is the equivalent of a 911 emergency call, a call by the dispatcher in an attempt to make contact at the alarm site, and a second incoming call by the alarm company to

provide "responsible person" information, again the equivalent of a 911 call. Many alarms can involve 5 or more phone calls which slows the response to both 911 and business calls.

The City of Salem currently requires a permit to use or maintain an alarm system. Alarm permits cost \$20 and are renewable for \$12 after the initial year. Alarm permits have generated revenue to the general fund in the average amount of \$48,494 over the last three years.

The police department is recommending the permit process be discontinued. If the City continues to require an operating permit, citizens may think a police response is implied with the permit. This will mean the general fund revenue generated by the permit process will be eliminated.

Fines for false alarms are progressive. There is no fine for the first false alarm in a calendar year. The fine is \$50 for the second false alarm, \$100 for the third, \$150 for the fourth, \$200 for the fifth, and \$250 for six and above. Average revenue from false alarm fines over the last four years is \$55,617.

False alarm fees will still be assessed but the amount of fines collected will be considerably less. For example, if we decrease our responses by approximately 85% this could result in a corresponding 85% reduction in false alarm fees.

Based on a random sampling of 50 alarm calls responded to in calendar year 2000, officers spent an average of 18 minutes investigating an alarm call. The average number of officers responding to these 50 alarm calls was 1.3 officers. If we could see an 80% reduction in alarm response down from 5,688 in 2002 to 1,138 (4,550 fewer responses), this would translate into 1,365 hours. This time could be used for directed traffic enforcement or crime reduction efforts.

It is our belief this policy would result in a reduction of our response times to emergency calls and improve our ability to work neighborhood issues and traffic enforcement. Salt Lake City, Utah has implemented a plan similar to what the police department is proposing. They saw a 47 second reduction in emergency response the first year verified response was implemented.

In researching which response policy would be the most effective use of police officer's time, City resources, and taxpayer dollars, the Salem Police Department considered the following:

1. Verified Response:

The verified response approach requires independent verification of a need for police presence at the site of an intrusion alarm *before* police are involved at all. This means that, in the case of monitored alarm systems, the monitoring company, on receiving an intrusion alarm activation, dispatches a private security service (either their own service or one they contract with to provide follow-up service) to the site of the alarm. If there is a crime in progress or positive evidence of an attempted crime, the private security advises the monitoring company, who then requests police response. If the private security responder finds no crime or criminal attempt, the monitoring company is advised of that condition, but the police are never involved in the process at all. For unmonitored alarm systems, police would

respond only if there was independent verification of a need for service (e.g., a neighbor calling and saying that the alarm was going off and they saw an open door when they knew the residents were away).

The theory behind verified response is that the police will rarely, if ever, be involved with false alarms (Salt Lake City saw a 90% reduction in the first year, Eugene, in their first 6 months, have gone from over 2,000 responses to around 200). Few people question that response to an actual crime or attempted crime is a basic police service. People do question the wisdom, however, of making it a basic police service to use the police to respond to places where circumstantial information is consistently wrong 99% of the time indicating that a crime *might* have happened. Verified response works to assure that police are involved only in alarm instances where crimes or attempted crimes are actually involved. It is the only model that addresses the waste of police resources aspect of the false alarm problem.

Under a verified response system, an immediate priority dispatch of officers is justified because a threat to property has been independently verified.

2. Permit / Fine Driven Response (our current policy):

The City issues a user permit and fines for false alarms. Police respond to every alarm activation. This plan is inexpensive for alarm users and alarm companies. This policy is time intensive to manage and enforce. It uses trained police officers to enforce permits and fines, neither of which is a crime. Alarm response by police is subsidized by ALL citizens whether they have an alarm or not. (Alarm companies estimate 20% of residences and businesses have alarms). False alarms are not reduced (99% false), simply reimbursed. In addition, response to alarms is generally delayed due to officers being tied up on other higher priority calls for service.

3. Cost Recovery:

The cost recovery approach uses annual permit fees and/or fines to generate income to offset the actual cost of administering and operating a police alarm response program. The costs can either be shared by all alarm users (annual permit fee) or absorbed by only those using the service (service fees/fines to those generating false alarms), or by some combination of the two. The cost recovery approach involves billing a responsible party for at least the **actual cost** of *each* false alarm to which police respond as opposed to an escalating fine scale. Cities who use this program use the fees to hire employees to deal with the alarm problem. Phoenix, AZ Police Department has 12 civilian employees and 2 detectives, Portland Police Bureau's alarm unit consists of more than four full time personnel to monitor and administer their alarm program.

Cost recovery, while not eliminating staff time and associated costs related to responding to and processing false alarms, does - in theory - generate sufficient revenue to offset the expenses. False alarms aren't significantly reduced, and the police still have to respond to them all. Police are still responding to a 95% + false alarm rate.

4. Two Call Verification:

This approach is championed by the alarm companies. If the alarm goes off, the alarm company will call the site and then an alternate number prior to calling the police. The second call is made to a number other than where the alarm is sounding, such as the subscriber's cell phone or pager. It is a 50/50 chance the person not at the site will know why the alarm has been activated.

This policy would involve voluntary compliance by the alarm companies. Discussions with the alarm companies show this would take a corporate decision to make this policy for each company. It is not likely a nationwide policy change will be implemented. It would also be an unenforceable policy for the police. You cannot fine or suspend an alarm subscriber if the alarm company does not do what it is required to do. It is difficult to impose fines on alarm companies for not following policy, especially when the majority of companies are based in other states.

This approach could reduce the number of alarms 30% to 50% over a period of 3 years. However, 99% of responses are still false and the number of alarm users is increasing an average of 10% per year.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

1. The Salem Police Department provides professional law enforcement services to a city of more than 141,000 population with a very lean staff ratio of 1.2 officers per 1,000 residents, well below the national and statewide averages.
2. Budget projections for the next several years indicate there is no relief in sight. The police department and all City departments will be forced to continue in our attempts to do more with less while alarm users are increasing about 10% per year.
3. Responding to alarms makes up 8% of the police department's total call load with 5,688 responses in 2002. 99% of those alarms were false.
4. In addition to the drain on police officer resources, those 5,688 alarms generated almost 20,000 phone calls to or from an already overburdened 911 Center.
5. The loss of revenue due to discontinuing alarm permits and fewer false alarm fines will be more than offset by the reduction in workload for city staff.
6. Salem Police personnel would continue to respond immediately to those alarms that are manually activated alarms intended to signal panic, duress or robbery. Bank alarms and residential panic alarms are two common examples of alarms that will continue to receive **immediate** police response.

7. Requiring confirmation by a third party before responding to alarms will dramatically reduce the demands on the patrol officer and the 911 Center. We anticipate it will have a positive effect on dispatch and response times to true emergencies.
8. Third party confirmation includes, but is not limited to, video/audio confirmation by the alarm company, responding private security officer or other designee of the alarm subscriber, confirmation from a witness or other confirmation independent of the alarm signal that a crime has occurred or an emergency exists.
9. Alarm owners should be better served by private security personnel verifying the status of their alarm rather than waiting for a police officer to clear from a higher priority call to respond. This should result in officers responding only to the 1% of all alarms calls which are valid or manually activated alarms.
10. While many suggest raising the permit fee or false alarm fine to cover the cost of police response, the "costs" are too great for this to be a realistic option. Other jurisdictions have demonstrated that alarm companies can provide a more rapid private security response for only \$5 more a month added to their customer's monthly bill.
11. After more than two years of research, including meeting with alarm company representatives, we are more convinced than ever this proposal provides the best balance in providing basic police services to all the citizens of Salem.
12. We are also recommending revisions to the Salem Revised Code Chapter 38. These changes include eliminating the alarm permit requirement and requiring Private Security Responders to be certified by the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST). See attachment B.
13. The Salem Police Department will provide the City Council with written results of the reduction of alarm responses one year from the time these changes are enacted.

Summary:

The Salem Police Department has explored various options for reducing false alarms for the last five years. All of the above listed options have been considered. The conclusion of the Salem Police Department is verified response is the preferable method of response given the current fiscal climate. We are responding to more calls for service with fewer officers. Alarm calls which are 99% false should not be allowed to interfere with our ability to respond to true emergency calls in a timely manner. Salt Lake City, Utah experienced a 47 second reduction in response time to genuine emergency calls the first year verified response was implemented.

These alternative response policies were presented to the Chief's Police Advisory Committee and the Salem Neighborhood Association's Police Liaison Committee. They were presented in written form

(See Attachment) as well as in an oral presentation. Members of both committees voted unanimously for verified response as the policy which should be implemented by the Salem Police Department.

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice commissioned a nationwide study to look at the problem of false alarms. The conclusion of the study was requiring alarm companies to verify a need for police response before calling the police is the best response. This study can be reviewed by going to their website www.cops.usdoj.gov .

Denise Shaw, formerly with the Charles County, Maryland False Alarm Reduction Unit summed it up best when she said **“Tell me of any other industry that makes a profit from selling a product, collects a monthly profit from that product, where their product only operates correctly 2% of the time, and where another entity, who does not share in the profit from the product’s sale and operation, is required to provide free services to support that product?”**

Frequently Asked Questions About False Alarm Response

Year	Calls For Service	Alarm Calls	Percentage
1999	68,806	5,737	8.3%
2000	69,722	5,725	8.2%
2001	71,169	5,756	8.1%
2002	75,595	5,688	7.5%
Total	285,292	22,906	8.02%
Ave. per year	71,323	5,726	8.02%

Number of Alarms vs. Alarm Premises

2001 4,899 alarms at 2,120 sites
 2002 4,671 alarms at 2,092 sites

Number of Valid Alarms

Year	Alarm Calls	Audible	Silent	# of Valid Alarms	Percent
2001	5,756	4,620 (80%)	1,136	17	- 1%
2002	5,688	4,598 (86%)	1,090	46	1%

Permits (Alarm permits cost \$20 and are renewable for \$12 after the initial year)

Alarm permits have generated revenue to the general fund in the amount of:

99-00 - \$46,272
 00-01 - \$45,979
 01-02 - \$53,233
 Average - \$ 48,494

Fines: Fines for false alarms are \$50 for the second false alarm, \$100 for the third, \$150 for the fourth, \$200 for the fifth, and \$250 for six and above. Fines are not assessed for the first false alarm per calendar year.

Revenue for the general fund from false alarm fines totaled:

99-00 - \$67,815
 00-01 - \$59,214
 01-02 - \$39,822
 Average - \$55,617

2002 Alarm Sites

# of Alarms	Address	Owner	Monitoring Co.
45	831 Lancaster Dr NE	Lancaster Mall	various
35	401 Center St NE	Salem Center Mall	various
22	205 Chemeketa St NE	Credit Union	Allied Security
22	461 High St SE	City of Salem 5 Oaks	Protection One
22	3740 Market St NE	Fred Meyer	Fred Meyer Security
19	630 Center St NE	Washington Mutual	Alarm Central
19	2360 Fairgrounds Rd NE	Conquistodor Restaurant	ProTeck
17	3525 Commercial St SE	RentTown	Security Alarm
15	198 Commercial St SE	Mt. West Jennings	Sonitrol
14	1880 Lancaster Dr NE	PacWest	ADT
14	1890 Lancaster Dr NE	America's Best Tires	Affordable Monitoring
14	2611 Pringle Rd SE	Willamette ESD	ADT
14	4780 Liberty Rd S	Shurguard Storage	Custom Security
13	450 Marion St NE	Mervyn's	Target Security
13	1705 Silverton Rd NE	Sofia's Auto Repair	Monotronics
13	2805 Valpak Rd NE	Truax Oil	Sonitrol
12	694 Church St NE	NW Human Services	Protection One
12	1205 Capitol St NE	Payless Shoes	Alarmex
12	1930 Turner Rd SE	Lowe's	Vector Security
12	3545 Portland Rd NE	Plaza del Sol	All American Monitoring
12	3878 Beverly Av NE	Office Building	various
12	4555 Liberty Rd S	Sunnyslope Shopping Center	various
12	4770 Commercial St SE	Jack in the Box	SSD
11	480 Center St NE	Salem Center	various
11	1010 Hawthorne Av SE	Costco	Sonitrol
11	1295 12 th St SE	Dave Power Automotive	Central Monitoring
11	1660 Lancaster Dr NE	El Mirador	Professional Security
11	2093 Lancaster Dr NE	Taco Bell	ADT
11	2380 Claxter Rd NE	West Coast Beet Seed	Honeywell
11	3135 Commercial St SE	Rock N Rogers	Safe 2000
11	4059 Market St NE	Bible Center Fellowship	Security Professionals
10	388 State Street	Capitol Center	Salem Fire Alarm
10	775 Front St NE	Keith Brown	Protection One
10	1501 Lancaster Dr NE	Carl's Jr. Restaurant	Cascade Alarms
10	1599 State Street	Eric Olsen, Atty.	Brinks
10	2625 Liberty St NE	Applebee's	RLD Services
10	3000 Market St NE	Business complex	various
10	4263 Commercial St SE	Kelly's	Merchant Patrol
10	4755 Liberty Rd S	Willamette Dental	Phillips Electronics
10	5492 Commercial St SE	Cottman Transmission	Security Associates
10	5514 Commercial St SE	Dale's Remodeling	Monitronics

Date: June 3, 2003

To: Dennis Taylor, City Manager
Police Commission Members

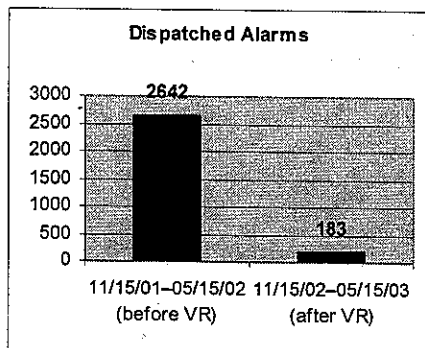
From: Thad Buchanan, Interim Chief of Police

Subject: INTRUSION ALARMS / SIX-MONTH REVIEW OF VERIFIED RESPONSE

The purpose of this memo is to provide a six-month review of the effectiveness of the department's verified response procedures specific to intrusion alarms. The city of Eugene's verified response protocol which was implemented on November 15, 2002, requires security alarm service providers to provide an eyewitness confirmation that a valid intrusion alarm has occurred before calling the police. The alarm service provider may use independent monitoring or dispatch private security to verify an alarm is actually due to a criminal act. Once the alarm is determined to be a valid alarm, police are called. The first six months of implementation have resulted in a dramatic decrease in the number of dispatched alarms and illustrates why verified response has become a proven law enforcement strategy to dramatically reduce police response to false intrusion alarms and more effectively utilize existing police resources.

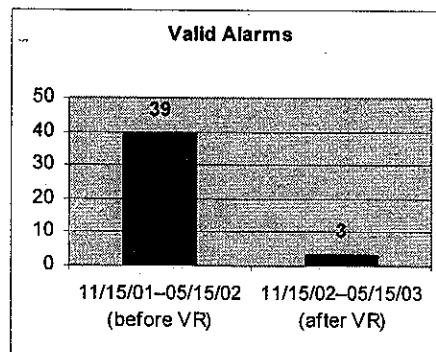
In 2001 Eugene Police responded to 5,944 intrusion alarm activations. Approximately 98.5% of these calls were false. Only 88, or 1.5% of the calls resulted in a police report and just 10 people were arrested at the scene of the crime. This high level of police response to false alarms was diminishing police responsiveness to other calls and was a tremendous drain on Eugene's limited staffing resources.

City of Eugene – Six Month Comparison



A significant reduction in dispatched alarm calls has been achieved in the first six months of the verified response protocol. This graph shows that during the same time period prior to implementing verified response, officers were dispatched to 2,642 intrusion alarm activations. Thirty-nine, or approximately 1.5%, of these calls resulted in a police report being taken and seven arrests, (0.26%), were made by officers on the scene.

During the first six months of the verified response program, the number of dispatches to intrusion alarm activations plummeted to 183. Of the 183 alarm activations that were dispatched, three or approximately 1.6%, generated a police report indicating some sort of criminal activity had occurred. Although the number of alarms to which officers were dispatched was reduced significantly, the single arrest in 2003 represents 0.54% of



calls. However, with only six months of data to review, it is too soon to draw any reliable conclusions about the rate of arrests in the verified response program. *The data from both time periods exclude robbery, panic, hold-up and duress alarms which remain a high priority for police response and do not require verification prior to dispatch.*

City of Eugene – Alarm History

The false alarm ordinance that was adopted by the City Council in 1996 and amended in 2001 employed a fee and fine structure to regulate false alarms. Following this amendment, police staff began research to establish a fee structure for the newly amended ordinance. Much of this research was focused on identifying appropriate fees and fines to make the program self-sustaining and completely cost-recoverable. Not a single community with a similar fee and fine based ordinance that staff reviewed was fully cost-recoverable. In fact, most were suffering significant deficits. Following the receipt of detailed information and data from other law enforcement agencies, the Eugene Police Department investigated the feasibility of moving directly to a verified response program rather than imposing the regulatory system that had been planned.

In August 2002, prior to implementing a verified response protocol, the priority for police response to all intrusion alarms was reduced. This change was made to more effectively utilize our limited staffing, given the high percentage of false alarms that we had historically experienced, and was in accordance with alarm response recommendations of the International Association of Chiefs' of Police Model States Report specific to intrusion alarm calls. This reduction in priority excluded robbery/hold-up and panic/duress alarms which remained a high priority.

Along with this change, Eugene Police officials met with alarm company representatives during August 2002 to discuss the history of police response to alarms and how the percentage of false alarms (98.5%) had necessitated a change in police practices. Extensive efforts were made to educate the community about the change to verified response prior to and following the implementation. Local media outlets, newspaper editorial staff, community meetings and educational literature were all avenues that were aggressively pursued to provide as much information as possible to the public and to address concerns of alarm customers.

Internally, policy was developed to address police response to intrusion alarm activations. General Order 308.27 identifies alarms requiring verification and exclusions to the verification protocol.

Next Steps:

Based upon the data presented above, the first six months of the verified response program has been very successful. Staff will now focus on reducing calls for service for non-verified intrusion alarms by continuing to review all calls for service involving intrusion alarms. The goal of this effort will be to reduce the significant time burden these calls place on 911 call-takers, thus freeing the call-takers to devote more time to valid calls for service in the community. It is important to note that while some alarm companies, such as Sonitrol, have taken effective and timely steps to inform their customers and employees of the new verification protocols other companies are still in the early stages of making necessary changes. Police staff will continue to monitor the response of alarm companies to the verification requirements with the goal of improving compliance with the alarm verification procedures prior to contacting police.

While the data collected thus far is very encouraging, staff plan to conduct another internal review of the data at the one-year mark. This review will be helpful in providing a more comprehensive analysis of the data and program results.

BURGLAR ALARM TASK FORCE
RESEARCH SUMMARY

TACOMA

Licensing:

Alarm monitoring companies pay an annual fee to be licensed for the privilege of doing business in the City of Tacoma, just like any other business. The fee is based upon the size of the monitoring company and ranges from \$100 to \$500 annually. Alarm companies are billed \$40 for an alarm device license for each alarm they monitor. This is less than \$3.50/month for the alarm holder if the alarm companies choose to pass the cost along. The alarm companies are billed \$60 per false alarm their client activates. By billing the alarm monitoring company who called dispatch to send an officer to the alarm, the costs of billings are kept to a minimum.

SALT LAKE CITY

Verified Response:

ADT added an additional \$5 to the \$24.95 monthly monitoring fee to cover verified response costs. Most companies ranged from a \$5 - \$7 monthly increase.

There are some claims that burglaries will increase if the police are no longer first responders. In Salt Lake burglaries at alarmed sites prior to implementing verified response comprised 2% of all burglaries. After verified response was implemented, burglaries at alarmed sites comprised 2% of all burglaries. Burglaries did not increase.

Prior to implementing verified response Salt Lake City police responded to 35 – 50 false alarms per day. The average now is two false human activated alarms per day.

EUGENE

Verified Response:

In a measured 6 month period before verified response, Eugene dispatched officers to 2,642 intrusion alarm activations. In the same 6 month period after implementing verified response, officers were dispatched to 183 alarm activations.

CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG

Police response to permitted alarm holders only:

Beginning September 1, 2003 the alarm monitoring company must provide police dispatch with the alarm holder's permit number before officers will be dispatched.

In 1996 Charlotte-Mecklenburg instituted an ordinance requiring no-cost registration of alarm systems; failure to register could result in a \$100.00 fine; there are two "free" false alarms annually per registered site; fines range from \$50.00 to \$500.00 annually. Fee schedule: false alarms 3, 4, and 5 are \$50.00 each; 6 and 7 are \$100.00 each; 8 and 9 are \$250.00 each; 10 and above are \$500.00 each. If the service charges are not paid, the police will not respond to future alarms. If an audible alarm sounds for more than 15 minutes there is a fine. If there are any changes to the permit information they must be made within 30 days or there will be a \$100.00 fine.

This ordinance resulted in a 30% reduction in police response to alarms in the first year.

The administration of the ordinance is outsourced to a third party private company. The third party private company administering the ordinance is dealing with \$617,000 in unpaid fines and has turned those fees over to a collection agency.

SAN FRANCISCO

Licensing:

Ordinance requires monitoring companies collect licensing fees from alarm holders. Alarm companies would be held financially accountable for any uncollected fees and could be criminally prosecuted.

The California Alarm Association (CAA) has filed suit claiming the ordinance forces alarm companies to act as tax collectors. The money goes into the general fund -- not to the police department.

LOS ANGELES

Alarm calls dispatched as "all units":

Alarm calls are dispatched to all the units (patrol officers) at once. When an officer becomes available that officer can respond. This eliminates the issue of what priority to give alarm calls.

Former Chief Bernard Parks conducted a study in LA that contributed to the determination of this policy. He is often misquoted as saying that verified response will not change the way officers are dispatched to alarm calls. Former Chief Parks believes very strongly in verified response: "Absolute best," "Absolute number one goal is verified response," "That's the goal."

LA city attorney determined that police response couldn't be denied if the alarm holder cannot afford to pay alarm fees.

SALEM

Rejected the alarm industry's CARE (Coordinated Alarm Reduction Effort) as proposed to Salem due to the large administrative requirements.

Currently, response to alarms is lower priority under verified crimes.

Each morning the police department issues a Patrol Morning Report that details the previous 24 hours most significant activity. The following is a quote from the Monday, 9/22/03 report written by the sergeant whose squad begins duty at 1600:

Very, very busy. At one point we were 26 calls down with no clear units. In progress domestics holding for 2 hours. Shift 5 hit the street with no briefing. We caught up to the call load by 2200 hours. Thanks to Sgt. M and his squad for the assistance.

Dispatch must make an average of three telephone calls for each alarm.

Officers spend an average of 18 minutes waiting for a responsible person (RP) at each alarm call.

City of Salem False Alarm Invoiced and Collected Report: 8/01/02 – 6/27/03:

Amount Invoiced: \$38,150.00

Amount Collected: \$35,050.00 (\$3,100.00 outstanding)

Fees ranged from \$50 - \$1450

All revenue collected goes into the general fund, not to the police department.

Oregon has hiring requirements for private responders, requires criminal history background checks, requires extensive training for private responders.

VERIFICATION RESPONSE CITIES

Las Vegas, Nevada

Lane County, Oregon

Arvada, Colorado

West Valley City, Utah

Salt Lake City, Utah

Taylorsville, Utah

Henderson, Nevada

Eugene, Oregon

Victoria, British Columbia

Murray, Utah

VERIFIED RESPONSE OPTIONS

This method is usually accomplished per policy without the creation of an alarm unit and accompanying employees, software, tracking and billing, and permits. Police continue to respond to the human activated alarms such as panic and robbery, but do not issue fines for this type of false alarm. All other types of alarms are responded to with verification. A few examples of cities with this option:

Victoria, British Columbia

Eugene, Oregon

West Valley City, Utah

Lane County, Oregon

Arvada, Colorado

INSURANCE COMPANIES

When asked about their procedures regarding homeowners' insurance coverage in cities where the police departments have or have not implemented verified response the answer from USAA and State Farm was the same. Both give discounts to homeowners who have installed monitored alarm systems. Neither gives consideration to the policies of the local law enforcement agency.

MONITORED ALARM ORDINANCE REVIEW

TACOMA

Purpose and Intent of the ordinance is to:

1. protect public safety by curtailing or eliminating the extraordinary number of false alarms which prevent or delay public safety personnel from responding to legitimate calls for public service;
2. recover the costs associated with responses to false alarms;
3. stop the current subsidization of private business with public tax dollars;
4. reduce or eliminate the instances of false alarm activations in the City of Tacoma;
5. license the alarm industry in the City of Tacoma.

- **False Alarm** means the reporting of the activation of any monitored alarm system where police units dispatched to the location determine that there is no evidence of a crime, fire, or other activity on the premises that would warrant a call for immediate police assistance or investigation. An alarm shall be presumed to be false if the responding City personnel do not locate evidence of intrusion. No false alarm fees will be assessed during the time period for which no response is made at the direction of a supervising officer for a large number of alarms activated due to earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, or other acts of God.
- **Monitored Alarm System** includes any monitored burglary, panic, intrusion, premises, property, robbery, or other type of alarm device.
- **Alarm System Operator's License (\$100-\$500 per annum)** is required for any person/company to operate an alarm monitoring service within the jurisdictional limits of the City of Tacoma, even if such monitoring is conducted from a location outside the city limits. There may be as many as 48 alarm monitoring companies operating in the City of Tacoma.
- **Monitored Alarm Device License (\$40 per annum)** is required for any Alarm System Operator who arranges to monitor an alarm device within the City of Tacoma. Each monitored alarm device license shall be issued for a particular alarm device and is not transferable. Tax and License will bill the Alarm System Operator annually, with provisions made for pro-rated device licenses to be issued for the addition of new customers quarterly.
- **False Alarm Service Fee (\$60 per occurrence)** will be assessed to the Alarm System Operators on a monthly basis by Tax and License. A CAD report will be generated in LESA based on information provided by the officers for Tax and License. No fees will be assessed if the responding units are cancelled prior to arrival at the scene.
- **Alarm System Operators** will lose their privilege to conduct business in the City of Tacoma if their fees are not paid in full. Licensees who fail to pay the assessed fees will be treated as any other business in the City as provided for under Title 6. Their license will first be suspended after 30 days and revoked after 60 days. Notification will be made by the Tax and License Manager to the company and to LESA and TPD. All alarm monitoring companies are required to notify their subscriber within ten days of the notice. No police response shall be made to alarm devices until licenses are reinstated.
- **Appeals** will be brought by the Alarm System Operator to the Tax and License Manager after the assessed fees have been paid. The Tax and License Manager will then determine if the matter will go before the Hearings Examiner for resolution, according to existing provisions in Title 6.

ORDINANCE NO. 27019

AN ORDINANCE regulating alarm monitoring companies and monitored alarm devices, imposing license fees, recovering costs related to responses to false alarms, and providing for enforcement and penalties; and amending Title 6 of the Tacoma Municipal Code by adding thereto a new chapter, to be known and designated as Chapter 6.92, "Alarm Devices."

WHEREAS the Tacoma Police Department annually responds to approximately 12,000 alarms of which approximately 98 percent are false, and

WHEREAS responses to false activations of monitored alarm systems constitute approximately 99 percent of all false police alarms, and

WHEREAS responses to false monitored alarms have diverted the annual equivalent of approximately nine full-time sworn peace officers from regular police duties, and

WHEREAS responses to false monitored alarms thereby endanger the public by preventing, diverting, or delaying police officers from patrolling a neighborhood; responding to calls for service; or investigating and solving crimes, and

WHEREAS the use of tax dollars to pay for responses to false monitored alarm systems is not in the public interest because it confers a private benefit to an alarm owner while detracting from overall public safety, and

WHEREAS the use of tax dollars to cover the costs of responses to false monitored alarms unfairly requires the estimated 75 percent of taxpayers who do not own alarms to subsidize the costs of response to their net detriment, and

WHEREAS private firms in the local area offer private response services for a fee, but most alarm owners instead rely on the "free" service provided by the Tacoma Police Department, and

WHEREAS vendors of monitored alarm systems obtain a private benefit from public monies because they advertise that police will respond when their monitored alarm systems are activated, and

WHEREAS vendors of monitored alarm systems are thereby using public money to increase private profit, and

WHEREAS the significant amount of police resources expended on false monitored alarms is both expensive and dangerous to peace officers, and

WHEREAS the regulation of monitored alarm systems within the City is in the best interest of public health, safety, and welfare, and

WHEREAS the City has the power to license, for revenue, the privilege of engaging in business in the City of Tacoma, and

WHEREAS it is necessary to establish licensing for monitored alarm systems and recover costs associated with responses to false alarms; Now, Therefore,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF TACOMA:

Section 1. That Title 6 of the Tacoma Municipal Code is hereby amended by adding thereto a new chapter, to be known and designated as Chapter 6.92, "Alarm Devices," to read as follows:

Chapter 6.92
ALARM DEVICES

Sections:

6.92.010	Purpose.
6.92.020	Exercise of regulatory police power and revenue license power.
6.92.030	License required.
6.92.040	Definitions.
6.92.050	Alarm system operator (monitoring company) license.
6.92.060	Monitored alarm device license.
6.92.070	Duty of licensee.
6.92.080	Regulations.
6.92.090	Certain devices, systems, uses prohibited.
6.92.100	Suspension or revocation.
6.92.110	False alarm response fee.
6.92.120	Fees.
6.92.130	Penalty and interest for failure to pay.
6.92.140	Method of payment.
6.92.150	Appeals.
6.92.160	Penalties.
6.92.170	Mailing of notices.
6.92.180	Duty to supply ordinances and information to system subscribers.
6.92.190	Severability.
6.92.200	Public disclosure – Confidentiality – Information sharing.
6.92.210	Effective date.
6.92.220	Initial compliance date.
6.92.230	Administrative provisions.
6.92.240	Short title.

6.92.010 Purpose. The purpose and intent of this chapter is to:

(1) protect public safety by curtailing or eliminating the extraordinary number of false alarms which prevent, hinder, or delay public safety personnel from responding to legitimate calls for public service; (2) recover the costs associated with responses to false alarms as the expenditure of such public funds constitutes an unlawful gifting of public monies; (3) stop the current subsidization of private business with public tax dollars; (4) reduce or eliminate the instances of false alarm activations in the City of Tacoma; and (5) license

the alarm industry in the City of Tacoma. The recitals set forth in the preamble to this ordinance are hereby incorporated by reference as if fully stated herein.

6.92.020 Exercise of regulatory police power and revenue license power.

A. The provisions of this chapter shall be deemed an exercise of the City's police power to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the general public, and are not intended to protect individuals or create or otherwise establish or designate any particular class or group of persons who will or should be especially affected by the terms of this chapter. This chapter neither imposes nor creates duties on the part of the City or any of its departments, and the obligation of complying with the requirements of this chapter, and any liability for failing to do so, is placed solely upon the parties responsible for owning, operating, monitoring, or maintaining monitored alarm systems.

B. To the extent that the City may not exercise regulatory power with respect to the licensing requirements of this chapter, the provisions of this chapter pertaining to licensing shall be deemed an exercise of the power of the City of Tacoma to license for revenue the privilege of engaging in business in the City.

6.92.030 License required.

A. It shall be unlawful for any person to connect to a monitored alarm system in the City of Tacoma, or to monitor such an alarm system, directly or indirectly, via telephone, cable, wire, wireless, video, electronic, or other form of

connection to or by any outside entity or source without first having obtained a license or licenses required by this chapter.

B. It shall be unlawful for any person to permit to be used or operate any monitored alarm system in the City of Tacoma that is connected by means of telephone, cable, wire, wireless, video, electronic, or other form of connection to any outside entity or source that is not licensed or is not monitored by a person licensed pursuant to this chapter.

C. The licenses required pursuant to this chapter are separate from and in addition to any licenses required by any other chapter of the Tacoma Municipal Code including, but not limited to, those required pursuant to Chapter 6.01, Administrative Procedures for Tacoma Taxes; Chapter 6.02, General Provisions; Chapter 6.59, Burglar Alarms; and Chapter 6.69, Annual Business License.

D. It shall be unlawful for any person to avoid any of the licensing requirements of this chapter by subcontracting for monitoring services or making any other contractual or business arrangement that has the effect of avoiding the requirements of this chapter.

6.92.040 Definitions. Unless the context or subject matter otherwise requires, terms defined herein shall have the following meanings when used in this chapter:

“Alarm system” or “alarm device” means any system, device, or mechanism which, when activated, transmits a telephonic, wireless, electronic,

video, or other form of message to a private monitoring company, or some other number, or emits an audible or visible signal that can be heard or seen by persons outside the protected premises, or transmits a signal beyond the premises in some other fashion, except any system, device, or mechanism primarily protecting a motor vehicle.

“Alarm system monitoring company” or “alarm system operator” means any person, individual, partnership, corporation, or other form of association that engages in the business of monitoring intrusion, property, burglary, robbery, panic alarms, or other alarm systems located in the City of Tacoma, and which reports any activation of such alarm systems to the police, police dispatch, and/or the Law Enforcement Support Agency, directly or indirectly. This includes alarm system monitoring companies and alarm system operators that are located outside the city limits of Tacoma and which monitor alarms installed within the city limits of Tacoma.

“Alarm system user” means the person having or maintaining a property, intrusion, burglary, robbery, panic, or other alarm system. It means only a subscriber when the system is connected to an alarm system monitoring company.

“Burglary alarm system” has the same meaning as “property alarm” below.

“Chief of Police” means the Chief of the Tacoma Police Department, or his or her designee.

"Department" shall mean the Finance Department of the City of Tacoma.

"Director" shall mean the Director of Finance, or his or her designee.

"False alarm" means the reporting of the activation of any monitored alarm system where police units dispatched to the location determine that there is no evidence of a crime or other activity on the premises that would warrant a call for immediate police assistance or investigation. An alarm shall be presumed to be false if the responding City personnel do not locate evidence of intrusion, commission of an unlawful act, or emergency on the premises that might have caused the alarm to sound. If earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, or other acts of God set off a large number of alarms, a police supervisor may determine that no responses will be made to such alarms during the pendency of such event. No false alarm fees will be assessed during the time period for which no response is made as determined by the police supervisor.

"Fire alarm" means a signal initiated by a device such as a manual fire alarm box, automatic fire detector, waterflow switch, smoke detector, or other device which, when activated, is indicative of the presence of a fire or fire signature. All fire alarms shall be exempt from the provisions of this chapter.

"Monitored alarm system" means any system, device, or mechanism which, when activated, transmits a telephonic, wireless, electronic, video, or other form of message or communication to a private monitoring company, other number, or person who can then notify police that an alarm has been activated. This includes all systems which transmit telephonic, wireless,

electronic, video, or other form of message from an alarm installed within the city limits of Tacoma to any location outside of Tacoma (e.g., an alarm monitoring center located in a state other than Washington). All alarms that are monitored, except fire alarms, are included within the definition of "monitored alarm system"; e.g., any monitored burglary, intrusion, panic, premises, property, robbery, or other type of alarm device.

"Panic alarm" has the same meaning as "robbery alarm" below.

"Permittee" or "Licensee" means the person(s), corporation(s), or other business entity to whom a license or licenses have been issued under this chapter.

"Person" means any individual, partnership, corporation, trust, incorporated or unincorporated entity, or other entity or group of persons, but excludes the United States, the state of Washington, and any political subdivision or municipal corporation thereof.

"Police Department" or "police" means the Tacoma Police Department.

"Premises" means any area and any portion of any area protected by an alarm system.

"Property alarm," "intrusion alarm," or "burglary alarm" means any system, device, or mechanism for detection and reporting of any unauthorized entry or attempted entry or property damage upon real property protected by the system which may be activated by sensors or other techniques and, when activated, transmits a telephonic, wireless, electronic, video, or other form of

message, or emits an audible or visible signal that can be heard or seen by persons outside the protected premises, or transmits a signal beyond the protected premises.

“Residence” means a building or structure or portion thereof designed to be used as a place of abode for human beings and that is not used for any other primary purpose. The term includes all dwelling units within the definition of a “residential use.”

“Robbery alarm” or “panic alarm” means any system, device, or mechanism, activated by an individual on or near the premises, to alert others that a robbery or any other crime is in progress, or that the user is in need of immediate assistance or aid in order to avoid injury or serious bodily harm, which meets the following criteria:

1. The system is installed on real property (the “protected premises”);
2. It is designed to be activated by an individual for the purpose of summoning assistance to the premises;
3. It transmits a telephonic, wireless, electronic, video, or other form of message or emits an audible, visible, or electronic signal that can be heard, seen, or received by persons outside the protected premises; and
4. It is intended to summon police assistance to the premises.

"System subscriber" means any person, corporation, or other business entity that purchased, contracted for, or has had any alarm system installed in or on premises owned or controlled by them.

6.92.050 Alarm system operator (monitoring company) license. An alarm system operator license shall be required for any person to be or become or operate or provide an alarm monitoring service within the jurisdictional limits of the City of Tacoma. This includes any person who monitors alarm devices installed in the jurisdictional limits of Tacoma even if such monitoring is conducted from a location outside the city limits of Tacoma (e.g., an alarm monitoring center in another state). Such license shall be valid for the calendar year in which it is issued and is not transferable.

6.92.060 Monitored alarm device license.

A. Monitored alarm device licenses shall be required for any alarm system operator renting, leasing, installing, placing, subscribing, contracting, subcontracting, or otherwise arranging to monitor an alarm device within the city limits of Tacoma. Each monitored alarm device license shall be issued for a particular device, and shall not be transferable from: one monitored alarm device to another; from one person to another; or from one premise, building, dwelling, or residence to another. A monitored alarm device license is valid only for the calendar year in which it is issued. If an alarm system operator or subscriber transfers, assigns, or subcontracts monitoring services for a validly licensed alarm device to another alarm system operator, the existing valid

license shall remain in full force and effect for the remainder of the calendar year in which it was issued. An alarm system operator who assumes responsibility for monitoring an alarm device that has already been licensed for that year must report all such transfers in its quarterly report. The alarm system operator shall provide the transfer information in the form required by the Director (e.g., Excel spreadsheet). The transfer information shall include, at a minimum, the name of the alarm system operator under which the device was previously licensed, the name of the alarm system operator assuming responsibility for the alarm, the address where the device is installed, and the name of the subscriber.

B. Alarm system operators shall update quarterly, in the form required by the Director (e.g., Excel spreadsheet), a list of all alarm devices monitored by them within the jurisdictional limits of the City of Tacoma. Such list shall include the information required by the Director which, at a minimum, shall include the address where the alarm is installed, the name of the subscriber, the type of alarm, and the number of alarm devices.

6.92.070 Duty of licensee.

A. It shall be the duty of all licensees granted licenses under this chapter to comply with all applicable regulations in this chapter or elsewhere, and the failure of any licensee so to do shall constitute, but shall not be exclusive grounds for, suspension or revocation of any license and shall constitute a violation of this chapter.

B. It shall be the duty of all licensees granted licenses under this chapter not to have in their employ or financially interested in the business to be conducted any person who has had his or her license revoked or suspended by the City of Tacoma within one year from the date of such revocation.

C. It shall be the duty of any person engaged in or representing himself or herself as being engaged in an alarm monitoring business in the City of Tacoma, whether it be for selling, leasing, renting, servicing, inspecting, installing, maintaining, repairing, or monitoring alarms, to obtain all licenses required by this or any other chapter including those required pursuant to Chapter 6.02, General Provisions; Chapter 6.59, Burglar Alarms; and Chapter 6.69, Annual Business License.

6.92.080 Regulations.

A. All monitored alarm systems and alarm system operators shall comply with the regulations set forth in this chapter.

B. Fees shall be assessed for all responses to false monitored alarms.

C. No fee shall be assessed for a police response to the report of an audible or visual alarm.

6.92.090 Certain devices, systems, uses prohibited.

A. No person shall operate or use an alarm system which emits an audible sound where such emission does not automatically cease within ten minutes.

B. No person shall operate or use an alarm system which automatically dials the Tacoma Police Department directly and delivers a prerecorded message.

C. No person shall install, monitor, operate, or use a monitored alarm system which is not licensed as required pursuant to this chapter.

6.92.100 Suspension or revocation.

The Director shall have the power and authority to suspend or revoke any license issued under the provisions of this chapter as set forth in Chapter 6.01 and Chapter 6.02. The Director shall notify the licensee, in writing by ordinary mail, of the suspension or revocation of the license and the grounds therefor. Any license issued, or application therefor, under this chapter may be denied, suspended, or revoked based upon one or more of the grounds set forth in Sections 6.01.230, 6.02.070, and 6.02.145 of the Tacoma Municipal Code and/or any violation of this chapter. The Director shall also immediately notify the Police Department of the revocation, and no police response may be made to any alarm devices monitored by the alarm system operator until all suspended or revoked licenses are reinstated. No suspended or revoked license may be reinstated without prior payment of all license and alarm response fees due and outstanding.

6.92.110 False alarm response fee.

A. Alarm system operators shall be assessed a false alarm response fee for each police response to a false monitored alarm which is registered to the

alarm system operator. No fee shall be assessed if the responding units are canceled prior to arrival at the scene.

B. No license hereunder shall be granted or renewed under this chapter unless all assessed false alarm response fees are paid in full. Licensees who fail to pay assessed response fees within 60 days may have all licenses suspended by the Director. Licensees who fail to pay assessed response fees within 90 days may have all licenses and registration revoked by the Director.

C. Any license suspended or revoked by the Director shall not be reinstated without payment of all outstanding balances for licenses and false alarm response fees.

6.92.120 Fees. The license fees for the various classes of licenses shall be and are hereby fixed as follows:

Alarm System Operator License	
For one to 100 devices	\$100.00 per annum
For 101 to 200 devices	\$200.00 per annum
For 201 to 500 devices	\$400.00 per annum
For 501 or more devices	\$500.00 per annum
Monitored Alarm Device License	
\$40.00 per annum (per device)	
<i>Pro-rated fees to be charged quarterly for periods of less than a year as follows:</i>	
Alarm devices installed Jan 1 to Mar 31	\$30.00 per device
Alarm devices installed Apr 1 to Jun 30	\$20.00 per device
Alarm devices installed Jul 1 to Sep 30	\$10.00 per device
False Alarm Service Fee	
\$60.00 per occurrence	

6.92.130 Penalty and interest for failure to pay.

A. If payment of any fee due under this chapter is not received on or before the last day of the month in which it becomes due or within an extension of time granted by the Director, there shall be added to the amount, from the date it becomes due, a penalty as provided in Chapter 6.01 of the Tacoma Municipal Code.

B. In addition to said penalty, interest shall be charged as set forth in Chapter 6.01 of the Tacoma Municipal Code.

C. The licensee shall be notified by mail of the amount of any penalties and interest so added or assessed, and the same shall become due and shall be paid within ten days from the date of such notice.

D. Any penalty fee or assessment of interest may be appealed as provided in Sections 6.01.140 and 6.01.150 of the Tacoma Municipal Code, provided that any penalty or assessment is fully paid at the time the appeal is filed. Any appeal must be filed within the time limits set in Sections 6.01.140 and 6.01.150.

6.92.140 Method of payment.

A. Device License Fees. Except for the initial compliance period set forth in Section 6.92.220, the fees for monitored alarm devices shall be payable in advance by the alarm system operator on an annual basis with quarterly adjustments for additional devices. Annual device licenses expire as of

December 31 in the calendar year in which they were issued and must be renewed by January 31 of the next year in order to avoid penalty.

1. The initial device license fees shall be payable on or before January 31 of the annual period for which fees are due. At the time of payment of the annual fee, each alarm system operator shall provide, in the format specified by the Director (e.g. an Excel spreadsheet), a list of all addresses at which monitored alarms are installed, the name of the corresponding subscriber, and the number of devices at such address.

2. Each alarm system operator shall provide quarterly, in the format specified by the Director (e.g. an Excel spreadsheet), a list of all additional addresses at which monitored alarms were installed during such quarter, the name of the corresponding subscriber, and the number of devices at such address. The Director shall assess each alarm system operator for each additional device and such assessment shall be due and payable no later than the last day of the month following the end of the quarter.

B. Alarm System Operators License. Except for the initial compliance period set forth in Section 6.92.220, the alarm system operators license is payable on an annual basis. The license fee shall be payable on or before December 31 of the year preceding the beginning of the annual period for which the license fee is due. The alarm system operators license expires as of December 31 in the calendar year in which it is issued and must be renewed by January 31 of the next year in order to avoid penalty.

C. False Alarm Service Fees. The false alarm service fees imposed by this chapter shall be due and payable within 60 days of the date they are billed to the alarm system operator, and remittance shall be made on or before such date.

6.92.150 Appeals.

A. Any licensee under this chapter aggrieved by the denial, revocation, or suspension of a license issued pursuant to this chapter may, upon full payment of any fees assessed and/or due or owing, appeal the same as provided in Chapter 6.02 of the Tacoma Municipal Code.

B. Any licensee under this chapter aggrieved by the imposition of a false alarm response fee, penalty, or assessment of interest may appeal the same as provided in Sections 6.01.140 and 6.01.150 of the Tacoma Municipal Code, provided that any and all fees, penalties, or assessments are fully paid at the time the appeal is filed and that all other requirements for an appeal have been met.

6.92.160 Penalties. Any violation of this chapter shall constitute a misdemeanor and any person convicted thereof shall, upon such conviction, be subject to a penalty by fine in an amount not exceeding \$1,000.00 or by confinement in the county jail for a period not exceeding 90 days, or both such fine and imprisonment.

6.92.170 Mailing of notices. Any notice required by this chapter to be mailed shall be sent by ordinary mail, addressed to the address as reflected in

the records of the Director. Failure to receive such notice shall not relieve the obligation to pay any fee, interest, or penalty, nor shall such failure extend any time limit. It is the responsibility of the licensee to inform the Director in writing about a change in address.

6.92.180 Duty to supply ordinances and information to system subscribers.

A. All persons licensed pursuant to this chapter shall supply each of their system subscribers with copies of all current ordinances pertaining to alarms and a copy of the licensee's policies and practices with respect to billing a system subscriber for any fees or licenses established by this or any other chapter of the Tacoma Municipal Code.

B. All persons licensed pursuant to this chapter shall notify each of their system subscribers of the revocation or suspension of any license issued by the City of Tacoma. The notice shall be in writing and shall be mailed to all system subscribers no later than the tenth calendar day following such suspension or revocation.

C. Failure to comply with the notice requirements set forth herein shall constitute separate and independent grounds for imposition of penalties as provided herein and for suspension and revocation of any license(s) issued by the City of Tacoma.

6.92.190 Severability. If any provision, section, or part of this chapter shall be held invalid or its application to any person or circumstance is held

invalid, all other parts, provisions, and sections of this chapter or the application to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected.

6.92.200 Public disclosure – Confidentiality – Information sharing.

All requests for public disclosure or for information shall be governed by Section 6.01.200. In addition to the provisions of Chapter 6.01.200, information and statistics gathered by the Tacoma Police Department and/or the Law Enforcement Support Agency pertaining to calls for service and responses to alarms may be made available to the Tax and License Division of the Finance Department and other City departments, as necessary, to fully carry out the purposes of this chapter.

6.92.210 Effective Date. This ordinance shall take effect January 1, 2003.

6.92.220 Initial compliance date. All persons subject to this ordinance shall have until March 31, 2003, to obtain all required and applicable licenses and pay all related fees, and to pay false alarm response fees accrued through March 31, 2003. Fees for the initial compliance period shall be computed from and paid for the period beginning January 1, 2003.

6.92.230 Administrative provisions. The provisions of Chapter 6.01 and Chapter 6.02 shall apply to this chapter unless there are specific provisions in this chapter which are contrary thereto.

6.92.240 Short title. This ordinance shall be known as the Alarm
Devices Code and may be cited as such.

Passed _____

Attest:

Mayor

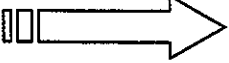
City Clerk

Approved as to form and legality:

City Attorney

Company Alarm Credits

SAFECO

Local		5%
Police Station		6%
Fire Station		
Central Station		10%

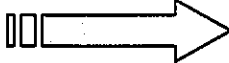
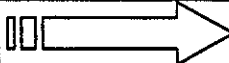
Oregon Mutual

Local w/ outside bell		2%
Fire or Police Alert		10%
Central Station		15%
* Western Protectors - same		

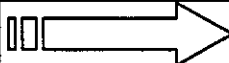
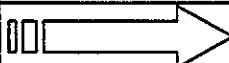
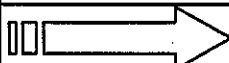
Sublimity

Local		98% Base Premium
Police & Fire		97% Base Premium
Central		95% Base Premium

North Pacific

Local		2%		
Police Alarm		3%		both
Fire Alarm		3%		6%
Central Fire		5%		both
Central Burglary		5%		10%

Allied

Local Fire		2%		both
Local Burglary		2%		4%
Police Alarm/alert		3%		both
Fire Alarm/alert		3%		6%
Central Fire		5%		both
Central Police		5%		10%

National Study of False Alarms for the Security Industry Association

SOURCE OF FALSE ALARMS

- 71% of the alarms were caused by user errors
- 13% by an environmental problem on the premise (e.g., a curtain blowing)
- 8% by equipment or power problems
- 8% were due to unknown causes.

Of the user-caused problems, one quarter related to making an error in entering codes, and three quarters were due to movement issues, including:

- Someone authorized to enter not putting in a code - 26%
- Some authorized to be inside moving around after a system was armed - 23%
- Exiting or opening after arming the perimeter (e.g., getting the paper) - 25%
- Pet movement - 13%
- All other - 13%

Susan Ellerin, Ph.D.
President
STAT Resources, Inc.
T: 617-713-4601
C: 617-510-0289
F: 617-734-4095

Note: This study was done in mid-90's and the only thing the researcher expects has changed since then is that the equipment has gotten much better.

ALARM INDUSTRY QUESTIONNAIRE

FROM THE BURGLAR ALARM TASK FORCE, CITY OF SALEM

*The information provided below is considered confidential
and provided for statistical analysis only*

1. *How many customers (by number or by percent) do you monitor for in the various plans you offer?*

Company A: 2097 total as of August 22, 2003

Company B: 1476 total

Company C: Subscribers = 170; Currently monitored = 125

2. *How many are businesses and how many are residences?*

Company A: 420 Businesses; 1677 Residential

Company B: 111 Businesses; 1,365 Residential

Company C: 86 Businesses; 72 Residential

3. *Does your company have licensing agreements in other jurisdictions?*

Company A: Yes

Company B: We are licensed (to do general business) in the State of Oregon as a company as well as all our employees

Company C: Not clear what you're asking here. Not appropriate; not part of this market

4. *What are the approximate costs for the license you pay for, monthly charges to your customers, and the charges for false alarms you pay the jurisdiction?*

Company A: \$40 per account; charges to customer (under review and audit at this time; proprietary information); \$60 false alarm charges. We feel these charges should be sent directly to the alarm users and not through alarm companies.

Company B: The only city that we pay false alarm fees to directly is the City of Tacoma and that is \$60 per false alarm and all the charges are passed through to the customer. (Under the new City of Tacoma ordinance, the licensing fee can range from \$100 to \$500 annually. Alarm companies will be billed for an alarm device license for each alarm they monitor, which will be \$40. This is less than \$3.50/month for the client, if the alarm companies choose to pass this cost along to their subscribers. The alarm companies will be billed monthly for each false alarm their client activates, at a cost of \$60 per false alarm.)

Company C: Monthly monitoring fee is \$22.50. This alarm company does not

pay false alarm fines.

5. *What do you feel are the causes of false alarms?*

Company A: The majority (over 70%) are User errors. Users make mistakes, Users aren't trained properly, User forget; some employees & janitors are just careless. In addition, less than 20% are causing the false alarm problem. In many municipalities schools and government buildings are known to have high false alarm rates. In addition, around least 80% of our customer base is not having false alarm problems; they are using them properly, and protecting their lives and property without problems. There are many methods for reducing false alarms with a well thought out and administered alarm ordinance. Will provide more information and documentation to the Task Force in future meetings as requested.

Company B: 75% are user error; the majority are entry/exit delay problems.

Company C: Number one cause is human error which can be a result of improper or too little training by the alarm system installer. Number two cause is misapplication of equipment.

2001
DPSST Private Security
Unarmed Instructor's
Training Manual

Department of Public Safety Standards and Training
Private Security Unit - 1320 Capitol Street NE, Salem OR 97303
Phone (503) 378-4888 Fax (503) 373-0858

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PO-5-A-5 Identify the importance of securing the point of entry and exit.

PO-5-A-6 Identify the need for proper witness handling.

PO-5-A-7 Identify options of handling a suspect still on the scene.

B. Report Writing

PO-5-B-1 Identify the importance of good report writing.

PO-5-B-2 Identify the basic information a report should contain.

PO-5-B-3 Identify the importance of a "chronological order of events" in writing a report.

PO-5-B-4 Identify the advantages and disadvantages of using an officer notebook.

PO-5-B-5 Identify the advantages of writing in "first person".

VI. THE FUNDAMENTALS OF PATROLLING AND CONTACTS IN THE FIELD

A. Foot or Vehicle Patrol

PO-6-A-1 Identify the importance of a daily individual patrol and location action plan.

B. Citizen Contacts in the Field

PO-6-B-1 Identify the objectives of the field interview and frequent citizen contacts.

PO-6-B-2 Identify the SARA method for resolving problem situations.

C. Tactical Communications with Emotional, Angry or Hostile Citizens

PO-6-C-1 Identify the five tactical communication phases of a citizen contact.

**MINUTES
BURGLAR ALARM TASK FORCE
November 18, 2003
6:00 p.m.
City Hall, Room 325**

Welcome

Dan Clem, Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call of Board Members

Task Force members present: Chair Dan Clem, Keith Butler, Chuck Huggins, John Baker, Vince Mulligan, Steve Magreaves, Anna Peterson, Wes Bennett, Byron Hawkins

Others Present

Alarm Industry Representatives: Jon Sargent, Derek Bliss

Staff Present: Police Chief Walt Myers, Sargent Steve Bellshaw, Kimberly Barnett, Margaret Blaine

Approval of Minutes from October 28, 2003

Byron Hawkins **moved** to approve the minutes; **seconded** by Anna Peterson. The vote was taken and **approved**.

Task Force Deliberations

Verbatim testimony by Anna Peterson:

I thought a lot about this item and haven't said anything to anybody on the committee about it or Councilor Clem. I want to direct my comments to John Sargent because I personally was insulted by the letter you sent to the members of the task force and to me and personally was concerned when I read about it in the newspaper, but the thing I was most concerned about is in this cover letter. Twice you make reference to people on the task force who failed to attend meetings, and in your list of things that you hoped people would attend to you say it's hoped that the summary will be useful to those members of the task force that were unable to attend all of the meetings. I just thought it would be important to point out that every member of this task force came forward to serve as a volunteer. They have given time from their businesses, from their families, from their homes, from other activities, many other activities that may have had previous commitments. And from time to time when people are volunteers in this city, they do these meetings. But I felt that your repeated remark about how they failed to be at meetings really was disrespectful to the intent. I know people on this task force have studied numerous reports and have come well prepared with the intention of doing good work. I felt that was unfair.

Verbatim response by John Sargent:

I apologize for giving you that impression, it was certainly not my intention at all. It was simply to try to summarize the massive amount of documents and presentations.

Peterson:

Well, the summary does help that, but I think it is important to value volunteers for the tremendous time they give. You are a lobbyist, you are paid to show up. You are paid for every word you write and every minute you sit. I think it was a cheap shot and I simply request that any future communication you might have regarding this task force recognizes the intent of the people.

Sargent:

I certainly do recognize that, I apologize if anyone took it that way.

Peterson:

And then we won't see that kind of reference in letters from you or your industry.

Sargent:

I hope you understand that it was not the intent.

Chairman Clem expressed concern over another piece of correspondence from Jeff Martin. Clem felt the work done by the task force was very collaborative, and in the interest of the entire public's safety.

Councilor Bennett stated he took exception to Jon Sargent's comments and did not think there was room for criticism when people were volunteering their time. Councilor Bennett hopes that Jon Sargent can correct the notion that he left throughout the community about this committee.

Steve Margreaves noted that the key vote that was taken on October 14, regarding verified response versus the coordinated option, was very close. He was absent from the meeting and the vote was 4 to 4, with the Chairman breaking the tie. He felt the members should have been notified this vote was going to be taken on October 14.

Chairman Clem responded that the agendas that were sent to members listed the intent of the meeting. Clem did not agree that an attendance problem caused the outcome of the vote, and that the committee had previously agreed to not bring up previously taken votes for the purpose of re-voting.

Margreaves felt this group was divided about recommending what is included as verified response to Council. Margreaves **moved** to reconsider the vote that was taken on October 14; **seconded** by Amanda Dalton. The vote was taken and **failed**. Margreaves, Dalton and Hawkins voted in favor.

Dalton commented that the council will have a very tough decision and will face the same discussions that came forward three months ago.

Hawkins noted that he supported the work done and will be a supporter of these recommendations to the community. He explained that he voted for reconsideration because there are some other things that would be helpful. He believes that what is coming out of this is going to be of benefit to the community.

Chairman Clem reviewed the report for edits. The intent was to show all of the information that was submitted. He asked if anyone wished to add anything to the report, to file a minority report with council.

Dalton requested that under Fact/Findings, it should state that 40% of the false alarms were made by the same people; noting that some types of alarms were repetitive.

Chairman Clem responded that information was shown in #19.

Dalton suggested that those paragraphs could be combined.

Item # 13: remove the word "unanimously".

Item #12: awkwardly written, will be rewritten. ...20 plus years of experience, only four criminals have been apprehended.

Item #12 remove "frequently" and replace with "the K-9 unit has been dispatched."

Page 1, B.(3): remove "and alarm holders"

Page 2, B.(6): remove the word "false"

Facts/Findings #15: replace insurance company with insurance agency

Analysis of Burglar Alarm Ordinance (B) (2) replace "must be help responsible" with "must be held responsible"

Summary Edits:

First Paragraph

Omit first sentence "and what taxpayers are paying for" and replace with "that funding provides"

Second Paragraph - No change

Third Paragraph - Omit the first sentence.

Fourth Paragraph - Remove the word "Also." Remove "alarm monitoring companies" and replace with "alarm industry"

Fifth Paragraph - Remove "By incorporating response to.." Replace with "By responding to unverified alarm calls"

Sixth Paragraph - insert the word for "verified" false alarms, remove the "the elimination of the permit system"

Change last phrase to read: "provide greater incentives for reducing the number of false alarm calls."

Seventh Paragraph - In the first sentence remove the word "false"

Change sentence: remove the phrase starting with "Concomitant with" ...start the sentence with: "The BATF felt the decision of hiring private security responders is best left up to the alarm subscribers..."

Strike every reference to the word "monitoring" in the paragraph.

Chairman Clem referred to the Issue statement on page 1 of the report: "Should the City Council adopt a Burglar Alarm Response Policy proposed by the Salem Police Department." The police proposed verified responses, and the task force went beyond that. The task force looked at the

alarm industry, at different kinds of responses, at a whole host of data involving what the current situation was. Essentially the task force challenged all of the points that the police department had made and made its own independent sentence. The task force did a lot more than what was required and he is very proud of that.

Chairman Clem noted that under the Recommendation, Item A is policy change and B is recommendation for ordinance change. Current SRC says that the police are not obligated to respond to alarms, so it doesn't make sense to change the ordinance saying they will. The reason the ordinance is in there is a legal one. If the city is required to respond to a burglar alarm then it builds in all sorts of financial and otherwise liability. That was put in 1989-1990 that the city shall not be obligated to respond to a licensed alarm. It didn't make sense that we ever addressed that the city should pass an ordinance change that they should respond. We answered the question about verified response which is a policy. We provided recommendations for both policy and ordinance changes.

Chairman Clem told the committee that changes might be made when the report is reviewed by the city's legal department.

Steve Margraeves asked why the task force didn't include lawyers, noting that a lot of work was done and now it might be changed.

Kim Barnett explained that a lot of legal research has to go into the recommendations.

Wes Bennett noted that the report doesn't address silent alarms.

Chairman Clem noted that a statement should be added about what it doesn't include.

Huggins **moved** to approve the report as amended; **seconded** by Margreaves. The vote was taken and **approved unanimously**.

Chairman Clem thanked staff for their work; particularly Kim Barnett who did the lion's share of the work on the report. He also thanked all the additional people who came to help, and personally appreciated having the alarm association in attendance.

Jon Sargent (verbatim): I became aware late this afternoon of a newspaper article and I didn't care for the way it was written and the way it was put together. I know a little about how it was orchestrated last week because they wanted to quote me and I didn't say anything. It tends to do the same thing that we see in other cities when they are working on this, and that is paint a picture of the alarm industry as the bad guys. And we've got our own agenda and I personally almost want to use the word ?. I also want to thank you for what you've done here by taking out these two paragraphs, for example. You've taken out what's presented as a negative, and made it much more fair and balanced. I think if you compare what you read in the paper and what you see, we are obligated to notify our customers about what's going on and will offer an amendment. Some alarm people in this world are very emotional people and they will say and do things. There is nothing we can do to stop that. I just want to say these last changes here are very fair and balanced.

Chairman Clem (verbatim): I would hope the alarm companies in keeping their subscribers informed would also remind them that you played a very active role and that most of the model ordinance recommendations were adopted by this task force.

Chairman Clem informed the task force that it will depend on the City Manager as to when the task force report will go to Council.

Chairman Clem asked members to contact staff if they did not want to serve on the task force any longer.

Chairman Clem thanked everyone for their participation and noted that on the average, 9 of 13 members attended, and most of the time there was a 90% attendance rate.

Chairman Clem thanked staff for their efforts and noted that Kim Barnett was an absolute genius at helping put these things together. She's the one who deserves the praise. (Applause).

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Blaine

MINUTES
BURGLAR ALARM TASK FORCE
October 28
6:00 p.m.
City Hall, Room 325

Welcome

Dan Clem, Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call of Board Members

Task Force members present: Chair Dan Clem, Byron Hawkins, Vince Milligan, Bob Burton, Anna Peterson, John Baker, Keith Butler, Amanda Dalton, Chuck Huggins, Marin Arreolla, Steve Margreaves.

Others Present

Alarm Industry Representatives: Jon Sargent, Derek Bliss

Staff Present: Police Chief Myers, Sargent Steve Bellshaw, Kimberly Barnett, Judy Postier.

From the public: Dan de Carbonel, Statesman Journal

Approval of Minutes from October 14, 2003

Sgt. Bellshaw asked to have the last line of the third paragraph on page 2 be changed from "...three officers that started a security company in Salem." to "... started out as security officers before becoming police officers." The minutes were moved and approved unanimously with that change.

Task Force Deliberations

Dan Clem recapped what had been accomplished in the last meeting and commented that tonight's goal is to develop items to be included in the ordinance. Dan then provided the definition of discretionary response and asked for comments and discussion. Questions and discussion included: a time line for an agency broadcast alarm call(All Units Bulletin); Police Department routine and changes necessary to implement an agency broadcast system; perception of burglars; fear of no response; how much information is provided to an officer; the importance of the police department's role; use of private security; and a strong desire to not increase bureaucracy. Dan called for a vote on All Units Bulletin with provisions for a discretionary response by Officers for unverified alarm calls being included in the ordinance requirements. The **vote** passed unanimously with no abstentions.

The next category to be recommended in an ordinance was Permits/License - should the City continue to issue permits. Questions and discussion included: what is required in current permits; what are alarm company responsibilities; what are alarm owner responsibilities; what information is necessary to dispatch; what a permit can and cannot

do; the revocation and fining process; and form and cost that a fine would take. A vote was called for on should the Committee recommend the City continue to require permits for alarms as part of the proposed ordinance. The **vote** passed unanimously with one abstention.

The next category for discussion was Alarm Company Licensing - does the City issue licenses to alarm monitoring companies? Questions and discussion included: what is currently mandated by law; purpose of a license; what the City's interest is in tracking alarm companies; the nature of complaints; installation issues; and conditions of a business license in Salem. A vote was called for asking if the Committee should recommend licensing of alarm monitoring companies. The **vote** was 2 yes, 7 no, 2 abstentions. The vote failed.

The Committee then discussed enhanced verification - the requirement for two or three calls to verify the alarm is not a false alarm. Questions and discussion included: the difference between a two-call or three-call verification; definition of responsible party; anticipated reduction in false alarms; cancellation calls; and call progression. A vote was then called for asking if the Committee should recommend enhanced verification before response to burglar alarms. The **vote** passed unanimously.

The next category for discussion was verified response. Dan Clem asked the group to consider what elements would be acceptable as a verified response. The final list to be voted on included: audio with video; video only; private security; cross zoning; audio without video; witness on site; and audio with two-way. Upon discussion, it was agreed to remove audio without video and cross zoning from the list for separate treatment. A vote was called for asking if the Committee should recommend the remaining list for inclusion in a proposed ordinance. The **vote** passed unanimously. The Committee then discussed the audio without video and cross zoning options. After discussion, a vote was called for asking if cross zoning should be included as an option for verified response. The **vote** was 7 yes, 1 no, 2 abstentions. The vote passed. Further discussion on the option to include audio without video resulted in a motion to not include the option in the list. The **vote** passed unanimously to not include audio without video as a verified response.

Whether to impose a fine for a verified false alarm was the next category discussed. A motion was made to give the responding officer the discretion of determining whether a fine should be issued. After a brief discussion, a vote was called asking if the Committee should recommend giving the responding officer the discretion to determine if a fine should be issued for a verified false alarm. The **vote** was 9 yes, 1 no. The vote passed.

Dan Clem then asked the Committee how unmonitored alarms should be treated. After a very brief discussion, a vote was called for to respond to unverified alarms with an All Units Bulletin. The **vote** passed unanimously.

The next discussion was to determine where funds from fines would go - to the General Fund or to the Police Department. A concern was discussed regarding the perception of the public as to where the money would go when an officer has the discretion of determining how much a fine should be. It could be considered a conflict. During discussion it was agreed that the Police Department could certainly use the funds but it was not within the realm of this committee to make that determination. A motion was made and seconded to drop the discussion of where the funds should go. The **vote**

passed unanimously to drop the subject and not include it in the recommendations to Council.

The question was then asked, what should the maximum fine be set at. Comments and questions during discussion included current fines for noise ordinance violations, progressive fines, verified calls that end up being false, current processes for periodic review of fines, what is the benefit of officers having to attend court to defend high bail amounts, and will false alarms be reduced by imposing a fine. A vote was called for to make a recommendation to set the maximum fine at \$150, and to allow the officer discretion in determining how much of the maximum bail to impose. The **vote** passed, 9 yes, 1 no.

A motion was then made to require real estate agents to provide alarm information to the purchaser at the time of title transfer. Discussion and questions included what format the information would be provided in, whose responsibility would it be to ensure information had been included in sale, what is currently in the disclosure at the time of sale, and real estate sales without a realtor. A vote was called for to make a recommendation to require title companies to provide alarm information at the time of title transfer. The **vote** was 3 yes, 5 no, 2 abstentions. The vote failed.

The next subject of discussion was, should there be a fine for false alarms that are called off before an officer arrives at the scene. Discussion included, is there a higher level of responsibility, would it help reduce false alarm calls, and the effect of including cross zoning and audio with two-way as a method of verification. Discussion resulted in a motion to revisit the issue of accepting cross zoning and audio with two-way and remove them from the list of acceptable verification methods. A vote was called for to remove cross zoning and audio with two-way from the list of recommended acceptable verification options. The **vote** was 4 no, 6 yes. The vote passed.

Dan Clem then asked to group to consider a number of administrative items: does the Committee want to form a writing group to draft the proposed ordinance; does the Committee want to require group approval of the final product, or majority rules; and who will present the final report to Council. The group agreed Dan Clem and staff could draft the proposed ordinance. They further agreed that the report would be e-mailed to the group for review and comment. Anna Peterson was chosen as the presenter of the final report to City Council. The group further agreed to meet to review the proposed report before presenting it to the City Council. Dan Clem asked all members of the group to please attend the Council meeting when the report is presented.

Next Meeting:

November 18, 2003, at 6 p.m. in Room 325 at City Hall.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Postier
Staff Assistant

MINUTES
BURGLAR ALARM TASK FORCE
October 14
6:00 p.m.
City Hall, Room 325

Welcome

Dan Clem, Chair called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Roll Call of Board Members

Task Force members present: Chair Dan Clem, Kasia Quillinan, Byron Hawkins, Vince Milligan, Bob Burton, Anna Peterson, John Baker, Keith Butler, Amanda Dalton, Chuck Huggins,

Alarm Industry Representatives: Jon Sargent, Derek Bliss

Staff Present: Police Chief Myers, Sargent Steve Bellshaw, Kimberly Barnett, Judy Postier.

Approval of Minutes from September 30, 2003

It was noted that Chuck Huggins was present at the September 30 meeting but was omitted from the minutes. With that correction, the minutes were approved as presented.

Presentation by Derek Bliss, First Response Inc.

Derek Bliss, employed by a private security company, provided information regarding private security response policy, costs, and training. He informed the committee that his private security firm responds to approximately 14,000 alarms per year, covered by about 150 officers. Derek commented that the major difference between a police response and a private security response is that private security has a duty to observe and report, where a police officer has a duty to act such as make arrests. Derek compared police officer training certification to private security certification, noting that the major differences are in the length of the classes and the firearm training. He further commented that private security has the benefit of having codes and keys for entering the residence or business to verify intrusion, disarm an alarm, reset the alarm, and leave a report for the owner.

Discussion and questions of Mr. Bliss included the following: Bob Burton asked about the monthly costs for private security. Derek replied that it varies from \$6 per month to \$45 per month, with the upper range including usually 2 alarm responses without further charges. Bob further asked if they provide response to other alarm companies. Derek replied that they work with both the end user and alarm companies to provide security. Bob Burton then asked how many times per year were the private security guards given handgun training. Derek replied that state law requires certification twice a year, where police officers must certify at least quarterly.

Byron Hawkins asked if First Response had a presence here in Salem, or how much of

a presence other security companies have here. Derek responded that he has familiarized himself with the companies in the area, and has a personal interest as he has family here. There are a number of companies in Salem, with the larger players being Advanced, ProStar, and AAA. He commented that the private security industry is growing and that several companies have merged. Byron also asked if Derek's company was involved in Eugene's development of an alarm response. Derek replied that they were actively involved and worked very closely with the police department. The initial feeling that the alarm companies would spend thousands of dollars to fight it did not materialize.

Dan Clem asked if Derek's firm or any other firm contracts with a governmental entity to cover an entire jurisdiction. Derek replied that is a yes and no situation; in a town that is not large enough to have their own police force, private security can provide needed services. Eugene is seeing a good relationship with private security, but the company contracts with the end user but not the City of Eugene. With homeland security becoming such an issue, there is a need at reservoirs, treatment plants, etc. so there are more opportunities for private security in the future. Dan then asked in terms of contracting with people or businesses, does private security act as the responsible person or as a clearing agent at the alarm site. Derek replied that they act as an agent or responsible party for the property owner.

Bob Burton asked how many private security responders would Salem need. Derek replied that it depends on the call load. Most calls come in during the day that involve actual theft, but most false alarms come in at night, with an average of two during the day and three at night. Dan commented that we originally figured it would take 15 private security to replace the current officer response for alarm response. Dan then asked how much private security officers make. Derek replied that his firm provides health insurance, bonus, uniform allowance, and then pay them approximately \$10 per hour for a starting wage, with the average salary for an armed officer at \$11.25. Dan asked if a lot of officers get a start in private security. Sgt. Bellshaw commented that the City has three officers that started a security company in Salem.

John Baker asked if alarm response was just a portion of their workload in Portland. Derek agreed and said patrol, mall security, special events, construction sites, etc. all are part of the workload. John then asked what has prevented the same response in Salem. Derek replied that Salem is not quite there yet in terms of population and need. The relationship between private security and law enforcement is growing on a positive note. Kasia Quillinan asked what percentage of alarm holders are actually billed back for false alarms in his company, and how do you go about collecting those fees; are they billed directly or do they go through the police department, or what process is used? Derek replied that they work with the end user as a rule, and with alarm companies in some instances. They never bill the police department unless there is a contract providing for that. Many alarm owners have retainers or programs that include a set number of alarm responses built in. The goal is to reduce false alarms so we try to work with owners who have a problem.

Dan asked, with regard to the number of private security needed, could Salem expand and contract to meet additional needs if Salem decided to go more toward using private security. Derek replied that expansion is not typically a challenge, with stepping stones to getting a full private security force in place. Networking with the local authorities is a first step.

Task Force Deliberations

Dan Clem informed the committee that he had developed a check list (handout on file) for consideration based on the discussion and votes from the previous meeting.

Dan recapped what had already been agreed upon: majority rules; alarms are a deterrent but that criminals are not likely to be affected by whatever this committee recommends; agreed we did not agree on whether businesses and homeowners should be treated the same; need an ordinance that is broad; ordinance should offer options, encourage private security, be flexible, not harness the police, fees collected should not go to the General Fund but to the police, address alarm presence in real estate transfers by title transfer and rental changes; alarm companies should be responsible for training, education, and inspection of alarms; and calls need a verification system to eliminate false alarms before a police officer is dispatched.

Dan then reviewed the bulleted items on the checklist with the committee. During discussion, it was determined that Verified Police Response items should be changed to include possible false alarm fines, and eliminated the permits and fee items. For definition purposes, Discretionary Police Response is the same as All Units Broadcast Police Response.

Anna Peterson was concerned that the Verified Police Response still significantly involves the Communications Center because false alarm calls will still be coming in. Kim Barnett responded that it will significantly reduce the number of calls because Dispatch will not be the central person making all the calls; in this scenario the alarm company will be responsible for the majority of the calls. Dan added that with this scenario, if there is no responsible person identified and no estimated time of arrival, then there is no call to Dispatch.

John Baker asked if you have an unmonitored alarm, there will be no responsible person, so there will be no response from the police. Sgt. Bellshaw replied that what it becomes is a 911 call, because someone has called the police in response to hearing it. Amanda then asked if it would be safer to just have an unmonitored alarm so that you would get a response every time. Dan replied that you could also receive a false alarm fine, as well as a nuisance fine for the noise, if an officer responds and then finds it is a false alarm.

Bob Burton asked Derek if there are liability issues for contracting with private security. Derek replied that the alarm company is first in line. Jon Sargent asked if First Response had a limitation or indemnification of liability. Derek replied that yes, it is currently \$7 million aggregate.

Byron Hawkins commented that his company's experience in Eugene showed the bottom line is, the homeowner wants someone to respond. The lowest cost provided is private security. The City has extreme budget shortages, so you need a drastic measure to provide the needed security, which is a response by private security. ADT's experience in Eugene has been very positive as it is a large company. By having a contract with the City, which puts everyone on a level playing field, and by prepaying for responses to the City, then when a false alarm comes in, it is deducted from the escrow account. Anna Peterson responded that what the City of Eugene ends up doing is orchestrating a huge system for the alarm companies and still does not address the false alarm numbers. Dan replied that it does reduce the number of false alarms that the City responds to. Byron agreed with Anna and said that politics will always play a

part. A No Response policy will upset the citizens and cause a backlash. Dan replied that what the City of Eugene is doing is requiring a verified response in order to get a police officer dispatched. All unverified alarms go to the private security firms. Amanda suggested offering businesses incentives to use private security for their responsible party.

10 minute break at 7:50 p.m.

Dan asked the group if they felt all basic options had been listed. All agreed that all options had been listed that the group had discussed. Anna Peterson commented that a favored solution is not listed in just one box. The group agreed that items under the major options could be altered once a method of response had been narrowed down. Jon Sargent commented that LA is doing a "three strikes" effort where there is no response after 3 false alarms. Dan replied that it could be considered a sixth method of response for the committee to evaluate. He asked for a show of hands to indicate support for a sixth response, "three strikes." By show of hands, a sixth method was not added to the list of Methods of Response (4 yes, 5 no).

Dan then asked the committee to vote on their two favored methods to narrow down the choices. Verified Police Response (7 votes) and Coordinated Police Response (6 votes) were chosen for final discussion. The count for all categories was: Current Police Response 1; Verified Police Response 7; Discretionary Police Response 1; Coordinated Police Response 6; Contract Provider Response 3.

Dan then opened the discussion to the bulleted items for the two favored methods. Discussion items included absolute verification of alarms; greatest possibility of reducing false alarms; audio/video monitoring; personal responsibility of the owners; risk regarding personal safety of responders; and alarm company responsibility/involvement.

After discussion, it was decided to finalize the bulleted items after a main response was selected. Dan then called for a vote on the remaining two methods of response. The vote was 5 for Verified Response and 4 for Coordinated Response. Verified Response was selected as the final method of response. It was agreed that the bulleted items will be presented for discussion at the next meeting, as well as discussion about what the ordinance should include.

Next Meeting:

October 28, 2003, 6:00 p.m. in Room 325, City Hall

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Postier
Staff Assistant

MINUTES
BURGLAR ALARM TASK FORCE
September 30, 2003
6:00 p.m.
Council Chambers

Welcome

Dan Clem, Chair called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. Dan Clem outlined the expected time line for the remaining meetings and for bringing the Task Force's recommendations to the City Council.

Roll Call of Board Members

Task Force members present: Chair Dan Clem, Wes Bennett, Kasia Quillinan, Byron Hawkins, Vince Milligan, Bob Burton, Anna Peterson, John Baker, Keith Butler, Amanda Dalton, Marin Arreolla.

Alarm Industry Representatives: Jon Sargent

Staff Present: Police Chief Myers, Sargent Steve Bellshaw, Kimberly Barnett, Judy Postier.

Approval of Minutes from September 9 and September 16, 2003

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Minutes from September 9 and September 26 as presented. The motion passed unanimously with no discussion.

Kimberly Barnett Research Information Summary

Kim Barnett gave a presentation on research into licensing and verified alarms in other communities. Kim reviewed verified response in various communities, and provided information to refute claims that requiring verification of alarms before police response would increase crime. Kim informed the task force that Salem rejected the CARE proposal due to large amount of administrative costs. She then reviewed Salem Police Department procedures and provided an example from the police log regarding the average call load. Kim further provided information regarding the current status of false alarm fine payments and collections. Kim also addressed information regarding home insurance rates in relation to monitored home alarms.

Comments and discussion following Ms. Barnett's presentation included the following:

Dan Clem remarked that the basic question is - is there a homeowner's insurance discount for having a monitored alarm system? Two of the largest insurance companies, USAA and State Farm, do honor a discount for monitored alarm systems, regardless of the jurisdictional police department policy for responses. Wes Bennett commented that his State Farm agent said it would increase premiums if police made a policy to not respond. Bob Burton asked, if alarm companies are filing suit because it is making them tax collectors (San Francisco), what would it take to channel fines and license fees to Police instead of general fund. Dan Clem responded that if the fines go

people as best we can. Marin Arreolla asked if the causes for false alarms are the same for individuals and businesses? Dan replied that time of day is the major difference. Anna Peterson asked, do we really catch criminals? The criminals are not where the alarms are going off - we are chasing ghosts - and that is the core question. Kasia agrees and added that in none of the police reports she has read in the course of her business, has a crook been caught because an alarm went off. Dan asked the task force if there was agreement that the two statements are correct: we are not sending any signals to criminals with our recommendations, and alarms do not cause crooks to be caught. Kasia Quillinan, Anna Peterson, Marin Arreolla, John Baker, and Chuck Huggins were in agreement.

Amanda commented that we have the public to protect. She agreed that criminals will not step up their crime if we don't respond to alarms until after 6:00 p.m. but she disagreed that criminals would not be affected by headlines saying the Police Department does not respond to alarms. Bob Burton asked how can you convince me to have an alarm, when I have a number of guns, and my alarm will accomplish nothing. Chuck Huggins replied that alarms are a deterrent. Dan remarked that alarms act as a deterrent. There was general agreement alarms are a deterrent. Chief Myers commented that one option is when a call comes in to broadcast an alarm allowing an officer to respond when an officer is free to respond.

Anna Peterson stated it seems that a lot of rules, regulations, and procedures are dealing with equipment failure - will our process address that? If you have a dog barking, or trash, there is an ordinance related to them being a nuisance. Could the alarms be considered a nuisance. Marin asked if alarm companies are taking the time to train in a way that allows the user to properly use the equipment. Byron Hawkins commented that, almost universally, they give a video and instruction booklet, salesman gives instruction, installer gives instruction, and it is very basic. He further commented that these are not complex system, and false alarms are coming and going errors, or motion issues. Byron felt businesses are more oriented to protecting their assets; homeowners are worried about possessions; and homeowners are more concerned about intrusion, and think in terms of police, where businesses just want to stop burglary. John Baker commented that he is hesitant to go on these general guidelines - most businesses are family businesses, not the mall type, and he would feel just as violated if his business was broken into.

Dan asked the task force if there was agreement on whether Salem needs an ordinance. There was general agreement that Salem does need an ordinance. Dan then asked if the ordinance should address standards of performance? Bob Burton commented that alarm companies have to be held responsible. Wes Bennett replied that we should run this by the City Attorney to find out what we can put into an ordinance. Chuck Huggins spoke for a broad ordinance that would not tie the Police down - no standards for performance. Amanda asked if current policy addresses performance of the alarms. Sgt. Bellshaw replied that the Police Department doesn't have anyone to do that type of work, and code inspectors do not have the time to take that on. Chuck stated that if they are such a problem that they are a nuisance, then the Police can step in. Jon Sargent stated that there are some standards that should be in every ordinance - all sounders should shut off in 10 minutes; and panic buttons should have dual activation. Sgt. Bellshaw commented that audible alarms outside the house are currently addressed in the available ordinance with a cut off time.