

August 10, 2007

Larry K. Gaines, Ph.D.
Professor & Chair
Department of Criminal Justice
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Dear Dr. Gaines:

In December 2006, your department released a report titled “Police Response to Burglar Alarms Study: San Bernardino County.” Rather than being a thoroughly researched study of an important public policy issue, the report uses conjecture, unsubstantiated assertions and incomplete research to reach its conclusions. Although the report was revised in April 2007, appropriate improvements were not made. In our opinion, the study does not measure up to the minimal standards for university level research and should be withdrawn or revised again.

The report claims that its intent is to “identify all options and allow departments to make informed decisions.” However, the report does not even mention some options that are routinely being used across the country to significantly reduce dispatches to false alarms.

While it provides statistics in its promotion of verified response, it provides no statistics on various successful alternatives that address the same issue while preserving police response. This information is readily available from police departments, police associations as well as organizations that represent the alarm industry. In addition, the report fails to note that only a handful of police agencies in the U.S. (approximately 30 out of 18,000) have adopted verified response since it was first introduced in 1991. This statistic clearly contradicts the report’s conclusion that verified response is the optimal policy for alarm dispatch reduction.

Here are additional errors in the study:

CSU SB Report: “Verified response is the optimal policy since it results in reduced calls, officer safety, and great citizen satisfaction.”

Fact: While verified response reduces calls, there is no evidence it enhances safety. On the contrary, it often puts untrained alarm owners at risk. (*See Exhibit 1*) In addition, verified response simply does not satisfy citizens’ expectations. A recent survey of Salt Lake City citizens, conducted by a nationally recognized research firm, showed that they are opposed to verified response and want police to respond to alarms. (*See Exhibit 2*)

CSU SB Report: “Cities where verified response has been adopted have not witnessed increases in burglary or other crimes as a result of the policy change.”
Fact: Salt Lake City is one example of a city that saw an increase in crime following its implementation of verified response. (*See Exhibit 3*)

CSU SB Report: The report asserts that alarm response is very costly.
Fact: Fines and permit fees often pay the entire cost of police response. With verified response, however, this revenue is lost. The city of Dallas lost more than one million dollars (more than the cost of alarm response) after implementing the policy for businesses. The city’s new mayor won his election, in part, on his promise to end verified response.

CSU SB Report: “Alarm companies are adamantly opposed to verified police response since it generally results in reduced company profits.”
Fact: Opposition to verified response comes from voters who expect police to respond to alarms. (*See Exhibit 4*) Verified response has no material impact on alarm company profits since the cost of private response is paid by the customer.

CSU SB Report: “It may be that less costly precautions... may be just as effective in deterring burglaries as alarms.”
Fact: In the beginning of the same paragraph, the report acknowledges that homes with burglar alarms are nearly twice as likely to avoid burglary. Businesses with alarms are 3.5 times more likely to avoid burglary. (*See Exhibits 5 and 6*)

CSU SB Report: The report suggests that the primary purpose of alarms is to catch criminals and prevent burglaries.
Fact: Nearly all security systems have audible alarms designed to scare burglars away; however, they are NOT designed to catch burglars. Because police response time varies widely, criminals must limit their time on a premise as well as the amount they steal. This monetary valuable purpose should be credited. (*See Exhibit 6*)

CSU SB Report: Cities should still respond to all alarms, but not all alarms.
Fact: This statement fails to consider the fundamental provision of “equal protection” under our U.S. Constitution. Under this scenario, a poor business owner in a crime-ridden community would not receive police response, but a wealthy gun store owner would because he could afford a security guard. Both pay taxes.

CSU SB Report: The report says cities keep poor records of false alarms.
Fact: The report fails to mention the fact that there are companies who privately manage this matter. (*See Exhibit 7*)

In addition, the CSU SB report fails to mention one of the most exhaustive, non-partisan studies that rejected verified response. The study released in 2003 by the Los Angeles Burglar Alarm

Task Force was conducted by a cross-section of the community and clearly disapproves of the policy.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) has serious concerns about verified response as well. (*See Exhibit 8*) Even law enforcement representatives that support verified response are losing their faith in the policy. A recent survey shows support for verified response has dropped by more than 50 percent. (*See Exhibit 9*).

Instead, the country's law enforcement leaders have passed resolutions supporting alternative dispatch reduction solutions. (*See Exhibit 10*) They endorse a model ordinance that includes proven policies such as Enhanced Call Verification, CP-01 standards, fines for repeat abusers and registration of alarm systems. Here are a few examples of municipalities that have reduced their dispatch rates by using these methods:

- Olympia, Washington – 74 percent dispatch reduction
- Little Rock, Arkansas – 66 percent dispatch reduction
- Des Moines, Washington – 65 percent dispatch reduction
- Spokane, Washington – 60 percent dispatch reduction
- Seattle, Washington – 53 percent dispatch reduction

As a whole, the law enforcement industry strongly supports the response to alarms and the alarm industry. (*See Exhibit 11*) The Security Industry Alarm Coalition (SIAC) has been a respected resource for more than 1,000 police departments as they have worked to successfully reduce alarm dispatches. We know what works and what doesn't. Likewise, we stand ready to help your researchers with factual, verifiable information from reliable sources. As respected professionals, I trust they will review this information and make their report both balanced and accurate.

Sincerely,

Stan Martin
SIAC Executive Director
stan@siacinc.org



Dangling burglar encounter sparks response criticism

Tuesday, January 23, 2007

By REBECCA LOPEZ / WFAA-TV

DALLAS - A Dallas store owner has expressed qualms with verified response after he encountered a burglar literally still hanging out in his store while responding to his business' burglary alarm.

While the police department says verified response cuts down on the number of false alarms cops respond to, Chris Nguyen didn't seem to care about that when he stumbled upon a burglar in his store with no sign of the police.

When Nguyen raced inside his store after receiving a call that the store's alarm went off, he said he was surprised to find the burglar still hanging from the ceiling after falling through a grease trap.

"When I opened the door I see the guy stuck there [and] two legs moving," he said.

He and an employee, Tai Nguyen, forced the burglar to the ground and told the man not to move.

"If you move I will shoot you," he said he told the burglar as he went to the floor.

However, what really concerned Nguyen was news that a second man armed with a rifle was on the roof.

"[It was] very scary, very scary," Tai Nguyen said.

Critics of verified response say Nguyen's encounter is the perfect example of business owners putting themselves at risk trying to verify a burglary before police will respond.

"It's creating more danger, and of course it's a service businesses are paying for and expecting and not getting," said Michael Stein, a verified response opponent.

But the Dallas Police Department said while opponents worry about burglars getting away or business owners taking justice into their own hands, they believe the system gives the department more time to focus on confirmed crimes.

"We are not asking our citizens to go out and stop burglars and arrest people for us," said Lt. Vernon Hale, Dallas Police Department. "All we are asking for us in verified response is that the owner, the manager, the alarm company or security company go to location and verify that something is not right."

Dallas police said that 97 percent of business alarms that went off in Dallas during 2006 were false, and not responding to false alarms saved manpower for more critical and urgent calls.

Story: http://www.wfaa.com/sharedcontent/dws/wfaa/latestnews/stories/wfaa070123_mo_verifiedresponse.1285d509.html

Video: <http://www.wfaa.com/sharedcontent/VideoPlayer/videoPlayer.php?vidId=115815&catId=104>

*Public Opinion Survey of
Salt Lake City Registered Voters
Regarding Crime
And Police Response to Burglar Alarms*

MAY 2006

for

ALARM INDUSTRY RESEARCH &
EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

by

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SUMMARY AND OBSERVATIONS

Registered voters in Salt Lake City, surveyed in May, reacted with surprise and widespread disapproval to news of a six-year old city ordinance that police will respond to a burglar alarm only if someone on the scene can verify that a crime is being committed.

Only 20% of registered voters surveyed were aware that Salt Lake City has this ordinance. When told that this ordinance exists, 65% disapproved and only 28% approved. Those who strongly disapproved outnumber those who strongly approved by a 4-to-1 margin.

The survey by Bisconti Research included a total of 515 randomly selected registered voters in Salt Lake City who were interviewed by telephone May 4 to 20, 2006. The margin of error for a sample of 515 is plus or minus five percentage points.

Of those surveyed:

- 44% reported having a burglar alarm; in this report, findings for those with burglar alarms are shown under the heading “Total With Alarms.”
- 24% said that they have an alarm at home; findings for this subgroup are shown under the heading “Alarm at Home.”
- 15% said that they have an alarm at work; findings for this subgroup are shown under the heading “Alarm at Work.”
- (Some would not say if the alarm was at home or work)

The survey found no major differences between those with and without alarms. Disapproval of the ordinance was widespread across all survey groups and subgroups.

Highlights include:

- 80% of registered voters are concerned about crime.
- More than 1-in-4 registered voters (28%) has been a victim of a break-in or burglary in Salt Lake City. Most of these crimes were reported, but a significant number were not.
- Only 20% of registered voters are aware that Salt Lake City has an ordinance that police will respond to a burglar alarm only if someone on the scene can verify that a crime is being committed.
- By 65% to 28%, voters in this city disapprove of the ordinance; 70% of those with an opinion disapprove of the ordinance. Disapproval is high among all registered voters, whether alarm customers or not.

Exhibit 2

- Majorities in all demographic groups disapprove of the ordinance. Slightly more women than men disapprove. Business owners disapprove the most (77%).
- 30% of residents feel less well protected since the ordinance went into effect in 2000. Only 10% feel better protected. The rest either see no difference in protection or were unsure.
- Only 8% feel safer living in Salt Lake City now compared with five years ago; 33% feel less safe.
- The vast majority agree that a burglar would be less likely to break in if he knew police responded to alarm system signals—78% of registered voters agree versus only 18% who disagree. Majorities in all demographic groups believe that a private guard is not as effective as police responding to alarm systems. Only 34% consider private guards as effective.
- There is agreement among all demographic groups that a burglar would be less likely to break in if he knew police responded to alarm system signals. More women (80%) than men (74%) agree on this point. Business owners (84%) agree the most strongly.
- Few agreed with the statement that police services and crime prevention efforts have improved since the police stopped responding to alarm systems. This was true over all demographic groups. Residents who have lived in Salt Lake City for 7+ years were more likely to disagree with the statement than those who have lived there less than 7 years.
- Registered voters (70% overall and 85% of those who gave an opinion) believe that police should respond to alarm signals without waiting for a crime to be verified:
 - 48% said that the police should respond regardless of whether the cost could be covered by permits and fines paid by alarm system users,
 - 22% would require that police respond if the cost could be covered by permits and fines,
 - 12% believe that police should not be required to respond unless a crime is verified, and
 - 18% were not sure.
- The majority in all demographic groups would vote for a candidate who rejected the ordinance (60%) over one who would keep it (20%). Business owners (74%) and younger people (70%) were most likely to vote for a candidate who rejected the ordinance.
- 51% of registered voters believe that police response to burglar alarms does not affect property values; however, 38% of registered voters overall and 43% of those who have alarms in their homes believe that property values would increase if the ordinance were rescinded.

Exhibit 2

- Business owners would choose to locate in a city that provided immediate police response over one that did not by a 7-to-1 margin (73% versus 10%). Among business owners who gave an opinion, 88% would choose to locate their business in a location that provided immediate police response.
- Registered voters would choose to live and work in a city that provided immediate police response to burglar alarms versus a city with an ordinance like Salt Lake City's by 68% to 12%. Of those with an opinion, 85% would choose to live and work in a city that provided immediate police response.
- The majority disapprove of Salt Lake City government employees promoting the adoption of this type of ordinance in other cities—25% approved, 62% disapproved, and 14% were unsure.
- Given a scenario in which they are alone during a break-in and unable to get to a phone or panic button to verify that a crime is being committed, 25% of those with alarms feel that they could count on the police to respond promptly to protect them. Of those who have an alarm at work, 14% believe they could count on the police in this situation.

Conclusion

The survey reveals important potential impacts of the ordinance that requires police to respond to a burglar alarm only if someone on the scene can verify that a crime is being committed. The survey findings suggest that the issue is ripe with negative implications for public confidence, voting behavior, and the willingness of businesses and potential homeowners to locate in Salt Lake City.



FBI – Uniform Crime Reports Salt Lake City

	Population	Crime Index Total	Violent crime	Property crime	Robbery	Burglary	Larceny -Theft	
1997						2,911		
1998						2,831		
1999	177,010	18,268	1,257	17,011	485	2,244	12,922	
2000	179,455	16,831	1,301	15,530	576	2,169	11,828	
2001	184,723	16,438	1,166	15,272	481	2,209	11,401	*1st Year under VR
2002	188,504	19,059	1,233	17,826	478	2,512	13,337	
2003	184,022	16,745	1,294		503	2,359	12,464	
2004	182,768		1,328	16,343	465	2,353	12,108	

<http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm>



Some say proposal is cause for alarm

Dallas: Police say verified response saves time; residents fear crime

09:08 AM CDT on Thursday, October 13, 2005

By DAVE LEVINTHAL / The Dallas Morning News

If a burglar alarm rings but no police answer, does it really make a sound?

Such was the theme Wednesday at Dallas City Hall, as dozens of people, some shouting, crying or waxing philosophical, battled over a contentious police response proposal before the City Council during a marathon public hearing.

Known as "verified response," the policy proposal would require private alarm companies to verify the validity of an activated alarm before sworn officers respond. Dallas police say that the vast majority of sounding alarms are false, and that responding to them wastes officers' time and contributes little to overall public safety.

Opponents' primary argument: A verified response policy would render alarms all but useless, prompting burglars, who would no longer fear apprehension, to invade private property at will. The disabled and elderly, they say, would be particularly susceptible to crime.

"Burglars – they will have a field day in our city. The image of Dallas will be one even more dangerous than it already is," Brent Sonntag told the council.

"How will you convince residents that this is an improvement in their quality of life? You cannot," Charles O'Neal said.

Supporters of verified response, however, argued that the policy proposal would allow police to address more pressing crimes.

Police roundly back it. A letter signed by the presidents of six Dallas police organizations – the Dallas Police Association, Latino Police Officers Association, Texas Peace Officers Association, Asian Police Officers Association, Dallas Police Executive Lodge No. 89 and the Dallas Fraternal Order of Police No. 588 – states that verified response would "enable the men and woman of the Dallas Police Department to provide emergency services more promptly by alleviating the burden of responding to thousands of false burglar alarms each year."

Police Chief David Kunkle described verified response as "good public policy and terrible politics."

Exhibit 4

"Frankly, I don't know how to do a good job communicating the message ... that this will result in quicker response on average," Chief Kunkle told the council, noting that unverified burglary calls already are low-priority calls. "I don't know anything we can do to generate better results with minimal risk to the public."

Under verified response, private security officers would on average respond to alarms more quickly than Dallas police do today, the chief said. Under verified response, Dallas police would continue to respond to panic alarms, 911 calls and direct burglary reports as priority calls.

"Burglar alarms are not a public safety issue," said Larry Davis, chairman of the council-appointed Commission on Productivity and Innovation, which supports verified response. "The alarm industry is emotionally pumping up these people at the detriment of their customers just for their own pocketbooks. They are scared to death they won't be able to sell alarms."

Most of the more than 50 residents who addressed the council – rarely in recent years have so many people done so at once – opposed the verified response policy proposal.

At least 200 additional people, including alarm company representatives and police officers from Salt Lake City, gathered at City Hall for the public hearing, forcing building staff to open an overflow room above the main council chambers.

The atmosphere? Charged. The audience frequently ignored Mayor Laura Miller's requests not to applaud, and occasionally shouted down the few advocates of verified response who spoke before the council.

"Now, now, now, now, now ... don't get testy," Ms. Miller warned them after a loud round of boos. "All right, all right, all right ... quiet," she implored later after loud groans.

"I understand the arguments on both sides," the mayor said, adding that she remains neutral on the issue. "We must free officers up, but at what cost?"

The council voted to extend the public hearing for an additional hour, resuming Oct. 26. A vote on verified response is not yet scheduled.

<http://www.dallasnews.com/s/dws/dn/latestnews/stories/101305dnmetalarms.171a37b2.html>

POLICE RESPONSE TO BURGLAR ALARMS STUDY: SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

Submitted to:

San Bernardino County Police Chiefs and Sheriff's Association

December 14, 2006.
Revised April 2007.

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There is sparse research examining the impact of burglar alarms on the incidence of burglaries. Hakim and Buck found that residences with alarms had a 1.4 percent chance of burglary, and homes without alarms had a 2.3 chance of burglary. The effect for businesses was more profound. Businesses with alarms had a 4.2 percent chance of victimization, while non-alarm businesses had an 18.2 percent chance of being burgled. This research seems to indicate that the presence of burglar alarms have a preventive effect. However, it should be noted that most alarms are installed in residences and businesses in higher socio-economic areas, and the highest burglary victimization generally occurs in lower socio-economic areas. Thus, the findings may be artifacts resulting from the research design. Thus, it is not known from a research standpoint how effective alarms are in deterring crime. It may be that less costly precautions such as adequate lighting, a vehicle in the driveway, presence of a dog, and target hardening such as deadbolt locks may be just as effective in deterring burglaries as alarms.

Alarms have little impact on residential burglary.

Non-alarm businesses are 3.5 times as likely to be victimized compared with alarmed properties.

April, 1995

Burglar and fire alarms

Costs and Benefits to the Locality

By Simon Hakim, George F. Rengert and Yochanan Shachmurov

Abstract: The alarm industry has been estimated at 8-11 billion dollars in 1993. There are approximately 17 million alarms installed nationwide. The annual growth of installations has been 8 percent over the last five years. At the same time, the number of false activations per system is 1.1 to 1.4 per year, with 20 to 30 percent of police manpower devoted to false activations. 94-98 percent of all activations are false. Indeed, false activations pose a severe problem for local police departments which respond with stiff fines for false activations and reduced response to alarm activations in general which are not high risk such as jewelry stores, banks or government facilities. This paper identifies the social benefits and costs which result from burglar and fire alarms in a given community. Included benefits are reduced burglary, assault, and rape incidents as well as fewer incidents of fire which are detected early and controlled. Costs include police response to alarms, costs of installation and monthly monitoring fees. The results demonstrate that, indeed, burglar and fire alarms provide a net social benefit to the locality. The paper suggests that charges for false alarms should be allocated directly to the police which service them. Such users' fee method will improve resource allocation, and prevent a situation where alarms become useless.

I

Introduction

Fire and crime which occur in homes are costly and demoralizing events that affect every residential community. Victims suffer financial loss, days lost from work, and a dramatic decrease in the quality of life when their privacy is invaded and their homes are no longer regarded as safe havens. All citizens are affected by higher insurance premiums and higher taxes to pay for stepped-up police and fire protection. Neighbors of fire and crime victims also experience a decrease in their quality of life associated with the alienation and despair that accompanies the fear of crime and the apprehension of fire in a community (Krohm, 1973; Sesnowitz, 1972, 1973; Brantingham and Brantingham, 1975; and Jarrell and Howsen, 1990). Sometimes crime and fire are directly associated as in the case of arson. In other cases, invasive crime can take many forms independent of arson. In any event, criminals cause everyone to pay for their criminal acts, either directly or indirectly.

Consider the case of residential burglary. Alarms may change burglaries into attempted burglaries which although still a crime, do not make the victims suffer as great a loss since the actual crime of burglary is prevented. The National Crime Prevention Institute (1986) operationally defines crime prevention as the practice of crime risk management. "Crime risk management involves the development of systematic approaches to crime risk reduction that are cost effective and that promote both the security and the socioeconomic well-being of the potential victim" (2). Note that this definition includes both social and economic costs of crime.

In the case of residential alarms, the key phrase in this operational definition is "cost effective." It can be argued that residential alarms would not be cost effective if the owners were required to pay the true costs of servicing these alarms by the police and fire departments, including the false activations. Much of the costs of servicing residential alarms is paid for by the general public who support the police and fire departments from their general tax base. Furthermore, not all the residents of a community can afford or choose to install residential alarms. If the costs paid by those residents who do not own alarms were to accrue to the alarm owners, the question of whether residential alarms are cost effective would be answered directly. But these costs are borne by the entire community, owners and non-owners of alarms. Non-alarm owning residents experience few of the benefits, although they share in the costs of servicing the alarms. This article assesses whether or not the community as a whole benefits from the existence of the alarms.

In the case of residential burglary, there is the added question of whether alarms increase or decrease the burglary rate in other non-alarmed houses. This is referred to as the spatial displacement of crime (Meithe, 1991). There are, at least two possibilities: First, the burglar skips the protected house and goes to the unprotected, as a result, total burglary rate remains the same or diminishes somewhat perhaps because of the time factor. Thus, the victims have merely changed. The second possibility is that burglars cannot tell which houses are protected (unprotected houses may have fake alarm notices, for example) but do know, by experience, what fraction of houses in the neighborhood are protected. This experience is referred to as "learning by doing" (Deutsch, Hakim and Spiegel, 1990). If burglars have a feel for what percentage of houses in a community have alarms, then the alarms serve two functions. One is to stop a burglary in progress (only for alarm-protected houses in communities in which burglars feel the proportion of alarmed houses is low enough to exploit). The second is to deter attempts (in communities in which burglars feel the proportion of alarmed properties is too high to exploit), and this works equally well for protected and unprotected houses.

The act of installing an alarm is linked to a field in criminal justice called "designing out crime," or "problem solving policing" (Clarke, 1983, 1992; Poyner, 1983, 1993; Sesnowitz, 1988; Brantingham and Brantingham, 1990; and Felson, 1993). This approach seeks to prevent crime from occurring in the first place, rather than waiting for it to happen, and then trying to arrest somebody. Thus those who wish to design out crime strongly believe that the criminal justice system is a backup rather than the centerpiece of crime prevention. In addition, the adherents have collected information indicating that many types of situational and micro-environmental crime prevention, such as burglar alarms, do not serve merely to displace crime to new settings, but rather reduce overall crime levels, (Miethe, 1991; Poyner, 1993). These authors argue that the overall costs of crime are reduced by burglar alarms.

A correlation exists between having a burglar or fire alarm and the other characteristics of the house. For example, evidence suggests that alarms are perceived as luxury goods. The more expensive homes are, the higher the probability that they are protected by alarms. Since more expensive homes include more valuable contents, they are more likely to be protected by alarms. This suggests that benefits from alarms may be larger than estimated since the alarms are not merely deterring random burglaries and detecting random fires but are of particular value to the expensive homes' owners. This applies to both houses with valuable property and houses with vulnerable inhabitants, (Nasar, 1981; Rengert, 1988; and Sesnowitz and Hexter, 1982). In the analysis that follows, a conservative estimate is used by assuming that burglar and fire alarms are installed in the average, rather than the more affluent homes in the same township.

A point of special concern is the rate of false activations. Residents without alarms would not resent valid activations since these might remove a burglar from the community or prevent a fire from spreading. However, the traditional criminal justice literature assumes that no one benefits from a false activation, and most residential alarm activations are false alarms (Hakim and Buck, 1992). Not only are non-alarm

homeowners affected by these false alarm activations, the local police, fire and township officials also are concerned. Police soon lose a sense of urgency and precaution when responding because of false alarms. This is dangerous to the officers who might encounter an actual criminal while they are unprepared. In many localities, the responding officer approaches the property with citation book, rather than being prepared to encounter a burglar.

False alarms incur cost, but no benefit save the benefit to the home owner of not having to pay for a more reliable system or take the trouble to use it more carefully. So the home owner should be charged for the false alarms. It is actually a private service he obtained rather than a public good which everyone enjoys. However, as noted above, alarms also remove burglars from the community and from society at large, (Poyner, 1993). Fires are detected early which keeps them from spreading to adjoining properties. Thus, the incentive not to have an alarm system - for fear of having to pay for its occasional false activation - is an inefficient one. People will have fewer alarms than would be desirable, because they do not internalize the positive externalities to the society.

II

Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Locality

This study focuses on Tredyffrin Township in Chester County, Pennsylvania. Tredyffrin Township is a distant suburb of Philadelphia located nearly twenty miles west of the city. It is predominately white with a relatively young median age of 32.8 years (three to five years younger than the older suburbs closer to Philadelphia). The median home value and average sale price are over thirty thousand dollars greater than neighboring suburban townships closer to Philadelphia. It has relatively few retail establishments but does contain several large office buildings and manufacturing firms. It still contains vacant land and farms interspersed with the housing developments. It has 47 police officers, more per capita, but fewer per square mile, than neighboring suburbs closer to Philadelphia.

The data collected were based on individual homes. They included police files on the attributes of burglaries (including the value of property stolen) and alarm ownership. Also, a questionnaire was mailed to residents of the community to obtain information on both burglarized and non-burglarized homes in the township. The questionnaires were mailed with a letter signed by the police chief to all residential units which had reported to the police in the two and a half years prior to the study that they had been burglarized. It also was sent to a random sample of alarm owners, and, based on police records to a matched control group of adjacent homes which were neither burglarized nor own alarms. The returned questionnaires determined that police records were accurate in identifying alarmed and unalarmed residential units. Adjacent residential units were used to control for variation in the value of the units and environmental conditions surrounding them. Forty two percent of the questionnaires which were mailed out were completed and returned.

Tredyffrin Township is a prototype east coast affluent suburban community. It is plausible to assume that similar results will be obtained for other Northeast U.S. suburban localities. The analysis which follows is conducted conservatively; in case of uncertainty, costs are over-estimated and benefits are under-estimated.

III

False Alarm Activations

Most of the alarm activations responded by the Tredyffrin Police Department were false caused either by residents errors, natural factors such as wind and thunderstorms, or by malfunctioning systems. False activations generate friction between alarm owners, police departments, and local township officials. The high rate of false activations calculated from the Hakim and Buck Study (1991, Table 5.1, 126) is estimated at 1.2 per system a year, with an annual growth of eight percent a year. Clearly false activations of burglar alarms is a serious problem for Tredyffrin Township, as it is for all big American cities and suburban localities.

Based on national data, Shanahan (1992) estimates that between ten and thirty percent of calls to the police are due to false alarms. Nationwide ownership of alarms is estimated at seventeen million systems, or eleven percent of the structural units. This figure indicates the severity of the false alarm problem. Approximately one fourth of the Tredyffrin police department's resources are consumed by false alarm responses. Frequent response to false activations has produced resentment among police officers against alarm owners due to the latter's careless use of the systems. There is also police resentment against alarm companies for improper installation of systems and inadequate training of their owners. The police feel that it is necessary to impose fines to make alarm users and alarm companies reduce false activations. The fines also are used to encourage manufacturers and installers to improve managerial and hardware components of alarms to reduce false activations.

IV

Costs and Benefits to the Locality

This article tests whether alarms provide net benefits to the community, and to police departments given the existing levels of false activations. Even if alarms do produce net benefits to localities, this would not preclude current efforts to control and reduce false activations. However, the analysis is potentially beneficial to alarm associations and installers who must react to local ordinances which impose restraints on residents who own alarms. Identifying the benefits and costs to local communities will provide a comprehensive understanding of the net effects of alarm systems. It will redirect the attention of local policy makers from the mere cost considerations of false activations to a more balanced perspective which considers the benefits and the costs segments of the community and to its entirety.

V

Measurements of Cost

The first cost to be considered is installation outlays. The average cost of a system in Tredyffrin Township has been calculated (Hakim and Buck, 1991,78) to be \$2244. There were 1818 alarm owners in the township. The life span of a system is estimated to be fifteen years and the capital recovery rate at six percent (see Appendix). Thus, the annual cost to all alarm owners in Tredyffrin Township is:

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{cost of one unit} \times \text{number of alarm owners} \times \text{capital recovery rate} \\ &= \$2,244 \times 1,818 \times 0.10296 = \$420,035 [1] \end{aligned}$$

Next, the monthly service charges are considered. The average service charge has been determined to be \$26 per month. Eighty percent of all alarm owners in the Township are connected to a central station. Thus, the annual cost of the service charges is:

monthly charge x months x percent of owners paying the charge

$$\text{x number of alarm owners} = \$26 \times 12 \times 0.8 \times 1,818 = \$453,773 \text{ [2]}$$

Now, we come to the costs accrued to the police department through response to false activations. The police budget for 1990 was \$2,849,626. Operating costs include wages of officers, maintenance of facilities and cruisers, fees to the county dispatching service, replacement of equipment, cost of support personnel, heat and electricity. The number of officers in the department totaled 47. We assume that seven officers and the eight civilians are part of the overhead costs, leaving 40 officers available for direct crime prevention. In addition, we assume that the officers actually work at their basic job only 230 working days, or 1,840 annually. This calculation allows for days off, vacation and sick time, holidays, and in-service training. These figures are the experience of the Tredyffrin Township police department. Thus, the cost per hour per officer is:

yearly police budget of \$2,849,626 divided by (40 officers

$$\text{x 230 days x 8 hours} = \$38.71. \text{ [3]}$$

Since the total operating budget is used to calculate the cost per person per hour, this figure represents the fully loaded cost of one hour of an officer's time. In other words, there are no other costs that were not considered. Two officers respond to each activation with two cars, and the average response time is 9/10 hours. This is the average time needed to clear an alarm activation from initial call, to response, and to subsequent follow-up. Since an ordinance was enacted to fine owners for false activations, the number of activations were significantly down from previous years. The police in Tredyffrin Township have stated that the officers on regular patrol are diverted from public service and routine patrol to respond to alarm activations. In other words, there is an opportunity cost of responding to alarm activations since the officers who answer these calls are not available to conduct other security and service chores. A conservative estimate of this opportunity cost is the average cost of the two officers' time since it is assumed that the actual cost would have diminished at their average cost. Clearly, the real cost of responding to alarm activations to the community is lower than the average cost we used. Therefore, the cost imposed on the police department for each activation is calculated as:

cost per hour * number of officers * average response time

$$= \$38.71 \times 2 \times 9/10 = \$69.68. \text{ [4]}$$

There were 1996 activations in Tredyffrin Township in 1990 which yields total cost of response for both manpower and automobiles to be \$139,081. This figure includes response to both burglar and fire alarms. That figure indicates that the alternative benefits accruing to the community from other denied patrol activities when the officers respond to alarms are equal to the real cost.

The total cost to Tredyffrin Township of residential alarms is the sum of installation costs, monthly service costs, and the costs of responding to false activations. These figures total to \$1,012,889 per year. This is a significant cost to the alarm owners and to other members of the community. The issue now turns to whether or not the benefits of alarms outweigh these significant costs.

V

Measures of Benefits

The first obvious benefit to alarm owners is avoided burglaries. A non-monetary cost, which does not occur when residential break-ins are avoided, is personal injury and emotional discomfort to the victimized residents. At the national scale, in thirteen percent of all break-ins, burglars encountered someone in the home. In almost one third of these cases, the confrontation ended in assault, of which ten percent were rape (Dingle, 1991, 96-97; Bureau of Justice statistics, 1985; Rand, 1991).

Cohen (1988, A and B) has provided data on the cost of crime to victims based upon national statistics and jury awards in personal injury accident cases. The probability that a property protected by an alarm becomes a victim of burglary is the ratio of the number of properties which are burgled and alarmed, to the number of alarmed properties in the community, and is calculated to be 0.0104. The probability that a property that is unprotected by an alarm becomes a victim of burglary is the ratio of the number of burgled properties which do not have an alarm, to the total number of properties which do not have an alarm in the community, and is calculated to be 0.0306. Using these figures, we calculated the avoided violent crime as: the difference in probability of residential break-ins without, and with an alarm, multiplied by the number of homes with alarms. Then, this figure was multiplied by the average cost of crime as estimated by Cohen (1988: Table 1).

The Cost of Assaults is then the average cost of an assault x (probability of burglary without an alarm - probability of burglary with an alarm) x number of alarm owners x proportion of homes that were occupied x proportion of homes that were occupied x proportion of occupied homes that ended in assault. This yields,

$$\$12,028 \times (.0306 - .0104) \times 1,818 \times .13 \times 333 = \$19,122 [5]$$

The Cost of Assaults that Includes Rape is the average cost of rape x (probability of burglary without an alarm - probability of burglary with an alarm) x number of alarm owners x proportion of houses occupied x proportion of occupied homes that ended in assault x proportion of assaults that ended in rape. This is calculated as

$$\$51,058 \times (.0306 - .0104) \times 1,818 \times .13 \times .333 \times .1 = \$8,117 [6]$$

The direct monetary losses of burglary to a victimized household, which include the costs of repairs, lost wages from time off work, excluding the value of the goods stolen, were estimated by Cohen (1988) at \$939.

The nonmonetary costs of burglary include the pain and suffering which is estimated by Cohen (1988) at \$317 and risk of death which is estimated at \$116. The average total nonmonetary costs of burglary are \$433.

The monetary costs of burglary of \$939 plus the nonmonetary costs of burglary of \$433 yields an average total cost of burglary of \$1,372 (Cohen, 1988)

The Total Cost of Burglary to the Community Excluding Stolen Property is determined as the average total costs of burglary excluding stolen property x (probability of burglary without an alarm - probability of burglary with an alarm) x number of alarm owners. Thus,

$$\$1,372 \times (.0306 - .0104) \times 1,818 = \$50,385 [7]$$

To summarize, the total avoided costs, excluding stolen property in the township due to existing alarms total \$50,385. The avoided cost of the similar three categories for assaults is \$19,122, and of avoided rapes is \$8,117. Thus, without considering the value of the stolen property, alarmed homes in Tredyffrin Township avoided violent crime, nonmonetary and monetary costs estimated to have a total benefit of \$77,624.

Next, the direct costs of property stolen that are avoided by alarm owners are considered in Table 1. The first column assumes that there are no alarms in the community. Based on the survey, the burglary rate to all housing units without alarms yields an expected 319 burglaries which would have resulted in the Township in 1990 if no alarms existed. On average, unalarmed residences in Tredyffrin Township lose \$1,674. per incident, giving a total loss of \$534,006. If there are alarms in the community, 1,818 homes suffer a successful attack rate of 0.0104, yielding an expected number of burgled, alarmed properties of 19. Now, adding the burglaries expected to occur in the remainder of the population yields 236 incidents. Now, by applying the average loss to each of these to obtain the expected losses of \$24,106 in alarmed properties, and \$440,888 in non-alarmed residences are determined. The difference between these two states of the world, alarms versus no alarms follows from

$$(2) + (3) - (1) = 24,106 + 440,888 - 534,006 [8]$$

This yields a reduction in losses of \$69,012 because burglar alarms exist in Tredyffrin Township.

But more must be said. Since not all burglary attempts in Tredyffrin Township were successful the case of incomplete burglaries must be considered. About two percent of the alarmed properties were attacked unsuccessfully. The burglar is presumed to have been scared off by the alarm's activation. This means that 36 (.02 x 1,818) properties suffered no loss. Each would have lost \$1,674 had they not had an alarm. This results in an additional total loss avoided of \$60,264.

A further well recognized cost of successful burglaries is demoralization costs. These are emotional costs associated with the trauma of the invasion of privacy, vulnerability feeling, and loss of items of sentimental value. These losses have no market monetary value and are not recoverable via insurance. About ninety percent of burglarized homes in Tredyffrin Township reacted to burglary by installing alarms. Interestingly, the survey shows that households which were burglarized did not turn to other security precautions, (such as putting on neighborhood guards, installing steel shutters, better locks, walls with broken glass, dogs), other than alarm systems.

Table 1

Table 2

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Appendix

Calculating the Capital Recovery Rate for 6 Percent for 15 Years

Consider an investment project where all of the project costs occur in the current year, the net present value of the project equals $\sum_{i=1}^n \frac{X_{sub.t}}{(1+r)^i} - C$, where $X_{sub.t}$ is indexed by i from one to the last period of the project, say, n , and where,

$X_{sub.t}$ denotes the cash flow in year t ,

C denotes the investment outlay,

and r equals the interest rate.

If a project's net present value is greater than zero, it should be accepted, if not it should be rejected (Ross, Westerfield and Jaffe (1993), pages 51-243, especially pages 96-99; Kohler (1992), pages 405-428, especially pages 413-414 and 421; Varian (1993), pages 188-198). In our case, let's consider an outlay today of one dollar and $X_{sub.t} = X$ where X is a constant for all the n periods set to fifteen years. Then, applying the formula we have:

$$1 = X/1.06 + X/[(1.06).sup.2] + \dots + x/[(1.06).sup.15]. \quad [1]$$

For simplicity, define q as equal to:

$$q = 1/1.06. \quad [2]$$

Using equation [2], equation [1] becomes:

$$1 = Xq + X[q.sup.2] + \dots + X[q.sup.15].$$

$$= x(q + [q.sup.2] + \dots + [q.sup.15]) \quad [3]$$

Now, multiply both sides of equation [3] by q to yield:

$$q = X[q.\text{sup.}2] + X[q.\text{sup.}3] + \dots + X[q.\text{sup.}16].$$

$$= x([q.\text{sup.}2] + [q.\text{sup.}3] + \dots + [q.\text{sup.}16]) \quad [4]$$

Next, subtract equation [4] from equation [3] to give:

$$1 - q = x(q - [q.\text{sup.}16]). \quad [5]$$

Finally, we can extract the value of X , to yield:

$$X = (1 - q)/(q - [q.\text{sup.}16]). \quad [6]$$

Using the value for q in our case:

$$q = 1/(1 + r) = 1/1.06 = 0.94339, \quad [7]$$

equation [6] is equal to:

$$X = (1 - 0.94339)/(0.94339 - 0.3936) = 0.10296. \quad [8]$$

This capital recovery rate is used throughout the paper.

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(Example of a private business that manages false alarms for municipalities.)



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IACP/PSLC Position Paper – Verified Response

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

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

Other successful strategies include:

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

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

Exhibit 8

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

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

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

2004 Police Alarm Industry Survey

17% Support Verified Response

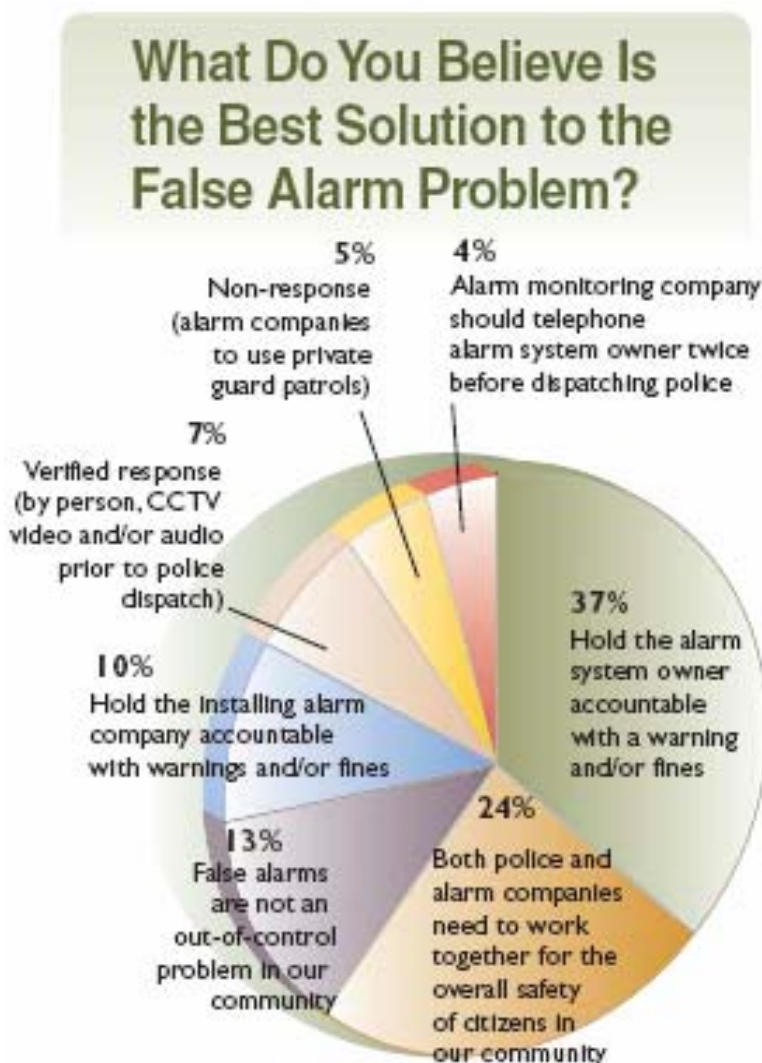
Survey sent electronically to 10,558 *Police Magazine* subscribers, with 1,263 usable responses generated for a 10-percent return rate and a 3.6-percent margin of error.

2006 Police Alarm Industry Survey

7% Support Verified Response

Survey sent electronically to 2,349 *Police Magazine* subscribers, with 334 usable responses generated for a 14.2-percent return rate and a 4-percent margin of error.

The data was also based on a proportionally balanced sampling of the main three police sectors — administrators, command/ middle management and line personnel.



Surveys conducted by *Police Magazine* and *Security Sales & Integration Magazine*.
www.policemag.com and www.securitysales.com

NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION RESOLUTION

MEASURES TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSES TO FALSE ALARM

Whereas

One of the critical concerns of law enforcement private security administration should be to address the problem of false alarms in their jurisdictions; and

Whereas

About 90 percent of all alarm calls made to police are false or unfounded, and in many jurisdictions those calls constitute 10 to 25 percent of all law enforcement calls for services; and

Whereas

The number of false alarms is growing along with the number of alarm systems in use, thereby taking law enforcement away from real emergencies and making each alarm system less reliable, credible and valuable; and

Whereas

Professionally installed and monitored alarm systems are useful instruments to deter crime and provide peace of mind for residential and business users of those systems; and

Whereas

This is a national problem (with both national and local solutions) that warrants the interest and concern of N.S.A;

Resolved

That the National Sheriffs' Association will continue through the efforts of the Private Security Committee and the nations numerous Alarm Associations to study the false alarm problem; and

Resolved

That the National Sheriffs' Association recommends that false alarms remain an issue for the Private Security Committee and that the Private Security Committee work with the state Sheriffs' Associations and the alarm industry to stimulate state and local level initiatives to reduce the problem; and

Further Resolved

That the National Sheriffs' Association urges our Sheriff's Office/Sheriff's Department to attempt to reduce their alarm response workload by considering various options, some of which could include the following:

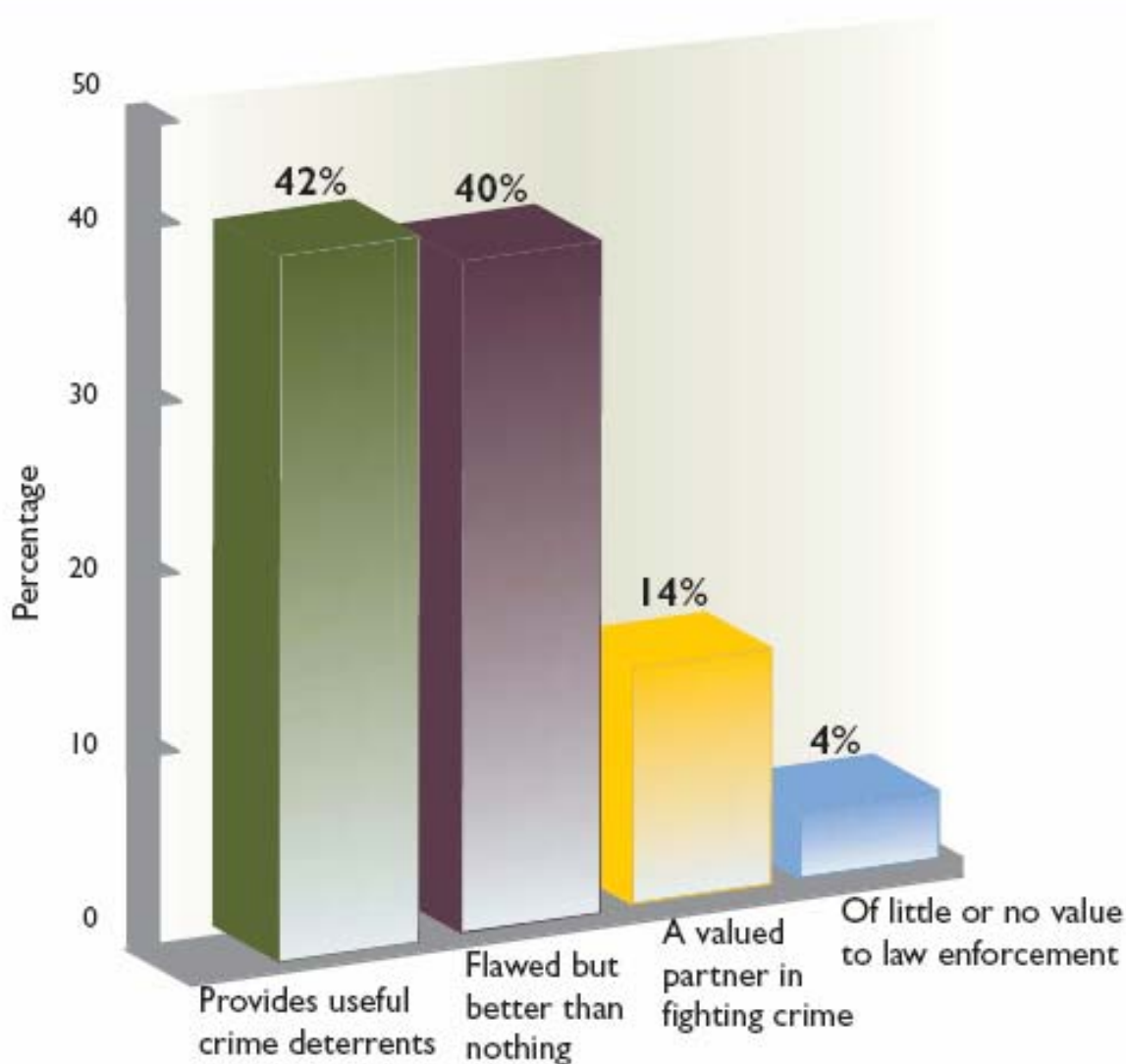
- Encouraging or requiring alarm central stations' response to attempt to verify alarms by telephone or by other electronic means before calling the law enforcement
- Moving alarm industry towards self-regulation by suspending services to chronic abusers of alarm systems
- Supporting alarm systems user education
- Utilizing supplementary or alternative response (leaving initial alarm response to private, contract responders or to municipal employees other than commissioned officers/deputies
- Encouraging the passage of alarm ordinances that provide for, among other things, user permits and fines for excessive numbers of false alarms
- Supporting security industry technology research and equipment standards
- Supporting cooperative efforts to reduce the administrative burden to local government through efficient permitting, licensing and centralized managing of the false alarm data and fee collection process
- Accepting dispatch cancellations
- Supporting dispatch cancellations
- Supporting licensing of alarm companies
- Supporting consumer ratings of alarm companies and systems based on dependability

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Sheriffs' Association urges all State Sheriff's Association/Sheriff's Departments/Office of Sheriff to participate in this program to reduce the number of false alarms on a nationwide basis.

Adopted at a general membership meeting on the 14th day of June, 1995 in San Antonio, Texas

96 PERCENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL SUPPORT THE ALARM INDUSTRY

What Is Your General Perception of the Electronic Security/Burglar Alarm Industry?



Survey sent electronically to 10,558 *Police* subscribers, with 1,263 usable responses generated for a 10-percent return rate and a 3.6-percent margin of error.

Source: 2006 Police Alarm Industry Survey conducted by *Police Magazine*, *Security Sales & Integration Magazine*. (www.policemag.com and www.securitysales.com)