ALARM USER AWARENESS CLASS

Presentation:

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Today we will:

- Explain to you what an alarm system is and how they work - not to make you an expert, but just a quick “alarms 101” overview.
- Answer the question - Do alarm systems really work?

What We Will Cover

- What is an alarm system?
- How alarm systems really work?
- What is a False Alarm?
- Causes & impacts of false alarms.
- How to reduce & eliminate false alarms.
- And more….

Define and discuss the causes of false alarms and false dispatches.
Discuss false alarm reduction, statistics, the impact of false alarms and most importantly the industry’s effort to reduce and eliminate false alarms and false dispatches.

Open Door, Motion or Glass Break Causes Alarm
System Sends Message Message Received At Central Station

Control Panel

- The “brain” of the system
- Monitors the various sensors connected to it
- Activates the siren; sends signal over the phone line.

A master control unit - the brains of an alarm - system interprets signals from the sensors based on the nature of the emergency. It can notify all occupants of the home or business by noise or beeping.
Keypad

- The user interface with the system
- Allows the user to operate the system by pushing keys

Glassbreak Detector

- The “hearing aid” of the system
- Detects sound of breaking glass

Motion Detectors

- The inside “eyes” of the system
- Detects motion on interior of premises

Contacts

- The perimeter “ears” of the system
- Located on doors & windows to detect opening

Siren/Speaker

- The “voice” of the system
- Sounds to frighten intruder & warn occupants
Alarm User Awareness Class

Slide 10

**Alarm System- Disarmed**

- System is Disarmed - Off
- Siren is Silent

Slide 11

**Alarm System- Armed**

- System is Armed - On
- Siren Is Silent

Slide 12

**Alarm System- In Alarm**

- System is Armed - On
- Siren Sounds
- Operator is Notified

Slide 13

**Monitoring Center Notification**

A monitored security system sends a signal by telephone line to the alarm dealers central station. Automation within the central station interprets the signal and directs the central station operator to the proper course of action.

**Responding Authority Notification**

This may include notification to the police, fire, medical or just owner notification for non-emergency events.

Slide 14

**Alarms: Your First Line of Defense**

Used properly, alarm systems are one of the most effective ways to deter burglaries and break-ins.

There's just one problem...
What’s That Sound I Hear Next Door?
• Could it be a false alarm?
• False Alarm vs. False Dispatch
  – False Alarm: Alarm system detects alarm status erroneously through user error, equipment, etc.
  – False Dispatch: Notification of an alarm to the law enforcement agency and responding authority finds no evidence of a criminal offense or attempted criminal offense.

What’s that sound next door? It’s that dang alarm system going off at the neighbor’s home or business.
Could it be a false alarm?
What is a false alarm vs. a false dispatch.
There is a very definitive difference.

False Alarms: The Problem
• The City has over ___ residential and commercial alarm systems
• The number of new alarm systems in is growing at the rate of ___ % per year

False Alarms: The Problem
• The current average of false alarm dispatches per alarm user per year is ___
• Our goal is to reduce the number of false alarm dispatches per alarm user per year to ___

False Alarms: The Problem
• ___ % of all calls for dispatch of law enforcement were due to false alarms
• The Law Enforcement Agency responded to ___ false alarms last year at a cost of $___ per response
• The Municipality spent over $__ responding to false alarms last year

False Alarms: The Problem
• Alarm systems provide an effective deterrent to crime & serve as the first line of defense against crime.
• BUT FALSE ALARMS:
  – waste law enforcement resources & taxpayer money
  – may cause law enforcement officers to be complacent in responding to alarms
  – may eventually result in limited or no law enforcement response to alarms
What Causes False Alarms?

In the past:
- Equipment Quality
- Installation Quality
- Misapplication of Equipment
- Weather
- User Inexperience

Today:
- User Error
- Misapplication of Equipment
- Installation Quality

What causes false alarms?

Today you probably never hear that loud siren next door like in the past.

Times have changed and improvements in the alarm industry have been phenomenal.

A while back when you heard the neighbor’s alarm system go off it probably was caused by a multitude of things.

And what are the primary causes of false alarms and dispatches today?

Several years ago most were equipment caused, today most are user error, misapplication of equipment and sometimes, depending on the dealer, poor installation quality.

Equipment failure with new systems, is a very small percent of false alarms.

Law Enforcement + Industry Involvement = Fewer False Dispatches

- Government Regulation
  - Ordinances
  - Permitting
  - Eliminating response to top offenders

- Industry Self Regulation
  - Equipment Standards & Improved Application
  - Installer Training
  - User Training
  - Improved Monitoring Center Procedures

How will the industry help eliminate false alarms in the future?

The alarm industry has developed and updates regularly:
- Equipment standards and application guides
- Installer training and servicing.
- More complete, recurring and simplified user training.
- Improved monitoring center procedures like alarm verification before dispatch and operator training programs.

Industry self regulation is just as important as our cooperative national programs and state and local government regulations.

Which False Dispatch Problems Do We Fix First?

Alarm Users play a critical role in preventing both false alarms & false dispatches.
### Slide 23

#### What can YOU do to Reduce False Dispatches
- Understand how your system works.
- Lock & secure all doors & windows.
- Know cancellation code.
- Respond to activated alarm to meet officers.

Make sure a responsible party is available to meet law enforcement officers when the alarm has been activated.

### Slide 24

#### What can YOU do to Reduce False Dispatches

**Call your alarm company:**
- BEFORE you start any remodeling.
- When you add or change a new authorized alarm user or emergency contact.
- When you change your phone number or phone service.
- When you add a pet to your home.
- When you are moving
- When you have an unexplained false alarm

Keep your responsible party list that you provide to your monitoring service up to date.

**Call the central station** and inform them of any remodeling, repair, electrical, telephone line work that is going to be done at the premises.

Advise your alarm company of any telephone number change at home or work. Telephone numbers for your responsible parties should be checked for any changes.

If you change anything at the premises, please **call your alarm company**.

Make sure everyone is out of the building or residence before arming the system.

### Slide 25

#### What can YOU do to Reduce False Dispatches

**Train ALL alarm users**
- Everyone who has a key needs to know how to use your system
- Includes - housekeepers, guests, neighbors, relatives, etc. Anyone who may stay at your home while you are not there.

Make sure everyone who has access (this also means keys) to the premises knows how to operate (turn the alarm on and off) the alarm system.

Make sure they know how to clear a false alarm with the monitoring company. This includes baby-sitters, maids, Realtors, relatives, teachers, janitors, etc.

Be sure that telephone repairmen, electricians, carpenters and other repairmen or servicemen are aware and careful of the alarm system.

Every person who uses the system should know their password or identification code for verification with the central station.
### Slide 26
**What can YOU do to Reduce False Dispatches**

**Re-Entering**
- If you re-enter your premises because you've forgotten something, turn off the alarm & re-set it when you leave again.

### Slide 27
**What can YOU do to Reduce False Dispatches**

**Canceling Alarms**
- If you accidentally set off an alarm make sure all phones are on the hook and wait for your alarm company to call you back, OR
- Follow your alarm company's instructions for canceling an alarm signal.

### Slide 28
**What can YOU do to Reduce False Dispatches**

**Bypassing Zones**
- Know how to “bypass” (shut off) the motion detector when you are at home
- Know how to shut off a malfunctioning component (“zone”) until repair is completed.

### Slide 29
**What can YOU do to Reduce False Dispatches**

**Inspect The Alarm System**
- Follow your alarm company’s instructions on testing the system regularly - don’t test it by intentionally setting it off.
- Have your alarm company replace batteries as needed; wireless systems generally require this more often.
- Get a yearly systems inspection.

Is the alarm panel transformer plugged into a 24-hour outlet?
The alarm system must have AC power.

**NEVER** unplug the transformer, you may forget to plug it back in.

If your power must be off for more than 10 hours, please call your alarm company.

What shape is the battery in? The battery’s life depends on how often power outages occur and how many accessories the system is driving (i.e., keypads, motion detectors, smoke detectors, etc.)

Most panels will send a low battery signal to the central station when the battery’s voltage lowers to a certain level.

Low batteries are the most common equipment reason for false alarm activation's.
What can YOU do to Reduce False Dispatches

**Holdup Buttons**
- Seriously consider whether you truly need this option
- Properly train your employees
- Make sure you do not have “single action” holdup buttons

What can YOU do to Reduce False Dispatches

**Duress Codes**
- A duress code appears to turn off the system but sends a special emergency message to your monitoring center, for example, if you were forced to turn off the system against your will

What can YOU do to Reduce False Dispatches

**Keypad Entry Errors**
- Know how to “clear” a wrong code if you make a mistake on the keypad
- Some keypads only require that you eventually get the right numbers in sequence
### What can YOU do to Reduce False Dispatches

#### Door & Window Alarms
- Doors & windows must be tight fitting & locked
- Door & window contacts must be free of paint & varnish
- Make sure there is no door or window warping
- Check weathering of security screens

Be sure the door or window is completely closed and locked. If an unlocked door is opened by a person, wind, dog, etc., the alarm is activated and law enforcement respond, it is considered a false alarm.

**What to watch for in doors:**
- Unsecured magnets
- Warping of the top of the door
- A metal or metal sheathed door should have a larger or stronger magnet

#### Motion Detector Alarms
- Be aware of what can cause motion detector alarms -
  - helium balloons (especially mylar)
  - pets
  - bugs on the lens
  - curtains

- A motion detector should not be aimed directly toward an air vent or fireplace
- Caution should be used in placing plants in field of view of motion detector
- Mylar balloons are a common cause of false alarms
- If pets are in your premises while the interior motion(s) is/are on, be sure the detector and lens are designed to provide a pet alley. If you acquire a pet, please contact your alarm company.

- Closed but not latched and locked doors (especially your delay doors)
- An increased gap between door and jamb due to settling of house
- For double doors - make sure fixed side is pinned on top and bottom
- Shaking a door should not set off the alarm

**What to watch for in windows:**
- Unsecured magnets - Windows should be completely closed and **locked** - it may show a good circuit at the time of arming, but a misaligned magnet and contact may false alarm with a change in temperature or humidity

- Spiders or bugs may form webs around the detector or may actually get inside the case. Keep the face of the detector clean.
- Drafts in the walls can cause false alarms if the motion detector is flush mount
- Movement of vertical blinds can cause false alarms
- Christmas and Holiday decorations cause false alarms
- Motion detectors need a clear view - do not block them. Do not stack things around the line of view, as they may fall over

- Casement windows that are cranked closed against the closed latch with the latch not securing the window
- Mini blinds attracted to the magnet
- Unplugged alarm screens
- Tears or excessive patches on window foil

- Ceiling fans cause air movement - this can cause false alarms
- The area around smoke detectors, motion sensors or other interior devices should be inspected for dust, webs and insects. Interior cleaning of these devices must be done by your alarm company
The Alarm Ordinance

Each alarm system must be registered with the city.

The Alarm Ordinance

Permit Fees:
- Residential $____
- Renewal (annual) $____
- Commercial $____
- Renewal (annual) $____

The Alarm Ordinance

- ______ “Free” false alarms per year
- Schedule of fines for false alarms in excess of this number

The Alarm Ordinance

Suspension:
- Alarm permit may be suspended after ____ false alarms
- One chargeable false alarm waived if you attend alarm awareness school

The Alarm Ordinance

- False alarm is defined as:
  - An alarm dispatch request to the law enforcement agency when the responding officer finds no evidence of a criminal offense or attempted criminal offense after having completed a timely investigation of the alarm site.
What To Expect From Your Alarm Company

- Provide written instruction manual
- Provide clear training at the time of installation
- Available to answer follow-up questions prompt & effective repair of the system
- Alarm verification by telephone call, video or audio built into your system

What To Expect From Your Alarm Company

- Proper licenses
- Available to update account information - phone numbers, emergency contacts
- Able to identify "zones" which have been tripped
- Available to receive calls and perform repairs after normal business hours

Measure Your Company’s IQ

- The Installation Quality Certification Program is an industry certification program which identifies companies that exceed standards in the areas of:
  - IQ User Training Guidelines
  - IQ Employee Training Guidelines
  - IQ System Design Guidelines
  - IQ Equipment Guidelines
  - IQ Installation Guidelines
  - IQ Monitoring Guidelines
- Ask your company if they are IQ Certified!

ALARMS CAN BE YOUR FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

But...
You have a responsibility to use your system properly.

And...
Now you know how!!!
### Contact Information

For more information, feel free to contact:

- The Security Industry Alarm Coalition
  *(972) 377-9401 or alan@siacinc.org*
- The Electronic Security Association (formerly NBFAA)
  *(972) 807-6800 or fact@alarm.org*
- The Installation Quality Certification Board
  *(971) 565-1855 or iq@alarm.org*
- The False Alarm Reduction Association
  *(971) 279-1917*

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The Electronic Security Association (ESAA) is an association of installing & monitoring alarm dealers that provides: seminars, training, guides, user brochures & lists of qualified dealers.

The False Alarm Reduction Association is an association of government-employed alarm ordinance managers, most of whom work for local law enforcement agencies.

### For More Information!

- CANASA - Canadian Alarm & Security Association
- CSAA - Central Station Alarm Association
- IACP - International Chiefs of Police
- SIACP - State Association of Chiefs of Police
- SIA - Security Industry Association
- SIAC - Security Industry Alarm Coalition
- State & Local Alarm Organizations

ESA can put you in touch with other organizations with resources to help you.

- Call us at 972-807-6800
- Or check the SIAC web site at [www.siacinc.org](http://www.siacinc.org) for links to them all.