TIPS FOR ALARM USERS

Nationally the Police respond to millions of calls to alarm systems where no crime or attempted crime has been committed. Numerous studies have shown that over 75% of these calls are due to user error. The purpose of this document is to help alarm owners identify the most common mistakes that are made and how to correct them. Please review these helpful hints and should you need additional information or training contact your alarm company.

The most common errors occur when the alarm is being turned on. The proper procedure to follows is:
- Check the alarm keypad and verify that the system is ready to turn on.
- If the alarm is not ready to arm check all doors and windows until the alarm is ready to turn on.
- Make certain that everyone who is leaving is ready to exit.
- Enter the arming code and have all people exit.
- Close the exit door and lock it.
- Wait by the door to make certain that the siren or bell does not go off.
- If for any reason you must re-enter the premises, open the door and immediately turn the alarm off.
- When you are again ready to exit repeat the above steps.
- MOST IMPORTANT, if the alarm goes off never leave until you've spoken to the alarm company. If they don't call you, you must call them so have your password ready and have the phone number for the alarm company close by.

The second most common error occurs when turning the alarm off. The proper procedure is as follows:
- Approach the door and unlock it.
- Open the door and enter.
- Immediately go to the alarm keypad and enter your code.
- Wait by the keypad until you get confirmation that the alarm is off.

Alarm systems are not maintenance free and should be serviced periodically.
- Your alarm system runs on a system battery. This battery should be replaced every three to five years, maybe even sooner if frequent power outages have occurred. An outdated or weak battery can cause the alarm to malfunction during bad weather.
- Over time doors and windows can warp or become misaligned. This could cause the alarm system to be over sensitive and should be addressed by either fixing the door or window, or adjusting the protection.
- Many dispatches occur because contact lists with the alarm company are not kept current. Even more important, contact lists should include cellular phone numbers. Request that your alarm company call the house number and the cellular prior to dispatching the police on burglary alarms.
- It is your responsibility to make certain that anyone with access to your home knows how to use the alarm system. Review this list with them and make certain they know how to cancel a false alarm.
- If you decide to use the Internet for your phone service make certain to let your alarm company know. *Your alarm may not transmit over the cable system unless adjustments are made!*

Be a good citizen. Your alarm is only as effective as you make it, and your educated use of your alarm makes it an effective crime fighting tool. For more tips on using your alarm call your alarm company and visit: www.siacinc.org.

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Security Industry Alarm Coalition

TIPS FOR THE NON-RESIDENTIAL ALARM USER

Non-residential alarm systems have a much higher rate of false alarms than residential alarms. This is typically the result of multiple alarm users, many of them casual users who may not be tasked to turn the alarm on or off for months at a time. In non residential applications you must also deal with employee terminations, transfers, promotions and other reasons for turnover. Even in the case of chain locations where the alarms are supposed to be similar, newer systems with slightly different arming procedures can result in false alarms.

The tips on the reverse side of this document for turning the alarm on and off apply equally to residential and non residential alarm systems. Review these procedures to familiarize yourself and your employees with the proper procedure for using your alarm system.

In addition to turning the alarm on and off there are other factors that play into non residential alarm systems.

- A common issue with these systems is after hours access to a telephone with an outside line. Many businesses turn their telephone system off after regular working hours or forward it to an answering service. If an employee makes a mistake and the alarm company calls they are unable to reach anyone as the employee is unable to answer the phone due to either the call going to a message center, or no access to a phone with an outside line after hours. If there is a direct number that rings after hours, make certain that your alarm company has that number.

- If the alarm is accidentally set off instruct your employees to never leave the premises until they have spoken to the alarm company and make certain they have the phone number for the monitoring center and the pass word required to cancel an accidental alarm.

- A huge problem revolves around emergency call lists. Most non residential systems should review their emergency call lists monthly. In cases of church's or other such occupancies no key should be given to any individual that does not know how to use the alarm system.

- Training of those with access should be an ongoing process. Work with your alarm company to develop a program that can be reviewed by employees frequently.

- Employees should be educated in how to use the robbery alarm. The robbery alarm should only be used for a robbery. Do not activate the robbery alarm for events such as customer disputes. In these cases someone should dial 9-1-1.

Responsible use of your alarm system insures that police will continue to respond. In some areas of the country the police require that a 3rd party verify an actual crime has been committed prior to dispatching an officer. This places you and your employees at risk if they are responding. When there is an alarm, and the police are dispatched someone with access should meet them at the premises and allow the police access. On commercial properties it is not unusual for burglars to enter through the roof or walls of a neighboring business.

For additional information on how to prevent false dispatches contact your alarm company and visit www.siacinc.org.