

# **NON-SWORN ALARM RESPONDER GUIDELINES**

FINAL REVISION - September 10, 1997

## **ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT**

This document was prepared by the Private Sector Liaison Committee (PSLC) of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this document do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP).

This publication is made available with the understanding that the distributing organization is not engaged in rendering legal services. If legal advice is required, the services of an attorney should be sought.

This document has not been copyrighted. Complete or partial reproduction is encouraged as long as it is:

1. Is not done for profit,
2. Does not alter the tone or substance of the recommendations, and
3. Advances the goal of improving the standards for non-sworn alarm responders in a manner compatible with the needs of the communities they serve, in cooperation and partnership with law enforcement.

## **INTRODUCTION**

For the last decade the Private Sector Liaison Committee (PSLC) of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) has worked to build lines of communication and cooperation with the private sector. Areas of cooperative efforts have included the development of guidelines and protocols on a variety of issues ranging from Product Tampering Threat Cases to Combating Violence in the Workplace to High Tech Crimes.

Presently the PSLC is focusing its efforts on the reduction of False Alarms. In developing strategies to reduce False Alarms, the PLSC worked with the leadership of the Alarm Industry. This leadership representation has included personnel from as many as four industry organizations - Alarm Industry Research and Education Foundation (AIREF), National Burglar and Fire Alarm Association (NBFAA), Security Industry Association (SIA), and the Central Station Alarm Association (CSAA). As a result of this partnership and support from the IACP Division of State Associations of Chiefs of Police (SACOP), a Model States False Alarm Reduction Program was developed.

The outcome of these efforts to date has been the publication and distribution of false alarm reduction materials, the implementation of model cities false alarm reduction effort, media initiatives, (see attached article, Police Chief June 1997) and the hands-on participation of all

interested parties. Genuine progress is being made in the reduction of false alarms throughout the United States. This is most visible in the growing awareness of the problem false dispatches pose for both sectors. This awareness is also producing the passage of local false alarm ordinances, alarm users training programs, pre-dispatch verification initiatives by alarm monitoring companies, and dispatch cancellations by police agencies to verify false alarms.

Although the vast majority of the 16,000 American police agencies will continue to direct sworn officers to alarm calls as part of their community policing agenda, a small number of major urban jurisdictions are reexamining their policies on intrusion alarm calls. This is due to the growing volume of all service dispatches and the rapid increase of alarm installations. Nationally 10-18% of total police service calls are for alarm signals, 95% of which prove to be false. This shift in philosophy has a few urban jurisdictions considering or requiring verification of a criminal act for nonhuman activations (intrusion as compared with robbery and panic) prior to the dispatching of police officers. As a result non-sworn private security personnel on a limited basis are being used as first responders to intrusion alarms. Many of these private sector personnel are, by necessity, armed for their own protection.

It must be noted that the alarm industry does not support response by other than sworn police officers, except as a final step in an escalating series of sanctions for alarm system abusers or as a supplement to response service provided by local police. It is also the belief of the alarm industry that properly structured cost recovery methods (fees, permits, system registrations fines, or citations) can in large part cover the costs of police response to false alarms if the funds generated are placed back in departmental budgets on a dedicated basis. Industry surveys have shown that the preponderance of alarm system users strongly prefers and expect police response. It is the view of the alarm industry that removal of police response has the potential to significantly diminish the effectiveness of an alarm system as a deterrent and will have a negative impact on public safety.

A search for sources of guidelines by the PSLC did not result in any clear document which focuses sufficiently on the subject of utilizing private security personnel as first responders to intrusion alarms. Consequently, the following issues have been identified as areas of consideration for jurisdictions developing protocols and policies for non-sworn private security personnel responding to alarms. It is highly recommended that jurisdictions without established non-sworn alarm responder services take time to prepare and approve policies/procedures governing this activity in advance of any modification from sworn to non-sworn responders.

## **1. QUALIFICATIONS AND SELECTION CRITERIA**

It is recommended that all non-sworn alarm responders meet the minimum applicable state requirements for private security officers, and be able to meet minimum qualifications to purchase a firearm. Using this latter qualification carries with it its own set of useful legislative mandated criteria whether the employee is armed or not. It is further recommended that all applicant certification as a private security officer meet the following minimum criteria:

- A. Must be at least 18 years of age "unarmed responder";
- B. Must be at least 21 years-of age "armed responder";

- C. Must possess a valid state driver's license;
- D. Must not have been:
  - 1. Convicted of a felony in any jurisdiction;
  - 2. Convicted of a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude including the use and/or possession of a controlled substance within a 7-year period, prior to applying for certification, or commission of a violation which has been determined to bear such relationship to the performance of security services as to constitute a disqualification for the applicable state's certification requirements;
  - 3. Convicted of any law of any jurisdiction involving the sale, delivery or manufacture of a controlled substance.
  - 4. Declared by any court to be incompetent by reason of mental disease or defect which has not been removed or expunged.

**COMMENTARY:** The decision to substitute private security personnel for highly trained police officers or sheriffs deputies is a significant one which each jurisdiction should carefully weigh. Statistically there is the real potential for both security employee and officer or deputy to be simultaneously involved in an active crime scene as armed uniformed responders. It is for this reason, as well as the need to insure that private security personnel acting as first responders are capable of making good decisions in the field, that great care must be exercised in their recruitment and selection. A second and equally important consideration is that these private sector responders must possess high quality ethical standards since they will be entering the homes and businesses of their communities at a time when these locations are the most vulnerable because of the absence of homeowners or corporate employees.

## **II. NON-SWORN ALARM RESPONDERS LICENSES AND CERTIFICATIONS**

It is recommended that:

- A. All states adopt private security licensing and certification legislation as recommended by the National Burglar and Fire Alarm Association (NBFAA) and the National Association of State Investigative Regulators (NASIR). See Reference Page for NASIR and NBFAA materials.
- B. All states provide both unarmed and armed non-sworn alarm responder licenses or certifications separate from and at a higher level than regular fixed post or mobile guard licenses or certifications.
- C. Applicants for all state non-sworn alarm responder licenses or certifications be required to submit a set of fingerprints to be forwarded to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a nationwide criminal record check. Further, if permitted, all applicants will be checked through NCIC for a computerized criminal history check prior to the issuance of a permanent private security license or certification. Armed

non-sworn alarm responders will not be issued a license or certification until clearance from an approved state criminal history check has been received.

**COMMENTARY:** A review of the duties and responsibilities of non-sworn alarm responders easily sets these private sector employees in a class all their own. There are many judgment calls these personnel must make in the course of their employment which can have major consequences. These can be beneficial or detrimental depending on the situation and actions taken or for that matter not taken. To assure the orderly employment of these private sector personnel, it is imperative that a third party be involved as a licensing and/or certifying agency. Especially with the high turnover within private security, an established work record associated with employment is essential. Just as state government exercises major licensing authority over a wide range of professional occupations, it is logical as well as critical that this role be played by state government regarding non-sworn alarm responders.

### **III. TRAINING**

It is recommended that:

- A. All state regulatory agencies, law enforcement, the alarm industry, and private security companies adopt minimum basic training requirements and in-service training which require continued specialized training for non-sworn responders to alarm calls. States should also provide a formal mechanism to establish curriculum requirements and hours of training through recognized instructional/educational facilities or institutions.
- B. All non-sworn alarm responder training will be reviewed and approved for certification by a state regulatory agency. Instructors will also be certified by the state regulatory agency. All training will be validated by approved testing criteria.
- C. Non-sworn alarm responder training will include the following topics:
  1. Defensive driving responses and safe vehicle operation, to include an overview of all applicable motor vehicle laws;
  2. Training in the Use of Force as applied to non-sworn alarm responders which emphasizes a de-escalation of force, alternatives to deadly force through the use of a force continuum (e.g., verbal commands, and the use of non-lethal physical defensive tools, batons, and pepper or chemical spray, etc.): If armed, additional training will include applicable legal criminal and civil training in the areas of when deadly force may be used.
  3. Patrol procedures and tactical responses (respond, observe and report), to include one or two person responses, communication and coordination with responding law enforcement agencies to both residential and business locations;
  4. Citizen detention and arrest authority for non-sworn alarm responders, with legal training to include a section on applicable civil and criminal laws;
  5. Verbal conflict resolution;

6. Firearms training to include:
  - a. Classroom, policies and procedures, and firing range training;
  - b. Classroom topics which include firearms safety, weapon familiarization, and care and cleaning;
  - c. Classroom, policies and procedures which include a review of deadly force and the elements required before a weapon is drawn and pointed at another person, and when deadly force may be used.
  - d. Range firing to include; range rules, shooting principles and procedures, and qualification to applicable state standards;
7. Fundamental alarm system design and operation training;
8. Report writing to include interviewing, note taking, and report writing exercises;
9. Optional first aid and CPR training if required by state licensing and certification requirements.

**COMMENTARY:** If there has been any one element of policing that has produced the recognized quality of personal performance by today's officers and deputies, it has been the advent of professional training beginning in the early 1970's. It was the cornerstone which has brought policing from a skilled trade to a genuine profession. There is every reason to believe that with proper training and supervision the alarm responder position can grow to earn the respect of communities and law enforcement. If there is anything that will calm those who would be critical, it would be the careful administration of quality, statutorily required basic and in-service training programs for all licensed or certified alarm responders.

#### **IV. LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that state legislation be introduced or modified as follows:

- A. Enact legislation which would require that all companies and their employees who respond to alarm system signals will meet the license or certification requirements of their respective states;
- B. Require an "Enforcement and Penalties" section which would allow police officers to ask non-sworn private security responders to show proof of state licensing or certification, and that it be carried on their person;
- C. Enforcement would include either civil penalties or criminal prosecution for failing to comply with the private security licensing and certification requirements of the state legislation;

- D. Require a Licensee to file and maintain with the Agency a certificate of insurance, naming the Agency as an additional insured, from an insurance company licensed to do business in the state, as evidence that Licensee has comprehensive general liability coverage of at least \$500,000 per occurrence and \$1,000,000 in the aggregate. The certificates for insurance will provide that the insurance may not be modified or canceled unless 30 days prior notice is given to the Director. It is agreed that coverage afforded by this policy will apply to all sums which the insured will become legally obligated to pay because of any negligent act, error or omission.

**COMMENTARY:** In a very real sense alarm response companies have the special responsibility to manage the deployment of their personnel in such a manner that they perform their duties at a level befitting the role they play in public safety. To achieve this, the private sector must recognize that entry into this operational aspect of protecting the general public in their persons or assets carries with it unique responsibilities.

There is also the issue of vicarious liability which becomes much more of an operational consideration as the complexity of situations present themselves to non-sworn alarm responders and officers or deputies alike. This crossover point of public/private sector interface is new and exists generally without clearly articulated responsibilities for both parties. Those who choose to provide non-sworn alarm response services will need to clearly reach out to the public sector to be sure what they do shows good faith and a willingness to adapt to local community service needs and standards. It is equally important for elements of state and local government to reward those private security personnel and their companies who make a genuine effort with trust and cooperation.

## **V. DUTIES OF STATE LICENSING OR REGULATORY AGENCIES**

It is recommended that state licensing or regulatory agencies adopt the following:

- A. Set qualifications and selection criteria in cooperation with consumers, alarm/security industry and law enforcement to develop formal process for a qualification and selection process and training standards for non-sworn alarm responders.
- B. Each state regulatory agency must ensure that the alarm responder training curriculum is verified and have sufficient hours to pass the tests required for issuance of permits, licenses and registrations.
- C. Implement state legislative guidelines and responsibilities to include:
  - 1. Clearly marked identification cards for each alarm responder with certification indicated on card.
  - 2. Required marking of response vehicles to distinguish them from law enforcement vehicles.
  - 3. Requiring specific lighting differences from emergency response vehicles (i.e. no red or blue, amber only light bars with alley lights, etc.)

4. Required marking of uniforms worn by first alarm responders distinguishing from law enforcement personnel to include state approved shoulder patches and badges.
5. Require specific radio communications protocols for alarm responders to address potential emergency response situations, but not interfere with law enforcement business.

D. Enforcement to include:

1. Impose civil/criminal penalties for violation of above.
2. Administrative hearings (appeals)
3. An avenue to provide law enforcement certification as first responders.
4. Training of law enforcement on alarm responder and private security regulation enforcement.

**COMMENTARY:** If there is one key player to the provision of non-sworn alarm responder services it is the state regulatory agency. Clearly, here in lies the singular repository of what is going well and not well on a statewide basis. There are a series of duties which if carried out can be of great value to both sectors. It is important for state agencies that monitor and manage this activity to not only communicate the status of the state program, but how it compares to programs in other states. It will also be important for the state agency to have operational personnel who actively work with local law enforcement to assure quality control and accountability by the security industry. This will mean that like liquor control activities, there are full time field inspectors from state government who insures compliance by their presence and support to local governments.

**CONCLUSION:**

These guidelines are the product of the work group whose names appear in the acknowledgments section of this document. America is unique in diffusing police power and as such is the only major country in the world to do so. More than 80% of all police forces in the United States have 20 or fewer sworn personnel. Consequently, there is no single answer to solving the false alarm issue except through the cooperation between state and local governments representing the public sector and the private security industry representing the private sector. One of the great strengths of this local control or police power is the multiple opportunities each jurisdiction represents by way of unique or innovative approaches to community problem solving.

The false alarm dilemma represents one of America's greatest challenges to the productive use of police resources. On the other hand alarm systems have helped achieve two important objectives. It is a positive tool that citizens can use to protect themselves from crime and reduce fear. Secondly, use of alarm systems have been an effective target hardening service used by millions of Americans. Police crime prevention officers have recommended them in their public presentations and given them partial credit for the reduction of burglary rates through the last decade. It should also be borne in mind that responses by police to alarm calls have directed them into residential and business areas, adding to their visibility as they move through that

portion of their jurisdiction. Listed with this document are materials and information that are available on the Internet at no cost.

The use of non-sworn personnel as additional or optional alarm responders is one of the many methods which can be employed in combating the false alarm problem. While these are only guidelines, they reflect the considered judgement of leaders and stake holders in this problem whose backgrounds in dealing with false dispatches are substantial. If there is a final through the Private Sector Liaison Committee would wish to present it is that the efforts in developing policing standards and their professionalizing impact took many years beginning in the late 1960's. In part the same will hold true with non-sworn alarm response. To succeed there needs to be a Community Policing approach tied to an ecumenical spirit that fosters effective public/private sector partnerships. This will enhance the general welfare of all citizens as individual persons, property owners, employees or employers.

□

# Acknowledgments

## NON-SWORN FIRST RESPONDER GUIDELINES

The following individuals and organizations contributed to the drafting, preparation and review of this document:

*Co-Chair, Private Sector Liaison Committee*  
Chief Michael G. Shanahan (Ret)  
University of Washington Police  
Seattle, WA

*PSLC/False Alarm Committee Chair*  
Stan Martin  
Vice President Industry Relations  
ADI  
Dallas, TX

*False Alarm Committee/Response Workgroup Co-Chair*  
Assistant Chief Bruce W. Prunk  
Portland Police Bureau  
Portland, Oregon

*False Alarm Committee/Response Workgroup Co-Chair*  
L. Earle Graham  
VP Patrol and Central Station Services  
Westec Custom Residential Security, Inc.  
Newport Beach, CA

Stephen Doyle  
Executive Vice President  
Central Station Alarm Association (CSAA)  
Bethesda, MD

Charlie Houper  
Sheriff  
Chemung County Sheriffs Office  
Elmira, NY

Weldon Kennedy  
Vice Chairman-Group Executive  
Guardsmark Incorporated  
Memphis, TN

Captain Theresa L. Martin, Program Manager  
Private Security Standards and Certification  
Department of Public Safety Standards and Training  
STATE OF OREGON

Robert Ohm  
Chair, AIREF False Alarm Coalition  
Sr. Vice President Operations & Field Support  
Wells Fargo Alarm  
King of Prussia, PA

Lockheed D. Reader  
NON SWORN GUIDELINES - PAGE 9 OF 16

Chief of Police  
City of Puyallup, Washington Police Department  
Puyallup, WA

Vince Ruffalo  
President  
A & R Security Services Inc.

Howard Safir  
Police Commissioner  
New York City

Thomas M. Seamon CPP  
Managing Director, Public Safety  
University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, PA

Brad Shipp  
Executive Director  
National Burglar & Fire Alarm Association (NBFAA)  
Bethesda, MD

Gail M. Simonton  
Executive Director & General Counsel  
National Association of Security Companies (NASCO)  
Memphis, TN

Doug Wankel  
Vice President Patrol Services  
Protection One Alarm Services, Inc.

## Where to Get Additional Information

### INTERNET RESOURCE LOCATIONS:

IACP/PSLC : <http://www.amdahl.com/ext/iacp/>  
National Association of Security Companies (NASCO):  
<http://www.nasco.org>

National Association of State Investigative Regulators (NASIR)  
<http://www.nasir.org>

Central Station Alarm Association: <http://csaaul.org>  
National Burglar & Fire Alarm Association (NBFAA) :  
<http://www.alarm.org>

Security Industry Association (SIA) : <http://www.siaonline.org>  
Model States Program Information: <http://www.adialarm.com>

**The International Association of Chiefs of Police**  
**515 N. Washington Street**  
**Alexandria, VA 22314-2357**  
**(703) 836-6767**



**\*\*\* ADD IACP “MODEL STATES” ARTICLE  
FROM POLICE CHIEF MAGAZINE 6/97 \*\*\***

□

# **IACP Resolution**

## **Measures to Reduce the Number of Police Responses to False Alarms**

*Whereas*

one of the criminal concerns of police administrators 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 15 percent of all police calls for service; and

*Whereas*

the number of false alarms is growing along with the number of alarm systems in use, thereby taking police 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 alarm systems; and

*Whereas*

this is a national problem (with both national and local solutions) that warrants the interest and concern of state chiefs' associations; now, therefore be it

*Resolved*

that IACP will continue, through the efforts of its Private Sector Liaison Committee (PSLC), to study the false alarm problem; and be it further

*Resolved*

that IACP recommends that false alarms remain an issue for the PSLC and that the PSLC work with the state chiefs' associations and the alarm industry to stimulate state-level initiatives to lessen the problem; and, be it further

### **IACP RESOLUTION - Page Two**

*Resolved*

that IACP urges police chiefs to attempt to reduce their false alarm response workload by considering various options, some of which could include the following:

Encouraging or requiring alarm central stations to attempt to verify alarms by telephone  
or by other electronic means before calling the police

Moving the alarm industry towards self-regulation by suspending services to chronic  
abusers of alarm systems

Supporting alarm system user education

Utilizing supplementary or alternative response (leaving initial alarm response to private,  
contract responders or to municipal employees other than commissioned officers)

Encouraging the passage of alarm ordinances that provide for, among other things, user permits and fin

Supporting security industry technology research and equipment standards

Supporting cooperative efforts to reduce the administrative burden to local government through efficien

Accepting dispatch cancellations

Supporting licensing of alarm companies

Supporting consumer ratings of alarm companies and systems based on dependability

□

## **Other Private Sector Liaison Committee Publications of Public Safety Interest**

The Private Sector Liaison Committee (PSLC) regularly sponsors publications of interest to both law enforcement and the private sector. The following publications were produced with cooperation from the listed sponsors and contributors. These publications are in the public domain and may be used as resources in addressing the particular problem of interest. These and all upcoming PSLC publications will be available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.amdahl.com/ext/iacp/> or by writing to IACP.

**Product Tampering - A Recommended Policy of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.** Principal support provided by the Southland Corporation, owners of 7-11 Stores.

**Drugs in the Workplace - Model Substance Abuse Policy.** Primary research support provided by The Drugs in the Workplace Committee of the Maryland Governor's Advisory Board for Justice Assistance.

**Combating Workplace Drug Crimes - Guidelines for Businesses, Law Enforcement & Prosecutors.** Primary contributions made by Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Assistance, Hallcrest Systems, Inc. and the Institute for Law and Justice.

**False Alarm Perspectives: A Solution-Orientated Resource.** Primary contributors include the National Burglar and Fire Alarm Association, the Central Station Alarm Association, the Security Industry Association and Peter E. Ohlhausen

**Combating Workplace Violence - Guides for Employers & Law Enforcement.** Principal support was provided by the Defense Personnel Security Research Center, Department of Defense and Bureau of Justice and Assistance, Department of Justice.

□

The International Association of Chiefs of Police is the world's senior law enforcement executive association. Founded in 1893, IACP comprises over 14,000 members representing 80 different nations. As an organization it is headquartered in Alexandria, VA, with a permanent staff of approximately 50 professionals. Over 150 working professionals serve on the training faculty. IACP is guided by an advisory board of 52 police executives representing international, federal, state and law enforcement agencies. This group provides policy direction to the professional staff and the association's diverse working groups, divisions, committee's and sections comprised of the heads of law enforcement agencies from throughout the world. The groups address contemporary issues facing law enforcement.

IACP represents a commonwealth of police administrators from the world law enforcement community. It is the singular point of focus where the smallest to the largest of police forces can meet for assistance and direction in a wide range of problem-solving agendas while still maintaining individual agency independence.

## **IACP LOGO AT BOTTOM OF PAGE**