ALARM MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES
IACP/PSLC, SACOP & NSA TIMELINE - RECOMMENDATIONS
Updated October 2018

Executive Summary

Following a comprehensive review of the twenty-year history and evolution of the IACP - International Association of Chiefs of Police, PSLC/Alarm industry partnership and the NSA - National Sheriffs' Association have determined that the **single most effective way to significantly reduce alarm dispatches** is a strictly enforced ordinance that contains the "Best Practices." include:

- Registrations and Renewals/fees,
- ECC-Enhanced Call Confirmation (also known as ECV or 2-calls),
- ~~Mandating CP-01 Alarm Control Panels~~, *No longer included - see note below*
- Limiting free responses to 2, 1 or zero
- Ceasing response to chronic abusers suggest 5-6 maximum, w/appeal process
- Allow cancellation of dispatch when Alarm Central Station reports proper cancel request from citizen

The effectiveness improves with each element added. ECC or 2-call verification, is the single most important element required for these reductions.

This partnership has resulted in a national reduction of alarm dispatches of over 75%, with many agencies experiencing 60%-90% reductions! The model offered has been well-vetted by IACP/PSLC and is based on numerous programs and actual successes as seen by hundreds of agencies, at least fourteen SACOP chapters and members of this committee.

The Model Ordinance w/Best Practices

Numerous joint studies have been conducted on Alarm Management to determine the most effective measures to reduce alarm dispatches. When considering the balance between community expectations, overall public safety, limited resources and IACP recommended initiatives such as Community Policing, the IACP-PSLC has determined the following elements/best practices should be included in any Alarm Management Program, by ordinance. The Model Ordinance now utilized by fourteen SACOP Chapters and adopted by hundreds of municipalities use the following best practices. Chiefs may choose to eliminate some of these practices from the model, however, effectiveness/results will be diminished. **The agency must strictly enforce the ordinance and it cannot have exceptions for municipal buildings, schools or other high resource use entities.**

These best practices jointly supported by the IACP & the Alarm Industry are:

1. **ECC - Enhanced Call Confirmation (previously called ECV - Enhanced Call Verification), commonly referred to as two-call confirmation**. Whether by ordinance or policy, a requirement for alarm monitoring centers to make <u>two calls</u> to <u>two different number</u>s (one typically a cell phone) prior to calling the PSAP in an effort to determine the cause of the alarm and whether or not a dispatch is required. *This practice was endorsed by the IACP general membership via resolution in 2002.*

2. ~~**Utilizing alarm control panels built to ANSI SIA CP-01 standards in all new installations.** This national standard for alarm control panels is highly effective against the number one cause of alarms -- "user error". All major manufacturers produce these panels. *This practice was endorsed by the IACP general membership via resolution in 2005.*~~ *Due to rapidly changing technology and the incorporation of nearly all the features specified by this standard in modern panels this best practice will no longer be recommended and has been removed from the Model Alarm Ordinance effective August of 2016.*

3. **Requiring Alarm Permits w/fees** - Registration of these systems is critical for the effective management of alarm programs. By recording system owner information you have responsible party documentation for fines/renewals/policy or ordinance change notifications. Nominal fees for registration routinely cover costs associated with

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administration of these programs. **Special Note:** We DO NOT recommend a "No permit, No Response" provision in an ordinance. As a public safety issue, all alarms calls should receive law enforcement response, unless previously suspended by ordinance provision. You can always cite a person for not having a permit on file after the response.

4. **Free responses/Fines** - Setting reasonable fines for alarm dispatches can be a significant deterrent to the occasional offender. Allowing a maximum of two free responses before incurring fines is advisable. When combined with restricting response to abusers, a reasonable fine structure will accomplish all reduction goals and allow for higher collection rates. Greater reductions will occur when setting free responses to one or zero. Local politics will govern this threshold.

5. **Ceasing Response to Chronic Abusers** - Law enforcement should stop responding to chronic abusers. It has been determined that many will just "write checks" to cover police response (these typically are most of your worst offenders). An agency should establish a response cut-off point at 3, 5 or less, whatever may be politically supported. Proper notice should be sent to the owner/premise with a right to appeal and/or take corrective action for reinstatement. *Note: 85% of users have NO dispatches per year; the next 8% will only have one and less than 0.5% of the permit holders will ever lose response.*

6. **Accepting Cancellations** - It has been determined that there is no practical value in continuing on an alarm dispatch if the party that originally requested the dispatch determines through customer contact or verified electronic means that the response is unnecessary and not needed. If the call is cancelled prior to law enforcement arriving at the location, the event should not be classified as a "false alarm" for the purpose of an alarm response count or fine.

ADDITIONAL IACP-PSLC & NSA RECOMMENDATIONS:

ENFORCEMENT - When ALL of the best practices above are combined into an alarm ordinance that is strictly enforced, and there are no exceptions for schools, government buildings, churches, or banks, you can expect alarm dispatch reductions of 50% to 70%. If the number of free responses are reduced to one or zero, and the jurisdiction strictly enforces the ordinance with good administration (in house or outsourced), an agency can see up to a 90% reduction in alarm dispatches over a several year period.

All of these best practices are combined and available in the "Law Enforcement Model Ordinance" available at no charge at www.siacinc.org. SIAC - Security Industry Alarm Coalition -- is the non-profit organization that represents the four national alarm associations, and is the industry representative to law enforcement including IACP, NSA, Major County Chiefs and Major County Sheriffs'..

ALARM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES - IACP-PSLC recommends formation and active participation by SACOP members in this highly successful initiative promulgated by SIAC (alarm industry) and supported by IACP. In an effort to establish a permanent communication structure at the state level, these committees are being formed across the country. The state chiefs association establishes an Alarm Management Committee with at least three active chiefs and then invites three alarm industry leaders to join the committee. Typically one of the first tasks the committee undertakes is reviewing the IACP recommended best practices and deciding how best to apply them in developing a "State Model Alarm Ordinance", within the constraints of state laws and/or local politics. Other items of mutual concern can also be addressed such as licensing or state legislation. Currently established Alarm Management Committees contact information is available through IACP/SACOP or the SIAC website at www.siacinc.org Note: SIAC is working to establish similar working committees within the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) structure.

USE OF ALARM FACTOR FOR MEASUREMENT - IACP-PSLC & NSA recommends the use of the Alarm Factor or Rate over time for measuring and comparing the relative success of these alarm management practices as concluded by the University of North Carolina in Charlotte (UNCC). The study completed in May 2010 has determined that the most accurate and effective method of measuring the success of alarm management programs is with the use of the "Alarm Factor" over time. The "Alarm Factor" is determined by dividing the total number of actual alarm dispatches by the

total number of active alarm permits. This "Alarm Factor" or "Alarm Dispatch Rate" can also be used to reasonably compare one agency to another or against a national base rate. The traditional or most commonly used percentage of false alarms was *not recommended* for the purpose of accurately reflecting the results of these programs over time. The complete study is available on-line at http://www.airef.org

SACOP Chapters with Alarm Management Committees that have adopted a model with these best practices highlighted in **BOLD** , with some minor variations or adjusted for state law:

Tennessee	**South Carolina**	**Connecticut**
Georgia	**Minnesota**	**Mississippi**
Florida	**Virginia**	**Texas**
Alabama	Oklahoma	Maine
Indiana	North Carolina	Michigan

LATEST Statistics from Phoenix, Montgomery County, MD & Fairfax, VA all correlate & confirm that when an ordinance is well-enforced and managed properly roughly 85% of the citizens/permitted holders WILL NOT have an alarm dispatch in any given year. The next 8-10% will have only ONE dispatch. This validates the conclusions:

- **That a very small percentage of systems cause the majority of dispatches**
- **No reason to stop responding to all systems (Verified Response)**
- **Targeting the chronic abusers with increased fines and suspension of service if issues go uncorrected is an effective and reasonable solution.**

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

Fining Alarm Companies - It is appropriate to fine the alarm companies only under these three circumstances:
- If the officer responding to the false alarm determines that an on-site employee of the alarm company directly caused the false alarm. In this situation, this will not be counted against the alarm user.
- If the alarm administrator determines the existence of a consistent pattern that disregards verification or written policy against verification, the alarm company can be issued a civil citation for failure to verify. To verify means an attempt by the alarm company, or its representative, to contact the alarm site by telephonic or other electronic means, whether or not actual contact with a person is made, before requesting law enforcement dispatch, in an attempt to avoid an unnecessary alarm dispatch request.
- If the alarm administrator determines that an alarm company employee made a false statement concerning the inspection of an alarm site or the performance of an alarm system.

All other fines should be billed to the alarm permit holder of record. Alarm users are responsible for the use of their systems, not the alarm companies, except as noted above. Recent court rulings and legal opinions have upheld this position. Documentation is available upon request.

The 20-year timeline below is meant to illustrate the methodical flow and review process for all programs and results that have led to the development of the best practices, model ordinance and the various position papers along the way.

1992   **Industry Joins IACP/PSLC** - The PSLC (Private Sector Liaison Committee) mission is to develop strategies to address and reduce the mutual problem for chiefs and the alarm industry of excessive numbers of false alarms. The initial effort began by commissioning the help of Peter E. Ohlhausen to do a study on the causes and effects of false alarms. The alarm industry agreed to help fund the research with IACP and subsequently the report, "False Alarm Perspectives: A Solution-Oriented Resource," was completed in 1993. By definition in its purpose, the report was a "...compendium of information on false alarms." Although it was not intended to deliver solutions, it did provide a clear picture of the challenges ahead.

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1993   **PSLC Requests "Model Cities" -** Fully recognizing the seriousness and magnitude of the issue, the PSLC members pushed for action from the alarm industry that could provide long-term solutions, and so the "Model Cities" project was introduced in 1993 and officially launched in 1994. Three private/public sector teams were formed to independently attack and reduce dispatches in the cities of Bellevue, WA, Elgin, IL and Philadelphia, PA. The teams embraced the challenge, worked together, and though each took a slightly different approach, each team succeeded in reducing false dispatches by the end of the program in 1995.

1996   **Model States Project Planned** - After reviewing the "Model Cities" data, the most effective "Best Practices" were extracted and combined. The chiefs within PSLC challenged the industry to see if they could be applied successfully over a wider range of cities and states, and so the "Model States" project was introduced. The best vehicle for implementing and coordinating such a project would be through the IACP/SACOP - State Association of Chiefs of Police. (A joint meeting with the various public and private sector representatives was held in August 1996. The mission, goals, tactics, and preliminary budget were developed and all parties pledged cooperation.) The alarm industry through AIREF (Alarm Industry Research & Educational Foundation) agreed to fund the project at a cost of $1.3 million.

1997   **Model States Project Launched**. Chiefs in about 15 cities for each of the four states selected (Florida, Illinois, California and Washington), would agree to apply the best practices to their respective cities. The industry provided a dedicated full-time coordinator in each state to help manage, coordinate and collect data for the duration of the study. SACOP chapters selected a chief to oversee each state's program and to coordinate with the industry.

1999   **Model States Report Completed -** IACP/PSLC & SACOP representatives took the collective data and proposed results under review, made some slight adjustments and then authorized the report to be published and distributed to law enforcement. The results reported by the Model States Report remain valid today and they are the basis on which all subsequent activity was modeled after.

2000   **CARE -** Coordinated Alarm Reduction Effort - was the post-Model States project entity used by the industry to promote the Model States results. This was initially accomplished through the use of over 20 regional summits hosted by law enforcement agencies, held across the nation and paid for by the industry. Over one thousand agencies attended these presentations

   ANSI CP-01 Standard - Industry receives ANSI approval for the new control panel standard that targets false alarm reductions from user error. PSLC agrees to add to it "Best Practices" .

2001   **ECV (2-call Verification), now referred to as ECC -Enhanced Call Confirmation. Proposed** - Post 9-11 the PSLC again challenged the industry to develop additional methods (best practices) that would further reduce dispatches. The industry responded by developing a process called Enhanced Call Verification (ECV) or 2-call verification. This was tested in Boulder, Colorado later that year, and yielded a 61% reduction in dispatches using only a police policy. Today most companies use ECV for at least part of their customer base, however requiring this for all alarm users can still yield up to a 35% reduction. In broader test cases applied by national and regional alarm companies, widespread success was measured ranging from 40% - 60% reductions in calls for service. After a review of the results, the PSLC formally recommended this program be added to the list of "Best Practices" and recommended the IACP pass a resolution supporting the practice. It was adopted at the annual meeting in 2002.

2002   **Rutger's Report -** The Rutgers Study examined a decade of information on alarm systems and burglaries in Newark, NJ. This report provided empirical data showing the effectiveness of alarm systems on preventing burglaries and documented that the crimes were not simply migrating to another area of the community. In fact, one conclusion of the report is that the more alarm systems there are in a community, the fewer burglaries will occur.

   SIAC - Security Industry Alarm Coalition Created - December 2002. As the relationship between the industry and IACP strengthened and matured, the industry sought a more permanent entity to always be available to interface with law enforcement. The four national North American trade associations agree to form SIAC to represent them and be the "One-Voice" for the entire alarm industry. SIAC is staffed by former police chiefs and alarm industry professionals and provides services to both law enforcement and the industry at no charge.

   IACP - Verified Response Position Paper (2002) - After nine years of research and tracking results of "Best Practices," the PSLC -Alarm Committee decides to issue a position paper on a relatively new

approach that a few cities have adopted - "Verified Response." Chiefs from the committee author the paper based on their experience and results from current public-private PSLC programs on alarms. The paper is unanimously approved by the entire PSLC and sent to the IACP board where it is approved. *See attachments : 2002-IACP position paper - verified response.doc & Patti Rea - Verified Response Update.doc*

2003-10   PSLC Expands Programs - Various initiatives over the years, including IACP resolution on CP-01 Control Panel Standards-2005; letter from IACP President Polisar on ECV implementation-2005; Implementation of Alarm Management Committees through SACOP-2004; UNCC Study on measuring False Alarms/Rates - 2010.

2011   IACP/PSLC Updates Position Paper - After an additional nine years of results for a total 18 years of study and best practice implementation, the committee recommends writing a new "White Paper" on alarms that includes all "best practices". The chiefs on the committee decided to exclude "VR - Verified Response" (non-response to alarms) as an option based on: The model ordinance success rate and acceptance by nine SACOP chapters; the fact that only 18 jurisdictions of the nearly 18,000 have utilized some form of VR in over ten years, and eliminating response to alarms is not considered a solution supported by Community Policing objectives; additionally, recent data from Phoenix and Montgomery County agencies now prove that over 85% of the alarm permit holders have "no dispatches" in a given year and the next 5-8% have only one dispatch. Most chiefs see alarm response as a community service that citizens expect and find no justification in making it an option to eliminate response as a recommendation by IACP - thus it was not included. See attachments...

2012-14   IACP/PSLC reviews COPS report - "False Burglar Alarms *2nd Edition*" finds several mis-statements such as measuring alarm reliability using percentage method which was clearly labeled as unsuitable for measuring alarm program effectiveness by UNCC Study previously mentioned. The study also fails to explore successes utilizing the IACP/PSLC/SACOP model ordinance with recommended "best practices". Efforts to have the study removed from circulation have been unsuccessful and so a handful of departments continue to use and quote information from this out dated and unbalanced study.

AT&T, Comcast enter the security market and are invited to speak at the PSLC meeting. They pledge to adhere to the recommended practices established by previous studies to minimize alarm dispatches and cooperate with law enforcement-industry efforts.

New video technology and proposals to improve apprehensions were reviewed by the committee. Though the video applications look promising the committee could not make a formal recommendation until guidelines/standards are developed and more data is made available for review. Additionally law enforcement members felt chiefs can currently change priorities for dispatch based on their own internal polices with most giving "priority" to any request where a "crime in progress" is reported

2016   Resolution passed by IACP & NSA redefining ECV(ECC) and acknowledging law enforcement autonomy in determining response priorities dependent on information received. Model Ordinance updated - term ECV changed to ECC to remove verification from definition and incorporated the ANSI CSV-01 standard as the reference document for screening/submitting calls to 911 centers. Also ANSI SIA CP-01 requirement removed as explained above - unnecessary to achieve desired results due to incorporation of features into current panel designs.

**2017-18   **Model Ordinance updated - Enhanced definitions to include video and other technology to help with verification of a crime in progress and apprehensions. CSV-01 ANSI Standard added to require alarm companies to follow a national standard when screening calls prior to requesting a dispatch. Final draft approved by PSLC. NSA Resolution approved in June '18; IACP Resolution approved October '18

Conclusion

This well-vetted ordinance has been approved with adjustments for local politics in 15 IACP-SACOP chapters. When the model ordinance with these best practices is utilized and enforced, law enforcement agencies may expect the cooperation and support from state & national alarm associations. Upon enactment, an agency should expect an initial drop of 30% or more the first year and up to 90% reductions in alarm calls for service over the course of two to three years. The level of reductions, and the time required to achieve the full reductions is directly related to the level of enforcement of the ordinance and assumes none of the major best practices were excluded.