



Montgomery County, Maryland False Alarm Reduction Program

Background

Montgomery County, Maryland has been enforcing a burglar alarm ordinance since the early 1980's. Between 1991 and 1993, a major overhaul of the program and ordinance was completed. The ordinance was fine-tuned in 1998 and again in 2002, leaving a comprehensive alarm ordinance that holds alarm users and alarm companies responsible for reduction of false dispatches. The Montgomery County success proves that false alarm reduction can be achieved and **sustained** over a long period of time.

Montgomery County has a population of approximately 1,000,000 in a 546 square mile area and is located just about in the center of the State of Maryland. It is a diverse county with the very wealthy and the very poor all within its borders. It is important to note that successful false alarm reduction can be achieved even in large metropolitan areas such as Montgomery County.

Main Alarm Ordinance Provisions

The Montgomery County alarm ordinance requires registration and biennial renewal of all alarm systems. Alarm companies are responsible for the initial registration, and alarm users are responsible for the renewal. Escalating false alarm response fees for residential and commercial alarm users begin at \$25 for the second false alarm and escalate to \$1000 **per false alarm** for residential alarm users and \$4000 **per false alarm** for commercial alarm users. Alarm companies are required to attempt to verify the validity of any alarm signal *prior* to requesting police dispatch except for hold-up and duress signals. Alarm users must have a mandatory alarm inspection upon the third false alarm and a mandatory system upgrade upon the eighth false alarm in a calendar year. Police must not respond to a burglar alarm activation if the alarm user fails to register, fails to pay response fees, or fails to upgrade the system when required. Police response is reinstated when the alarm user satisfies the violation. Alarm companies are prohibited from requesting police dispatch to alarm signals for seven days after registration of the alarm system, unless there is a waiver granted due to imminent danger to people or property.

False Alarm Reduction Successes

Montgomery County boasts the lowest reported dispatch rate for a large metropolitan area anywhere in the country. Through 2011, the residential dispatch rate was .15, commercial dispatch rate was .72, and the combined dispatch rate was .21. In 1993, there were about 25,000 registered alarm users. By the end of 2011, Montgomery County had 74,775 registered alarm users, and that number continues to increase each year, at the same time the combined dispatch rates continue to drop.

In 2011 alone, Montgomery County saved \$1,385,000 in wasted resources, recovered 9,233 hours of police patrol time and recouped the equivalent of almost 9 police work years. The False Alarm Reduction Section collected \$1,128,875 in 2011 in fees and maintains a collection rate of 93.7% of all monies billed. False alarms to which police officers respond have been reduced by almost 70%.

For More Information

If you would like additional information about the Montgomery County False Alarm Reduction Program, please contact:

False Alarm Reduction Section
Montgomery County Police Department
240/773-6300
fars@montgomerycountymd.gov
http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/police_fars

2011 Montgomery County Alarm Users Zero, 1, 2 and 3+ False Alarms

Residential		Commercial		Combined	
Number of False Alarms	Number of Alarm Users	Number of False Alarms	Number of Alarm Users	Number of False Alarms	Number of Alarm Users
0	57,660	0	6,465	0	64,125
1	6,510	1	1,351	1	7,861
2	1,105	2	628	2	1,733
3+	341	3+	715	3+	1,056

Total Alarm Users: 75,775
Residential Alarm Users: 65,616 Commercial Alarm Users: 9,159

A full 87.9% of residential alarm users; 70.6% of commercial users; and 85.8% combined users had **zero** false alarms during 2011. The number of alarm users who have **zero** false alarms increases every year and is a testament to a well-written, strictly enforced alarm ordinance and the educational efforts of both the FARS staff and alarm companies doing business in Montgomery County.