

Over the years, more and more homeowners and businesses have installed alarm systems. Although they are highly effective, the downside is an overabundance of false alarms, placing an undue burden on local law enforcement.

## How YOU can help

Over 80% of false alarms are the result of human error, and 50% of those errors occur when the alarm is being turned on and off. So here are some tips from the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police and the Virginia Burglar & Fire Alarm Association to help you reduce the possibility of false alarms in your home or business.

- ❖ Carefully review your alarm monitoring company's procedures for cancelling accidental alarms. Insist that written instructions are provided to you. DO NOT call 911 if you accidentally set off your alarm.
- ❖ Educate every person authorized to enter your home or business on how the system works.
- ❖ Make sure people authorized to use your system always have the appropriate passcode.
- ❖ Keep doors and windows locked when the system is alarmed.
- ❖ Use deadbolt locks.
- ❖ Follow your alarm company's instructions on testing your system. Don't test it by setting it off prior to notifying your alarm company.
- ❖ Know how to clear a wrong code if you

make a mistake on the keypad.

- ❖ Doors and windows must be tight fitting, and contacts should be free of paint and varnish.
- ❖ Choose a system that is tolerant of pets. If pets run free in the house, you should ask your alarm company for a motion detector that accommodates pets. Also some dog barks can activate older glass break detectors.

## How your ALARM Company can help

- Ask if the company is a member of the Virginia Burglar & Fire alarm Association and has proper licenses.
- Before selecting a system, ask the company about equipment with proven low false alarm rates.
- Insist on getting thorough training on operating the system.
- Make sure the main control panel battery is replaced periodically by your alarm company, typically every 3 to 5 years.
- Contact your alarm company immediately if you are having any problem with the alarm system, including any unexplained signal.
- The company must use multiple call verification by making at least two calls to verify every alarm signal, except fire, duress or hold-up alarms,

before calling the police.

- If the alarm is false, the company must immediately attempt to cancel the police dispatch.
- Ensure that the company has someone on duty 24/7 for service or to answer questions.
- Make sure the company has written instructions about the person or persons they are supposed to call before requesting police dispatch.

## Hanover County False Alarm Ordinance

- ❖ In order to reduce the number of false alarms received, Hanover County chose to enact and enforce a local alarm ordinance in December 2001 that requires businesses in the County to register for a permit.
- ❖ False alarm fees are charged after the third false alarm each calendar year and for failure of a key-holder to respond within one-hour of the alarm activation.
- ❖ Residential homeowners are not required to register. Also businesses within the Town of Ashland are not required to register under the ordinance.
- ❖ The primary message of this brochure is that if alarm users and alarm companies do their best to operate and maintain their alarm systems properly, the number of false alarms will decrease.

## Hanover County Alarm Definitions and Fees:

- **False alarm:** Any communication generated by or as a result of a security alarm system operated by alarm company operators on a non-residential premises that results in a response and investigation by a law enforcement officer which reveals no evidence or indication of criminal activity or other actual hazard. False alarms shall not include signals activated by unusually severe weather conditions or other causes that are identified to be beyond the control of the user. An alarm dispatch request that is canceled by an alarm company operator or other person acting on behalf of the owner of a non-residential security alarm system before the responding law enforcement officer reaches the alarm site shall not be considered a false alarm dispatch.
- **Failure to Respond:** Any person who activates, utilizes, operates and/or maintains a non-residential security alarm system operated by alarm company operators within the county, excluding the Town of Ashland, shall be assessed a civil penalty of two hundred dollars (\$200.00) if that individual or his designee(s) fail(s) to arrive at the protected premises within one hour of the activation of the security alarm system..
- **Civil Penalty:** A service charge of fifty dollars (\$50.00) for each occurrence shall be assessed against the person who activates, utilizes, operates and/or maintains a non-residential security alarm system operated by alarm company operators within the county, excluding the Town of Ashland, for the fourth, fifth and sixth false alarms, one hundred dollars (\$100.00) for the seventh and subsequent false alarms in each calendar year, other than an intentional false alarm, originating from the protected premises.



**"HERE TO SERVE"**

## HANOVER COUNTY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

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# FALSE ALARMS

The **KEY** to reducing the number of false alarms is right at the end of your finger.

