



**COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS
LAW ENFORCEMENT POLICY**

Policy No.	4710	Date Issued:	June 1, 1996
Section:	4700 – Specific Procedures	Date Revised:	February 12, 2024
SUBJECT: ALARMS - GENERAL			
APPROVED:	<u><signed copy on file></u> Chairperson, Law Enforcement Users Subcommittee		
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1.0 Purpose

There are several types of alarms. In order to generate the most appropriate response, dispatchers should always attempt to gain as much information as possible from callers.

2.0 Procedure

2.1 Burglar Alarms - Audible or Silent - Business or Residence

2.1.1 Burglar alarms are installed to protect property. Burglar alarms are either monitored by an alarm company or have a local audible alarm. Burglar alarms may be activated by the following:

- Suspect opening, breaking or moving a door, window or fence.
- Movement or sound within an alarmed area.
- Radio transmissions (from a police radio, etc.) within the area of an alarmed building.
- Power failures, restorations, and fluctuations.

2.2 Burglar Alarms Reported by an Alarm Company

2.2.1 The reporting alarm company must have called the alarm site prior to dispatching a peace officer. If an alarm company has not telephoned the site, the dispatcher will advise them to do so and to call back with the outcome of the call. The dispatcher may dispatch the call but must advise the responding unit that the site has not yet been called. Should an alarm company refuse to call a site, advise the patrol supervisor.

2.2.2 Do not advise alarm companies to call the site prior to the dispatch of residential panic alarms (audible or silent) or silent commercial alarms. In both cases, dispatch the alarms upon receipt from an alarm company. Obtain the following information:

- Location of the alarm (Address, name of business or resident)
- Type of alarm (audible or silent).
- Time the alarm was activated
- Location/Type of alarm in the building (interior alarm, motion detector, front door, glass breaking, etc.)
- Specifics of alarm – unauthorized opening, subject on site without proper codes, invalid keypad entry, etc.
- Alarm company name, operator name/number and telephone number.

2.2.3 Dispatch an officer and cover unit, if applicable. When available, dispatch a K9 unit.

2.3 Audible Burglar Alarms Reported by a Citizen

2.3.1 Obtain the following information:

- Location of the alarm (address, cross streets if the exact location is unknown, business name)
- Type of alarm (vehicle or structure, obtain a description)
- Other circumstances (is/was there anyone suspicious in the area; is there anyone home (if a residential alarm); when did this happen; what did the suspect and suspect vehicle look like; what was their direction of travel?)
- Reporting Party's name, location and telephone number

2.4 Canceling a Burglar Alarm Call

2.4.1 An alarm call can only be canceled by the alarm company originally reporting the alarm. If a citizen or employee calls stating the alarm was accidental, advise them to call the alarm company. The dispatcher should advise the responding officer of

the circumstances of the request for cancellation. The final determination of response will remain with the responding officer and/or the patrol supervisor.

2.5 Panic and Duress Alarms

2.5.1 Panic and duress alarms are usually reported by an alarm company. The purpose of these alarms is to safeguard occupied structures, primarily within residential settings, such as homes. For the sake of this policy, these types of alarms are not to be used for commercial locations.

2.5.2 Panic alarms can be either silent or audible and are manually activated by pushing a button or triggering device. The resident may activate their panic alarm when they observe a prowler or burglar.

2.5.3 A duress alarm is meant to be used when a person is forced to deactivate their alarm system. For example, during a residential robbery a suspect could threaten the victim with violence unless they turn off the alarm. Duress alarms are typically activated by entering a special disarm code. They are always silent alarms. These types of alarms are priority calls. Even if the location has a history of false alarms, treat it as valid unless it is confirmed false alarm.

2.5.4 Obtain the following information:

- Location of the alarm (address and name of resident or business)
- Telephone number to the location
- Type of alarm (panic or duress, silent or audible)
- Time the alarm was activated
- Alarm company name, operator name/number and phone number.

2.5.5 Initiate a dispatch incident and dispatch two officers, if applicable. When available, dispatch a K9 officer.

2.6 Canceling a Panic or Duress Alarm

2.6.1 Only the reporting alarm company can cancel a panic or duress alarm. If a citizen or employee calls stating the alarm was accidental, advise them to call the alarm company. One officer must continue to respond to the call and confirm the accidental activation. The dispatcher should advise the responding officer of the name of the citizen or employee trying to cancel the call.

3.0 VARDA (Voice Activated Radio Dispatched Alarm)

- 3.1** This type of alarm is installed for special monitoring at the location of recent burglaries. When the alarm is activated, it will set off a voice message directly over a radio frequency (generally a non-primary frequency), repeating the message several times. Example: "Burglary in progress, 231 Union Street." The message will repeat itself until the alarm is reset, usually manually.
- 3.2** When this alarm is activated, initiate a dispatch incident and dispatch an officer and, if applicable, a cover unit. When available, dispatch a K9 officer.

4.0 Vehicle Alarms

- 4.1** Vehicle alarms are audible and will be reported by citizens. Obtain the following information:
- Location of the alarm (address where the vehicle is located or cross streets)
 - Vehicle description including license plate, if known
 - Time element (how long has the alarm been going off?)
 - Other circumstances (was anyone seen near or around the vehicle at the time of the alarm? Was the alarm caused by someone breaking into the vehicle?)
 - Reporting Party's name, location and phone number
- 4.2** Initiate a dispatch incident and dispatch one officer. If it appears to be a recent auto burglary and the Reporting Party can provide a suspect description, dispatch a second unit, if applicable.

5.0 Robbery Alarms

- 5.1** Always treat a robbery alarm as a robbery in progress until verified as a false alarm. Robbery alarms may be reported by an alarm company or citizens and can be audible or silent. This could also be reported by an alarm company as a "panic/duress alarm at a business" but should be type coded as the appropriate robbery alarm. Obtain the following information:
- Location of alarm.
 - Address, business name and phone number of business.
 - Alarm Company name, operator name/number and phone number.
- 5.2** Dispatchers shall immediately dispatch the detail using the following format:
- Transmit three alert tones.

- Dispatch primary unit.
- Dispatch cover unit.
- Dispatch K9 unit, if available.
- Notify Patrol Supervisor.

- 5.3** KEEP THE RADIO FREQUENCY CLEAR UNTIL ADVISED BY THE OFFICER IN CHARGE THAT THE SCENE IS CODE 4.
- 5.4** The dispatcher will not call the location of the robbery alarm until advised to do so by the officer in charge. When the call is made, the dispatcher should always try to speak to a manager or their representative. The dispatcher should carefully listen to the person's tone of voice, voice inflections, etc. If nothing unusual seems to be occurring, the dispatcher should confirm there is no robbery occurring, that the person they are speaking with is an employee and obtain the employee's name. The dispatcher will tell the employee that there are officers outside the building due to a robbery alarm and have the employee go outside the building to contact the officers. The dispatcher will advise the employee to carry nothing in their hands, obtain a physical and clothing description of the employee and determine which door the employee will exit from, or direct the employee to an exit specified by an on-scene unit.
- 5.5** The dispatcher will then advise field units in charge that it appears Code 4 inside and relay the location and description of the employee exiting the business.
- 5.6** In the event the alarm was valid, suspect information will be broadcast to the officers as soon as possible.