

# False Alarm Reduction Program



SANDY SPRINGS™  
GEORGIA

# True Verification

- Effective June 19, 2019, monitoring alarm companies must provide True Verification prior to calling 911 related to intrusion (burglar) alarm activations
  - Confirmation by the alarm user at the alarm site or via self-monitored audio/visual equipment
  - Confirmation by a private guard responder at the alarm site
  - Audible and/or visual evidence provided by a monitored alarm system, provided that such evidence shall be made available to the 911 center (within 24 hours)
- The verification requirement is when the building is unoccupied

# Why the Change to True Verification

Enhance the safety for all who live and work in Sandy Springs



# The Problem

## Excessive false alarm calls

- 14,080 registered alarm users (residential & business)
  - City population - 107,000 | 6,000+ businesses
- 266 registered alarm companies
- Generating an average of 9,570 calls per year into the 911 Center
  - **99.5% of those calls are False Alarms**
- Each alarm call takes an average of 7 minutes to handle = 66,900 minutes (1,117 hours per year) 911 operators are pulled away from handling calls related to true emergencies
- Each dispatch to these false alarms diverts public safety personnel from crime prevention duties including patrolling neighborhoods

# April Statistics

- 659 calls from alarm companies into Non Emergency Call Center
  - 151 (23%) - Non verified
    - failure to make state-mandated 2-call verification or lack of registration
  - 114 (17%) - Called to Cancel after Police dispatch
- 534 calls from alarm companies into ChatComm
  - Includes panic, duress, hold-up, medical
  - 532 false alarms (99.6% false)

# Outreach Efforts

- Fall/Winter 2018
  - Meetings with alarm companies
  - Readiness Survey to alarm companies
  - Mailer to alarm users
  - Outreach to HOA leadership
  - Social | Next Door postings
  - Website updates
- March 2019
- March/April 2019
  - Advertisements in Reporter / Neighbor
  - Social postings
  - HOA meetings
  - Website updates
- May 2019
  - Social | Next Door postings
  - Alarm Expo
  - News media stories



# May 20 Alarm Expo

- 26 alarm company participants
- More than 200 attendees

# Monitored Alarm Systems

- Having a monitored alarm system is a personal choice
- It is a business agreement between the alarm company and the alarm user
- Alarm companies have NO agreement with Public Safety for guaranteed response
  - Fact: Alarm Industry concedes that 98% and more of all alarm calls are false
  - Fact: Because calls from alarm companies are 98% + false and have been for decades, calls from alarm companies currently receive low priority response (average 20 minutes or more)
  - Fact: No other industry with a 99% failure rate is viewed as a successful business. No other industry utilizes public safety resources without permission as the cornerstone of their business model



# Efforts to Reduce False Alarm Call Volume

- 2012: Council adopted its Alarm Ordinance
  - Based on alarm industry recommendations, with alarm users fined for each false alarm
  - 16% decrease 2013 to 2014
  - 6% decrease 2014 to 2015
  - 0.44% increase 2015 to 2016
- 2017: Ordinance changed penalizing alarm companies for false alarms, since the alarm company is entity calling 911
  - Alarm industry sued the City, claiming law violates company's constitutional rights for fining alarm company for customers' mistakes - Federal Court dismisses the lawsuit
- 2018: City amends Ordinance to require True Verification beginning June 2019

# How To Prepare for True Verification

- Understand all of your options
  - Confirmation by the alarm user at the alarm site or via self-monitored audio/visual equipment
  - Confirmation by a private guard responder at the alarm site
  - Audible and/or visual evidence provided by a monitored alarm system
- If your current alarm provider is offering excessive charges or is unable to provide the services you desire, shop other providers
- Additional information at [sandyspringsga.gov/alarms](http://sandyspringsga.gov/alarms)



# Burglary Trends

- Multi-Family Residences

- 2016: 233
- 2017: 159
- 2018: 147

- Single Family Residences

- 2016: 197
- 2017: 119
- 2018: 93