

# GREATER SUDBURY POLICE SERVICE

## VERIFIED ALARM RESPONSE PROGRAM (VARP)

EFFECTIVE & EFFICIENT  
DEPLOYMENT OF RESOURCES



# AGENDA

- Background on alarms
- Board False Alarm By-law
- Data Review
- Proposed Verified Alarm Program
- Board consideration
- Next steps



# BACKGROUND

- Definition
  - A false alarm call where police responded at the request of an alarm monitoring company and were not required following assessment on arrival
  - Security alarms are used in residential, commercial, industrial and other properties for protection against robbery, theft, property damage to to provide personal protection



# FALSE ALARM

- A **false alarm** is an alarm call where police responded and were not required; or where an alarm response cancellation was received after dispatch advising that police were not required.
  - Human error/lack of training of users
  - Weak batteries/Failure of alarm system
  - Drafts
  - Pets



## Alarm Response

- Two-officer response
- Treated as a priority for response
- Most times alarms are false
- Time consuming
- In 1999 5,623 alarms were false and in 2000 over 6,000 were false
- Board reviewed and implemented a new program



## False Alarm By-law

- In 2002, the Board adopted a False Alarm By-law in response to the number of false alarms
- Provided for registration of security alarm systems and imposed a fee for false alarms
- Registration process requires that a key holder be identified; if key holder cannot be located, then police are dispatched
- Adopted to reduce the number off false alarms



# BY-LAW 2002-01

## Current Fees

	Initial Fee Structure
Annual Registration	\$40 Residential \$60 Commercial \$60 Hospital/Education \$250 School Board
False Alarm - <b>registered</b>	\$75/false alarm (first 1 is free)
False Alarm - <b>unregistered</b>	\$125/false alarm



# Alarm Response

Monitoring Station calls, Communicator obtains:

- Address where alarm is coming from
- Name of business/homeowner if residential
- Type of alarm (perimeter, burglary alarm, panic etc.)
- Location of alarm on the premise (front door, upstairs motion, etc)
- Time alarm was received
- If a keyholder has been contacted, if so the name of keyholder attending, their ETA and vehicle they will be driving
- If it's a business, hours of operation
- Alarm company's name and call back number

**Communicator Assigns a priority and alarm gets dispatched.**





# Alarm Response

Our current event types and assigned priority numbers for alarms are as follows:

- **Priority 1** - Alarm –Hold up/Panic Alarm
- **Priority 2** - Alarm- Glass break
- **Priority 3** - Alarm- Business/Residential
- **Priority 3** - Alarm- Audible



# Ongoing Trends

- In **2017**, the GSPS received **4260** alarm calls. Police were dispatched to **1818** calls.  
**97%** of these calls were cancelled or deemed to be false.
- In **2018**, the GSPS received **4122** alarm calls. Police were dispatched to **1707** calls.  
**97%** of these calls were cancelled or deemed to be false.
- In **2019**, the GSPS received **3986** alarm calls. Police were dispatched to **1838** calls.  
**97%** of these calls were cancelled or deemed to be false.
- In **2020**, the GSPS received **3142** alarm calls. Police were dispatched to **1474** calls.  
**93%** of these calls were cancelled or deemed to be false.
- In **2021**, the GSPS received **3270** alarm calls. Police were dispatched to **1564** calls.  
**93%** of these calls were cancelled or deemed to be false.

Alarms account on average . 7% of our Calls for Service.



# IMPACT ON EMERGENCY RESOURCES

Type of Resource	Time Committed to False Alarms 2021
Patrol Officer (x2)	2357.5 Hours (50.30/hr) - \$118,582.25
9-1-1 Personnel	1178.75 Hours (38.17/hr) - \$44,992.89
Registration & Billing	Alarm Coord 780 hrs (31.77/hr) - \$24,781; Finance Coordinator 208 hrs (35.82/hr) - \$7451
Total Cost (including human resources, equipment & infrastructure)	\$195, 807/year
Officer & Public Safety	<b>NO PRICE</b>



# Comprehensive Review of Alarms

- To allow for effective and efficient deployment of resources;
- To reduce calls for service for uniform patrol; and
- To increase the capacity of police to respond to true emergencies and other Service priorities.
- Consideration of alarm response in other municipalities
  - Niagara, Toronto Police Service, Hamilton, Windsor, London, Waterloo, Ottawa, Peel, Durham, Barrie, York and Halton
- Findings
  - **Verified Alarm Program**



# Verified Alarm Program (VARP) - WHAT IS IT...

- This means that the alarm company must “*verify*” the alarm before calling police; and it is not an accidental alarm.
- Verification is made through sound, video, an eyewitness account or multiple zone activation points (sensors) that indicate a crime is occurring or has taken place.



## How does it work ...

- Monitoring Station calls.
- Communicator asks if alarm has been verified by one of four methods.
  - If “No” – advise the caller we will NOT be dispatching, and to call back when verified.
  - If “Yes” – note the method of verification and continue as previously done in the past.
  - Priority is a ‘2’ or ‘3’ unless it is a panic/ hold-up alarm.



## How does it work ...

- Monitoring Station calls.
- Communicator asks if alarm has been verified by one of four methods
  - Audio sensors that confirm criminal activity detected in the premises
  - Video system that confirms criminal activity through visual images
  - Confirmation by owner, key holder, witness or other response agency
  - Alarm triggered by multiple activation points





# How does it work ...

## 911 Emergency Communications response

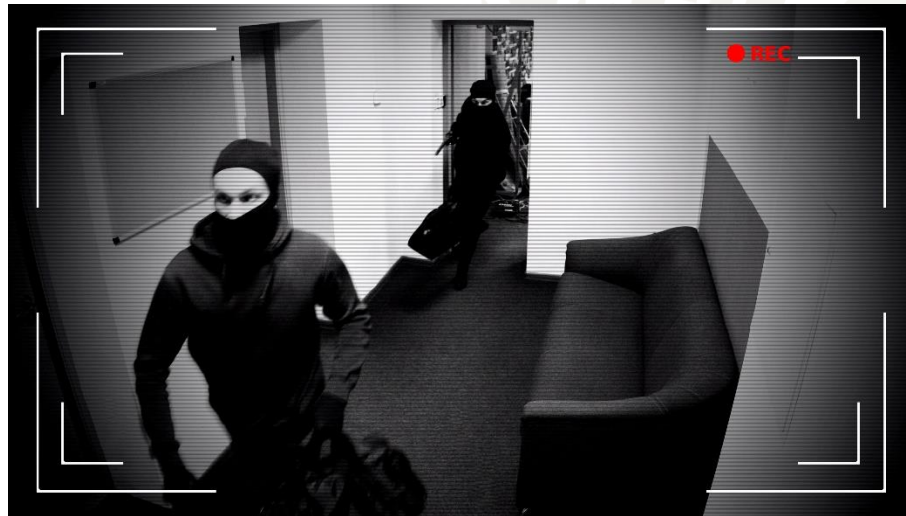
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# EXAMPLES

- **Audio:** Sensor activated and then alarm company hears sounds of persons inside via microphone (footsteps, crashing, banging, etc.)
- **Video:** Sensor activated and then video footage shows person inside committing crime after being viewed by alarm company.



## EXAMPLES Cont'd...

- **Witness:** An eyewitness on scene who confirms criminal activity is or has taken place.
- **Cross Zone:** More than one sensor being activated (glass break and then motion). BUT it must be DIFFERENT sensors, not multiple hits on the same sensor (three hits on same door)



# COMPARATORS VARP

POLICE SERVICE	VARP
Hamilton	Yes
London	Yes
Ottawa	No
Niagara	Yes
Peel	No
Toronto	Yes
Waterloo	Yes
Halton	No
Durham	Yes
York	Yes
Windsor	Yes
Barrie	No



# OTHER OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO MAINTAIN RESPONSE

- Most alarm companies offer guard response for nominal fee.
- Homeowners have options to upgrade their system to include video or installing multiple types of sensors if they only have contact sensors or a perimeter alarm.



## Q & A's

- A monitoring station calls to advise, “We have three Master Bedroom motion sensors activated.”

– **Would we dispatch? Is this verified?**

➤ **NO...** We don't dispatch for single zone hits.

➤ We would advise the monitoring company to call back once verified.

**Note:** Communicator will advise caller if police will be dispatched or not.



# Q & A's Cont'd

- A Panic/Hold-up call has come in!
  - **Do they have to verify this first?**

**NO they don't!** These remain a Priority “1” and officers will be dispatched.

Communicators will confirm what kind of alarm it is, and from where.

i.e. – a personal key fob, a secret duress code entered on the keypad, or a police panic button on the keypad





## Q & A's Cont'd

- A citizen calls in and does NOT subscribe to a professional monitoring company but Monitors It Themself. They have an 'alarm going off'. **Do we Dispatch?**
  - **YES, we will dispatch, but ONLY IF the alarm is verified.** If not, Communicator will have them call back once alarm is verified.
  - Communicator will ask if they can find out if it was an 'app' on their phone, a siren, the screen on their keypad, etc. Nowadays there are so many ways one can be alerted.
  - Note: If the alarm is deemed false, GSPS will bill them directly.



## Q & A's Cont'd

- Will there still be false alarm charges for the occurrences that prove to be false, even if the alarm was verified ?
  - **YES....** We are still charging false alarm fees to the monitoring station, where the situation proves to be a false alarm.
    - Note: Alarm owners who don't subscribe with professional monitoring stations will be billed directly.





## Q & A's Cont'd

- Why aren't officers being dispatched to all alarms, even if not verified?
  - **An alarm signal is not an indicator of criminal activity; it's just a "signal" that something is going on with the alarm system.** A traditional alarm system can only detect motion – **not criminal activity.**
  - We require multiple activation points for the alarm to be verified.
  - The new *GSPS Verified Alarm Response Policy* is to **ONLY** create calls for intrusion alarms that **HAVE** been verified.



# VERIFIED ALARM RESPONSE PROGRAM





**QUESTIONS?**

