

San Diego Police Department

TRAINING BULLETIN

A PUBLICATION OF THE SAN DIEGO POLICE DEPARTMENT

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20-10

JUNE 19, 2020

RESPONDING TO RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL BURGLARY ALARMS

I. PURPOSE

This bulletin will provide Department members with guidance on how to respond to residential and commercial burglary alarm calls, as well as how to properly disposition the calls so false alarm responses can be accurately tracked and reduced.

This bulletin is intended to be educational and procedural in nature, and does not supersede any policy, procedure, or training regarding tactics or officer safety.

II. BACKGROUND

Calls for service generated by false activations of burglary alarm systems represent a substantial burden on Department resources. As many as 97% of requests for response to burglary alarm activations are for false alarms. Department members responding to false alarms are not available to carry out other law enforcement duties. False alarm means any activation of an alarm system that results in a call for service where an emergency situation does not exist. It is the intent of the Department's false alarm program to preserve public health, safety, and welfare by reducing the number of false alarms.

III. BURGLARY ALARM RESPONSE GUIDELINES

A. Body Worn Camera

1. DP 1.49 – “Axon Body Worn Cameras” states, “Officers shall begin recording in the event mode while driving to a call that has the potential to involve an enforcement contact.”

Alarm users who have been assessed fines as a result of members' responses to false alarms may request a hearing to appeal these fines.

Body Worn Camera footage can be extremely helpful to the Hearing Officer in determining whether a fine should be upheld. Therefore, officers should activate their Body Worn Cameras when responding to burglary alarm calls, consistent with DP 1.49.

B. Response

1. Department members must physically respond to the location of the alarm activation and investigate the circumstances unless the reporting party cancels the request. Members may not call the residence or business in lieu of responding, as it is not possible to verify a person's identity via telephone or determine whether statements made over the phone are made under duress.

C. Preliminary Investigation

1. The preliminary investigation should include the following:
 - a. Check for vehicles parked in the driveway, in front of the residence, or the alley behind the residence. Note the license plates of any vehicles.
 - b. Check for signs of tampering on doors and windows, to include damaged or removed screens.
 - c. Attempt to contact occupants, verify their identity, and their lawful purpose on the premises.

IV. DISPOSITION OF BURGLARY ALARM CALLS

- A. It is important to take certain steps when closing burglary alarm radio calls so false alarms can be accurately tracked. In an effort to reduce the number of false alarm activations, verified false alarms result in the assessment of fines to the alarm user.
- B. All events must be cleared with a disposition code. The combination of the disposition code and the Department member's notes on the event assist the Alarm Administrator in determining whether a fine will be assessed.
- C. Documentation
 1. Notate on the event the license plate of any vehicle parked in the driveway, in front of the residence, or the alley behind the residence;

2. Whether the perimeter was checked, and if portions of the perimeter could not be checked, why not;
3. Any signs of forced entry, or the absence of signs of forced entry;
4. Any doors or windows that were not secure, regardless of the presence of signs of forced entry;
5. The presence of any pets that may have activated the alarm; and
6. The identity of anyone discovered at the home or business, and any statements they made as to why the activation occurred.

D. Disposition

All events must be cleared with a final disposition code. If it is determined the alarm activation occurred for some reason other than an emergency situation, the event should be cleared with a “U,” indicating the report was unfounded. This includes, but is not limited to, alarm operator error, employees or vendors without the proper code, faulty equipment, wandering pets, and air blowing from open windows or heating/air conditioning systems.

V. **CHRONIC ALARMS/REVOCATIONS**

- A. For the first through fifth false alarms in a twelve-month period, a notice of violation will be issued and a fine will be assessed.
- B. For the sixth false alarm, the alarm system permit will be revoked.
- C. Department members who become aware of a chronic alarm should contact the Alarm Administrator in the Police Permits and Licensing Unit at AlarmAdministrator@pd.sandiego.gov and provide the address, name of the resident or business if known, and how many times Department members have responded. The Alarm Administrator will verify that there have been six false alarms, revoke the alarm system permit, and contact the alarm user. Please do not create a Special Circumstances (PAC) file. The permit cannot be revoked until six *verified* false alarms have been documented.

If you have any questions regarding the content of this bulletin, please contact Officer Frank Dragula or Sergeant Dan McClain in the Police Permits and Licensing Unit.