Alarm Activation Report

Purpose

The purpose of this bulletin is to outline the procedure for completion of the Alarm Activation Report form.

Introduction

Each month, the Santa Ana Police Department receives over 900 calls for service regarding alarm activations, including robbery, burglary, and panic alarms. When a business owner or resident applies for an alarm permit, they are soliciting a police response to their business or residence in the event of an alarm activation. Police response to false alarm activations can result in a potential fine for the alarm user. Therefore, it is important that the police response to the alarm activation be properly documented on the Alarm Activation Report.

I. False Alarms

Santa Ana Municipal Code Section 10-271(g) identifies a false alarm activation as "the activation of an alarm system necessitating response by the police department where an emergency situation for which the alarm system was designed or used does not exist." When there is no physical evidence that a robbery, attempted robbery, entry, or attempted entry has occurred (i.e., pry marks; glass breakage; evidence of missing property; a witness; or extenuating circumstances), the alarm activation will be considered false.

II. Alarm Permits

Santa Ana Municipal Code Section 10-276 requires all alarm users to obtain a permit from the Police Department prior to the installation or use of an alarm system. The alarm permit applications are available at City Hall or on the website, http://www.santa-ana.org/. There is an annual fee associated with the permit.

III. False Alarm Penalties
Effective July 1, 2003, new guidelines were adopted that changed the false alarm penalty structure. The six-month initiation period for new installation is no longer provided. All alarm users are allowed one false burglar alarm in a 12-month period without a penalty. Residential alarm users will be allowed one false robbery or panic alarm in a 12-month period without a penalty. Commercial business alarm users are assessed a fine for every false robbery or panic alarm. Starting with the second false alarm in the same 12-month period, penalty fees ranging from $50 - $400 per occurrence will be assessed to each alarm user.

The 12-month period is not based on the calendar year. It is determined by the date of the most recent false alarm.

IV. Non-Response

After the 8th false alarm in any 12-month period, police response to alarm activations originating from an alarm user’s location will be discontinued. Failure to pay any false alarm fines will also result in automatic non-response status.

V. Alarm Activation Report Process

A. Reporting Requirement:

The Alarm Activation Report is completed for each alarm call that an officer responds to, whether the alarm is false or not. This report is in addition to any crime report that is completed regarding the call.

B. Report Form Completion:

The Alarm Activation Report form is a one-page report with two carbonless copies attached. The report form is simple and self-explanatory. Minor revisions to the reports were made in July 2005. When completing the report, attention should be given to the following areas of the report form:

1. **CI number**: In cases where a crime report is completed, the same CI number is used for the Alarm Activation Report.

2. **Crime or False**: Properly identify the alarm call as a false alarm or the result of criminal activity. Alarm activations caused by criminal activity do not result in potential fines for the alarm user.

3. **211 or 459**: Properly identify the alarm call as a robbery (211) alarm or burglary (459) alarm. The potential fines are different for each alarm type. False panic alarms are considered the same as robbery alarms for purposes of assessing penalty fees.
4. **Name**: Properly identify the name of the business or resident. An incorrect business name can result in the identification of the wrong alarm user when the activation is logged by the Crime Prevention Unit.

5. **Residence**: Indicate if the location is a residence by checking the box “Yes” or “No.” A check mark of “No” identifies the location as a commercial business.

6. **Apartment/Suite number**: Properly identify the suite number. An incorrect suite number can result in the identification of the wrong alarm user when the activation is logged by the Crime Prevention Unit.

7. **Cause of Alarm Activations**: The first three choices (Employee, Cleaning Service, and Alarm Co./Repair) are self explanatory. The fourth choice "Other," encompasses any unknown factors causing the alarm activation.

8. **Responsible Party**: Properly identify the name of the person (Employee, Cleaning Service, Alarm Co./Repair, etc.) who is present upon arrival. Obtain the person’s driver license number, date of birth, or some other type of identifying information.

9. **Comments**: Note any pertinent information, unusual circumstances, areas the officer was not able to check, or additional reports related to the call.
C. Report Distribution:

After the handling officer has completed the entire report, the green copy of the report form is left at the business or residence. In cases where there is no responsible party at the scene, the copy should be left in a manner where it is secure and can easily be located by the alarm user. This is important since the alarm user needs to know as soon as possible that his business or residence has had an alarm activation, and that the police responded. The
remainder of the report form (white and yellow copies) are turned into the Station Supervisor's Office in the normal manner.

Summary

The Alarm Activation Report is one of the most common and simple reports that officers will complete during their normal work day. However, it is one of the few calls for service where a citizen has preapplied for a police response, and is potentially subject to a fine after the police respond. Consequently, proper documentation of the police response through the Alarm Activation Report is essential.

If the false alarm incident is later determined to have been a valid burglary or robbery, make sure to change to final call type on the original call. In addition, the Alarm Coordinator should also be notified to ensure the alarm user is not assessed a fine for this crime.

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