



TORONTO POLICE SERVICE

ALARM SYSTEM RESPONSE POLICY

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Preface

Toronto Police Service (TPS) response to alarm signals dates back decades. On January 1, 1990, a Policy was introduced in an effort to reduce police attendance at false alarms. Throughout the years, amendments have been implemented that have included the registration requirement for monitoring stations, alarm dealers and their related clients, verification processes and suspension of service.

On September 29, 1996, the TPS expanded the Policy to include the Cost Recovery Program. Despite these efforts, the TPS has continued to provide response to a high number of alarm events that, year after year, have been found to be false.

On September 10, 2018, in an effort to adhere to the core responsibilities of policing and to improve efficiencies and effectiveness, a Verified Response requirement has been included in the Policy and applied to all burglar alarm system signals. This Policy describes the police response to an alarm system activation reported by a Monitoring Station.

Inquiries may be addressed to the Alarm Response Coordinator between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., Monday to Friday at (416) 808-8860, via email at alarms.program@torontopolice.on.ca or by fax at (416) 808-8870.

1. DEFINITIONS

1.1 Alarm Business

Means any person or persons who engage in the business of monitoring alarm systems, which includes Live Video Surveillance and reporting to the Toronto Police Service when an alarm system has been activated (referred to as 'Monitoring Station').

1.2 Alarm Company Identification Number

Means a registration number assigned by the Alarm Unit that identifies an alarm company/dealer.

1.3 Alarm System

Means any device which, when activated transmits a signal –audible, visual, or by other means, to alert a person(s) to the activation.

1.4 Audio Device

Means the transfer of real-time audio surveillance of an alarm system location to a person that permits the direct live listening in of the alarm system location or portions thereof and provides sufficient evidence in the audio that criminal activity is occurring/has taken place OR there is imminent threat to personal safety.

1.5 Burglar Alarm

Means an alarm system installed in a premise which, when activated, signals an alert of criminal activity or imminent threat to personal safety. It includes, but is not limited to alarm distinctions described as burglar, motion, door, window, glass break, etcetera.

1.6 Cancelled Alarm

Means a request received from the Monitoring Station to cancel police response to an alarm signal **prior** to the dispatch of the police field unit to the alarm event.

1.7 Cancelled Accepted Alarm (CAA)

Means a request received from the Monitoring Station to cancel police response to an alarm signal **after** the police field unit has accepted the dispatch to attend the alarm event.

1.8 Company Alarm

Means an event created in response to the activation of an alarm system installed in a non-residential premise (i.e. business, school, bank, etcetera).

1.9 False Alarm

Means an alarm system signal which causes police response to investigate criminal activity or imminent threat to personal safety whereupon police officers at the scene confirm no such situation has taken place OR

Means the activation of an alarm system, where in the opinion of the Chief of Police or designate, no emergency or evidence of criminal activity exists.

1.10 Hold Up Alarm

Means an event created in response to the activation of a hold-up alarm signal installed in a financial institution (defined as bank, trust or loan company or credit union) or business premise which, when activated signals an alert of a robbery that is occurring/has taken place. An alarm system installed in a commercial premise identified by the alarm industry as a **panic** alarm is classified as a hold up alarm.

1.11 Multiple Zone Activations

Means the capability of the alarm system to separate and report incidents or alarm signals by area that are monitored by the Monitoring Station (i.e. Zone 1 – Front Door, Zone 2 – Front Entry Motion, Zone 3 – Kitchen Motion, etcetera.)

1.12 Panic Alarm

Means an alarm system which, when activated, signals an alert of criminal activity or imminent threat to personal safety. It includes, but is not limited to; alarm distinctions described as panic, hold up, duress, domestic violence, emergency button, etcetera.

1.13 Post Suspension Alarm

Means a request received from a Monitoring Station for a police response to an alarm system that has been suspended from receiving police response to alarm system activations.

1.14 Premise or Permit Identification Number

Means a registration number assigned by the Monitoring Station that identifies the alarm system (premise or device).

1.15 Residence Alarm

Means an event created in response to the activation of an alarm system installed in a residential premise.

1.16 Roaming Personal Safety Alarm

Means an alarm event created in response to the activation of an alarm system which, when activated, transmits a signal accompanied with audio communication.

1.17 Valid Alarm

Means an alarm system signal, confirmed by police officers at the scene, activated for its intended purpose- - criminal activity occurring/has occurred or imminent threat to personal safety.

1.18 Enhanced Call Verification (ECV) changed name from Verification Process

Means a process completed by the Monitoring Station that requires communication confirmation (verbal or electronic) to verify that criminal activity is occurring/has taken place OR there is imminent threat to personal safety PRIOR to requesting a police response.

1.19 Verified Response (VR)

Means a process that provides confirmation that criminal activity is occurring/has taken place OR there is imminent threat to personal safety through these means AND must be met PRIOR to requesting a police response:

- Audio Device;
- Video Device; or
- An eyewitness (i.e. private security or person at scene)
- Multiple Zone activation

1.20 Video Device

Means the transfer of real-time video surveillance of an alarm system location that permits the direct live viewing of the alarm system location or portions thereof and provides sufficient evidence in the images that criminal activity is occurring/has taken place OR there is imminent threat to personal safety.

2. POLICY OVERVIEW

2.1 Police Response

The TPS will respond to requests from Monitoring Stations to attend to and investigate alarm system signals under the following conditions:

- The Monitoring Station is registered with the TPS;
- The Monitoring Station operator has complied with call processing requirements;
- The Monitoring Station is not under suspension per the provisions outlined in the By-law governing the TPS Cost Recovery Program;
- The Monitoring Station has complied with the verified response requirement as applied to burglar alarm system signals;....changed to verified response
- The premise and/or alarm system is not under suspension of police response to an alarm system.

Note: Verified activations are treated as a high priority call for service. **Police response is determined by the nature of demand, priorities and resources available at the time of the request for police response.**

2.2 No Police Response

The TPS will not respond to:

- Requests from Monitoring Stations that are not registered with the TPS or where the operator fails to provide a valid alarm company identification number;
- Requests from Monitoring Stations that have been suspended from service;
- Requests from Monitoring Stations for premises that have been suspended from service;
- Alarm system signals that have been communicated via an automatic dialling device and/or a pre-recorded message.
- Alarms that do not meet a Verified Response criteria. (Excluding Panic Alarms)
- **Note:** The TPS **may** accept a call for service when the information provided is sufficient evidence that criminal activity is occurring/has taken place OR there is imminent threat to personal safety.

2.3 Event Types

The TPS has designated four (4) specific types of alarm events:

- Company Alarm (COMAL)
- Hold Up Alarm (HOLAL)
- Residence Alarm (RESAL)
- Roaming Personal Safety Alarm (RPSAL)

2.4 Alarm Unit Responsibilities

The Alarm Unit is responsible for the daily management of the TPS Alarm/Security System Response Policy. Such responsibilities include, and are not limited to:

- Processing of all registration requests of Monitoring Stations and related alarm dealers and customers;
- Review of all processed alarm events;
- Preparation of the False Alarm Report for invoicing purposes;
- Preparation and issuance of alarm related correspondences (caution, suspension, reinstatement) as described within the Policy;
- Processing of all appeal requests;
- Administration of all alarm system issues through the respective Monitoring Station ;
- Liaison role with Monitoring Stations and alarm dealers.

An Alarm Response Coordinator will oversee the management of the TPS Alarm System Response Policy.

2.5 Monitoring Station Responsibilities

Monitoring Station responsibilities include, and are not limited to:

- Completing the registration processes of the TPS prior to requesting police response to an alarm system signal;
- Ensuring customers are informed of the Policy and any updates therein, and its contents (i.e. verified response, false alarm fee, suspension policies, alarm disposition appeal procedure, suspension appeal procedure, etcetera);
- Providing written and oral instructions to alarm system users in the proper use and operation of the alarm system;
- **Administration of all alarm system issues with the Alarm Unit;**
- Complying with the described requirements contained within the Policy.

2.6 Alarm System User Responsibilities

Alarm system users are responsible for:

- Maintaining the premise and alarm system in a manner that will minimize or eliminate false alarms;
- Providing up to date contact names and telephone numbers to the Monitoring Station (key holder information);
- Responding to or having a key holder who has access to the alarm system location attend when requested by the TPS to assist with the deactivation of the alarm system, providing access and/or providing alternate security;
- Not activating the alarm system for any reason other than the purpose of which the alarm system was intended;

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- **Addressing alarm system issues (i.e. service, inquiries re invoices and suspension of service, submission of Disposition Appeal Request or Suspension Appeal Request) with the Monitoring Station.**

Alarm system users are encouraged to use the emergency (9-1-1) or non-emergency (416-808-2222) telephone systems to request a police response, where applicable. Direct contact with a Communications Services operator enables the dispatch of appropriate emergency responders.

Inappropriate use of an alarm system to request police response may result in a false alarm disposition and subsequent false alarm fee.

3. COST RECOVERY PROGRAM

The Cost Recovery Program was established to address the issues of increased demand for response to monitored alarm system signals compounded by reduced availability of fiscal and human resources. Board By-law 110 governs the Cost Recovery Program.

3.1 False Alarm Fee

The TPS invoices a fee of **\$130.00+ HST** for an alarm event accepted by a police field unit that has been determined to be **false**.

3.2 Monthly Invoice

False alarm fees are invoiced monthly to the Monitoring Station that requested the police response. The invoice is issued by Finance and Business Management, Accounting Services.

3.3 Cancelled Accepted Alarm (CAA)

The TPS will invoice a Monitoring Station for a cancelled alarm event that has been accepted by a police field unit prior to receiving a cancellation request from the Monitoring Station. This means that if an alarm event is cancelled during the period of time between receiving the call for service and assigning the police field unit(s) to attend the alarm event, no fee will be invoiced. However, should the cancellation request be received after the police field unit has **accepted the call**; the Monitoring Station will be invoiced for the alarm event.

NOTE: Attending officers may continue to investigate an alarm event and as such, the Monitoring Station will be invoiced accordingly.

4. REGISTRATION Monitoring Station Registration

The Monitoring Station is required to be registered with the TPS prior to requesting a police response. The Monitoring Station is responsible to contact the Alarm Unit and submit a registration request.

4.2 Alarm Company Registration

The Monitoring Station is responsible to register all contracted alarm companies operating within the City of Toronto who require a police response to installed alarm systems.

4.3 Alarm System (Customer)

There is no requirement to pre-register an alarm system. The registration of an alarm system is considered to be processed at the time of the first call for service.

4.4 Registration Term

There is no expiration of a registration (Monitoring Station, Alarm Company, or alarm system).

4.5 Registration Fee

No Registration fee is required.

5. VERIFIED RESPONSE REQUIREMENTS

Effective September 10, 2018, the verification process requirement has been applied to all burglar alarm signals. Panic alarm signals are EXCLUDED.

5.1 Burglar Alarm Signals

The Monitoring Station is required to verify that criminal activity is occurring/has taken place OR there is imminent threat to personal safety PRIOR to requesting a police response to all burglar alarm signals. A Verified Response burglar alarm signal will be dispatched to an available police field unit at a high priority level. Police will not respond to burglar alarms that have not been verified.

5.2 Panic Alarm Signals

There is no requirement to verify a panic alarm signal prior to requesting a police response.

5.3 Verification Options

The Monitoring Station is required to verify the burglar alarm using one of the following methods:

- Audio device;
- Video device;
- Eyewitness (private security or person at scene);
- Multiple zone activations;

6. SUSPENSION OF POLICE RESPONSE – MONITORING STATION

6.1 Monitoring Station Suspension

The Chief of Police or designate may discontinue police response to alarm events from Monitoring Stations when payment of all or part of any fees and interest owing under the Board By-law 110 governing the Cost Recovery Program is outstanding over 120 days.

6.2 Dispatch Request during Suspension Period

Should a suspended Monitoring Station request response to an alarm system signal (i.e. Post Suspension Alarm), the TPS **may** accept the call for service. Any such alarm event found to be false will be invoiced accordingly.

6.3 Correspondence – Suspension

The Alarm Unit will provide correspondence, via courier, to the Monitoring Station once it has incurred fees and/or interest in arrears of 90 days or more. The Alarm Unit will provide correspondence, via fax and email, to the Monitoring Station once a suspension has been invoked confirming the suspension of TPS response.

6.4 Monitoring Station Notification to Alarm Companies

It is the responsibility of the Monitoring Station to take the appropriate steps to notify all affected alarm companies (clients) of any invoked suspension of TPS response. The Monitoring Station is required to copy the TPS correspondence and provide it to the alarm companies (clients) notifying of the invoked suspension of TPS response. In addition, the Monitoring Station is responsible for establishing alternate response arrangements.

6.5 TPS Notification to Alarm Companies

It is the position of the TPS that it is in the public interest to notify alarm companies (clients) of an invoked suspension. **In the event that the TPS does not receive a copy of above referenced correspondence, within fourteen (14) days of the invoked suspension; the TPS will notify alarm companies (clients) registered with the Monitoring Station of the imposed suspension.**

6.6 Suspension Term

The suspension will remain in effect until such time TPS Financial Management is in receipt of payment of outstanding fees and/or interest, the Monitoring Station will be reinstated to full service. The Alarm Unit will provide correspondence confirming reinstatement of service to the Monitoring Station.

7. SUSPENSION OF POLICE RESPONSE – ALARM SYSTEM SUSPENSION

7.1 Alarm System Suspension

The Policy provides for police response to a maximum of four (4) false alarm events within 365 days, of the date of the first false alarm event. Following the response to the fourth false alarm event, the premise will be flagged for suspension. The suspension will become effective 14 days after the 4th false alarm.

The Monitoring Station (or alarm company, where applicable) is responsible to notify the customer to forewarn of the impending suspension status, explain the TPS suspension appeal procedures and establish alternate response arrangements.

NOTE: *Police response to an **emergency** event may still be obtained by using the emergency (9-1-1) telephone system.*

7.2 Dispatch Request during Suspension Period

Should a Monitoring Station request response to a suspended alarm system (i.e. Post Suspension Alarm), the TPS **may** accept the call for service. Any such alarm event found to be false will be invoiced accordingly.

7.3 Correspondence – Caution Notice

The Alarm Unit will provide a confidential Special Caution Notice to the Monitoring Station once an alarm system has incurred two (2) false alarm events within a 365 day period from the 1st alarm.

7.4 Monitoring Station Notice to Alarm Company/Customer - Caution

The Monitoring Station is responsible for informing the appropriate alarm company or alarm system user that the alarm system has incurred two (2) false alarm events. **It is recommended that steps be taken to prevent police response to additional false alarm events.** *(This includes retraining in the operation of the alarm system and/or service to the installed alarm system.)*

7.5 Correspondence – Suspension

Upon an alarm system incurring four (4) false alarm events within a 365 day period, the alarm system generates a suspension notice. The Alarm Unit will provide:

- A confidential Alarm Suspension Notice to the registered address of the alarm system;
- A confidential Suspension Advisory Notice to the Monitoring Station specifying which premise(s) will be suspended and the effective date of the suspension.

7.6 Suspension Term

The suspension of service to an alarm system will remain in effect for a 365 day period from the suspension effective date.

Upon the conclusion of the 365 day suspension period, the Alarm Response Coordinator will review the account history and assess whether or not the alarm system will be reinstated.

7.7 Correspondence – Reinstatement Advisory Notice

The Alarm Unit will provide a Reinstatement Advisory Notice to the Monitoring Station upon the conclusion of the 365 day suspension period. Alarm systems that have been approved for reinstatement will be identified and reinstated accordingly. **Alarm systems that have been deferred for reinstatement will be identified and remain under suspension of service until a suspension appeal have been submitted and reviewed.**

An alarm system may be deferred for reinstatement due to requests for police response during the suspension period. Additional information may be required to be submitted to the Alarm Unit by the Monitoring Station with respect to the steps taken to resolve false alarm causes.

It is the responsibility of the Monitoring Station to take the appropriate steps to notify all affected alarm companies or clients of any deferred reinstatement.

8. Appeal Processes

The Monitoring Station may appeal an alarm disposition (assessment of fee and count towards suspension) or an alarm suspension of police response (invoked suspension of police response to alarm system signals). **The administration of appeals (disposition or suspension) must be managed by the Monitoring Station.** The TPS Alarm Response Coordinator will only accept documentation submitted by the Monitoring Station.

8.1 Alarm Disposition Appeal

The Monitoring Station is responsible to submit an Alarm Disposition Appeal Request form and any supporting documentation (i.e. work order, invoice, police occurrence number, etcetera, describing the steps taken to resolve the false alarm issues) on behalf of the alarm system user should information be obtained that suggests that a **false** alarm was actually **valid within 90 days from the invoice date.**

8.2 Alarm Suspension Appeal

The Monitoring Station is responsible to submit a Suspension Appeal Request form and any supporting documentation (i.e. work order, invoice, explanation letter, etcetera, describing the steps taken to resolve the false alarm issues) should the alarm system user request such.

Note:

- A minimum suspension period of thirty (30) days, from the effective date must be served during which this period must be clear of any false and/or post suspension alarm system signals
- A request will not be accepted where a suspension appeal was successful within the previous 365 day period (this constitutes a second suspension). A previous Suspension Appeal Request must not have been processed within the past 365 day period