



FALSE ALARM REDUCTION PROGRAM

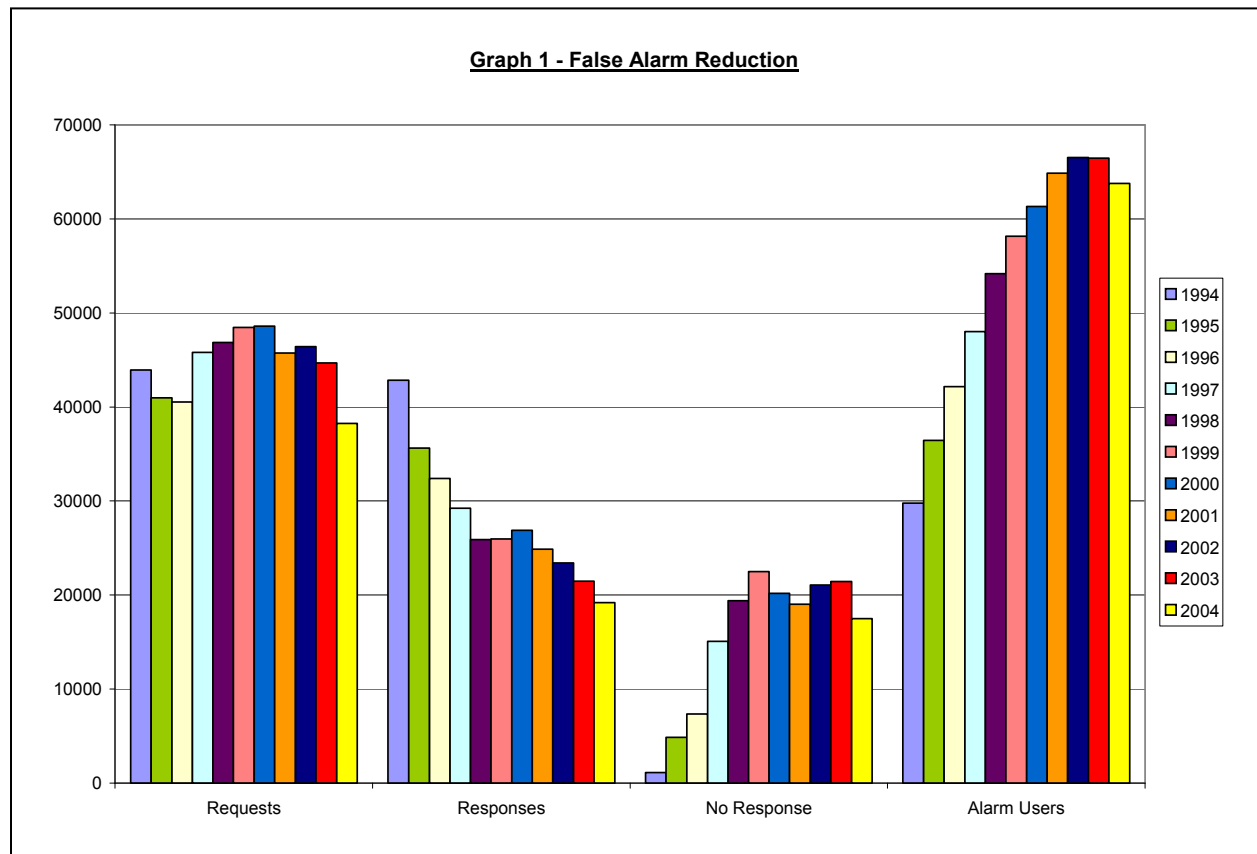


***ANNUAL REPORT
FOR YEAR ENDING 2004***

False Alarm Reduction

The False Alarm Reduction Section (FARS) of the Montgomery County Department of Police completed its ninth year of enforcement under the amended Chapter 3A, Alarms, of the Montgomery County Code. The FARS reports that there was a dramatic decrease in the incidence of false alarms between 2003 and 2004, despite an increase of 6,575 new alarm users. The FARS also performed outreach to approximately 34 different problem accounts in its “Major Offender” program, successfully completed the first full cycle of alarm user renewals, updated its web site, performed numerous outreach to the community and continued to reduce false alarm dispatch rates for alarm users.

In calendar year 2004, false alarms to which police officers were required to respond were reduced by 10.5% over the previous year. The FARS now shows a full 55.2% reduction in false alarms since enforcement of the False Alarm Reduction Program began in earnest in March 1995. Additionally, police officers responded to 23,631 *less* alarm calls in 2004 over 1994. These statistics, coupled with a 114% increase in the number of registered alarm users over the same time period, clearly shows that substantial false alarm reduction is still being achieved and that the alarm law is an excellent tool in reducing false alarms and positively changing alarm user and alarm business behavior. It is also a testament to a well-written, enforceable law and a highly dedicated and talented FARS staff.



Graph 1 – False Alarm Reduction, provides information on the number of *requests* for dispatch vs. *actual responses* (dispatched). If the false alarm reduction program is successful, the responses should continue to decrease relative to the number of total alarm users, and this fact is evident in the graph. The graph also provides information on calls where no response was made, as well as the total number of alarm users. The number of actual alarm calls to which police officers respond has continued to decrease. Police responded to only 19,190 of the total 38,248 requests made, or 49.8%. There were a total of 17,492 alarm activations to which the police were not required to respond in 2004.

Additionally, the number of *requests for dispatch* is at an all-time low. In 2004, there were a total of 38,248 requests for dispatch to alarm activations, down by a staggering 6,425 over the previous year. Requests for dispatch remained fairly static between 1994 and 2003 and results were measured in how many *less* responses police officers were required to make. While this is still the most important measure of the success of the program, 2004 marked a huge decrease in the number of requests for dispatch, which has far-reaching benefits for the Police Department beyond savings measured in police officer time. Less actual alarm calls into our Emergency Communications Center means time recovered for Police Telecommunicators to handle other requests for service from Montgomery County citizens. This is an extremely positive measure, which is directly attributable to the alarm industry's Enhanced Call Verification (ECV) initiative.

Chapter 3A, Alarms, of the Montgomery County Code requires alarm companies to attempt to verify the validity of an alarm signal *prior* to requesting police dispatch. This attempted verification generally requires one telephone call be made to the site to determine the cause of the alarm signal. The alarm industry has instituted Enhanced Call Verification in which alarm companies make the initial call to the site, and if unable to reach a responsible party, make at least one additional telephone call to another phone number, usually the customer's cell phone. This voluntary initiative has dramatically reduced the number of requests for dispatch made to 9-1-1 centers across the nation. The alarm industry, and those alarm companies that have voluntarily enacted ECV within their own companies, should be congratulated on developing and implementing a false alarm reduction strategy, which has dramatically reduced false alarms.

Absent enforcement of the alarm statute, coupled with an overall increase in alarm users, one would expect that the actual dispatches to alarm activations would increase substantially, or at least at the same rate of growth. **However, actual responses to alarm activations were reduced by an additional 10.5% between 2003 and 2004.**

In 1994, Montgomery County police officers responded on 97.5% of all requests for dispatch (43,936 requests for dispatch with 42,821 actual responses). However, in 2004, police officers responded to only 49.8% of all requests for dispatch (38,248 requests for dispatch with only 19,190 actual responses). This represents a 50.2% reduction between requests and dispatches, even with 33,992 *more* alarm users and correlates to a significant savings in police officer time.

One critical enforcement measure in the alarm statute is the requirement that an alarm company cancel a police response when it is determined that an alarm activation is false. This is

achieved through telephone or other electronic verification with the alarm user at the time of alarm system activation. The high number of non-responses (17,492) was due, in part, to that required cancellation by alarm companies. The higher the number of cancellations, the better the job the alarm companies are doing of reducing the number of false alarms to which police officers respond. In 2004, alarm companies cancelled a very impressive 9,028 requests for dispatch, which represents 24% of the total requests for dispatch. These cancellations provide officers with more time to engage in other more critical law enforcement related activities and community policing initiatives.

The FARS also continued its strict enforcement of all requirements for requesting dispatch, including providing the correct alarm user registration and alarm business license numbers. Police officers were not dispatched when an alarm business failed to provide all of the required information to Emergency Communications Center call-takers. Nor were police dispatched if an alarm user was in a violation status for failure to register, failure to pay a false alarm response fee or failure to upgrade the alarm system when required to do so. The legally mandated non-response provisions of the alarm law resulted in only 2,258 requests for dispatch that were denied as a result of the violation status of the alarm user or alarm business. This represents only 6% of the total requests for dispatch. The FARS will continue to work to reduce this percentage to negligible numbers.

Graph 2 and Chart 1 – Requests for Dispatch vs. Actual Responses depict the difference between the requests for dispatch and the actual responses since 1994. As stated previously, requests for dispatch in 2004 declined by a significant 6,425 calls, while the actual responses (19,190) to requests fell below 20,000 for the first time since statistics were captured. This, coupled with 6, 575 new alarm users, is incredibly positive and demonstrates the effectiveness of Montgomery County’s alarm law.

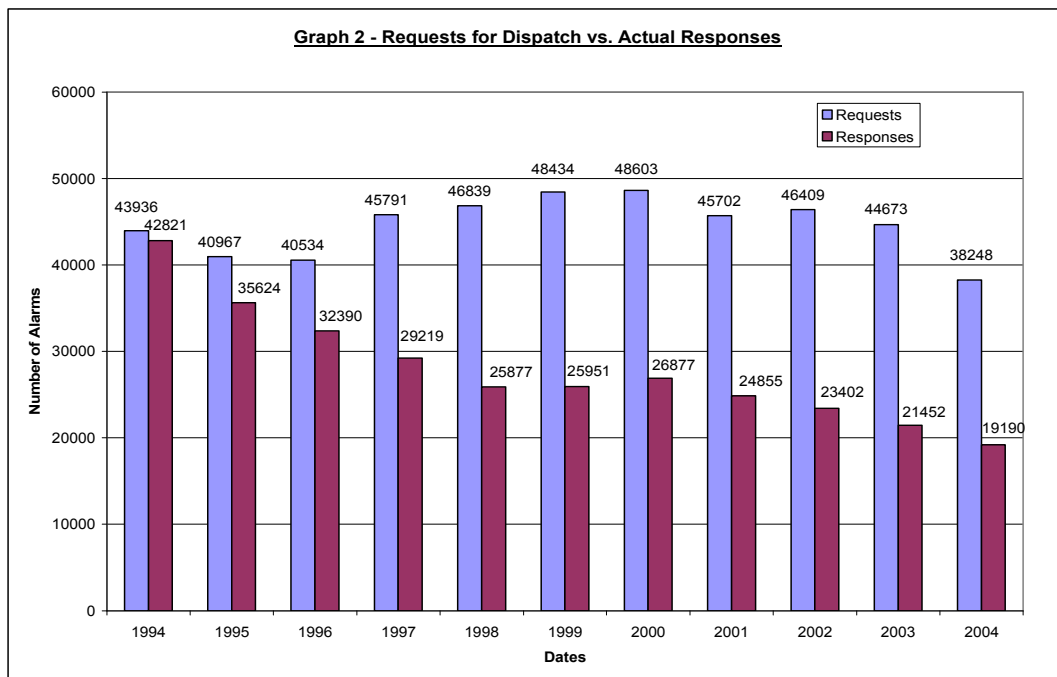


Chart 1 – Requests for Dispatch vs. Actual Responses

<u>Year</u>	<u>Requests for Dispatch</u>	<u>Actual Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Total Calls Responded To</u>
2004	38,248	19,190	49.8%
2003	44,673	21,452	52.0%
2002	46,409	23,402	50.5%
2001	45,702	24,855	54.4%
2000	48,603	26,877	55.3%
1999	48,434	25,951	53.9%
1998	46,839	25,877	55.3%
1997	45,791	29,219	63.8%
1996	40,534	32,390	79.9%
1995	40,967	35,624	87.0%
1994	43,936	42,821	97.5%

The false alarm dispatch rate is perhaps the truest measure of false alarm reduction, as it calculates the number of false alarm dispatches relative to the total number of alarm users. The false alarm dispatch rate is the only rate, which takes into account the growth of the alarm user base. **The Security Industry Alarm Coalition (SIAC), which represents the four major alarm industry associations in North America, states that Montgomery County has the lowest reported residential, commercial and combined false alarm dispatch rates of any jurisdiction in the country.** The residential false alarm dispatch rate decreased once again in 2004 and was .21. This means that overall, residential alarm users experience less than one false alarm every four years, which is a remarkable statistic. The commercial false alarm dispatch rate for 2004 was .89, which marks a negligible 1/100% increase over 2003 levels, but still reflects four years running that the commercial rate was well below the 1.0 mark. Combined residential and commercial false alarm dispatch rates fell to an all-time low of .30 and is the lowest combined reported dispatch rate in the entire country.

Chart 2 – False Alarm Dispatch Rates

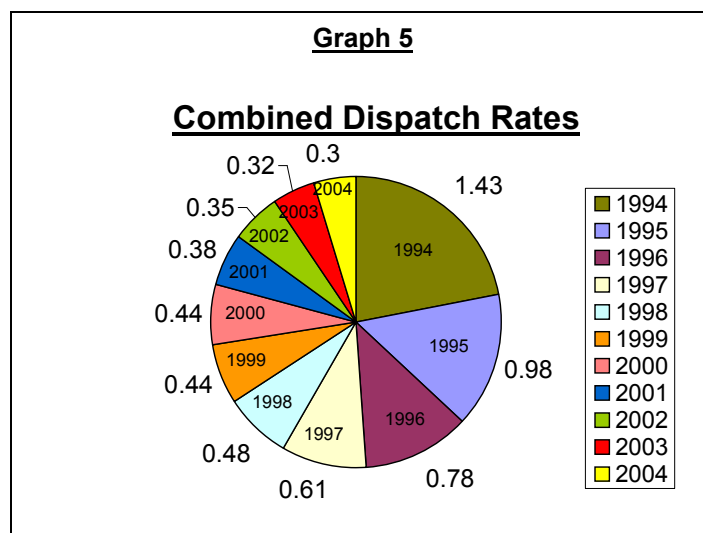
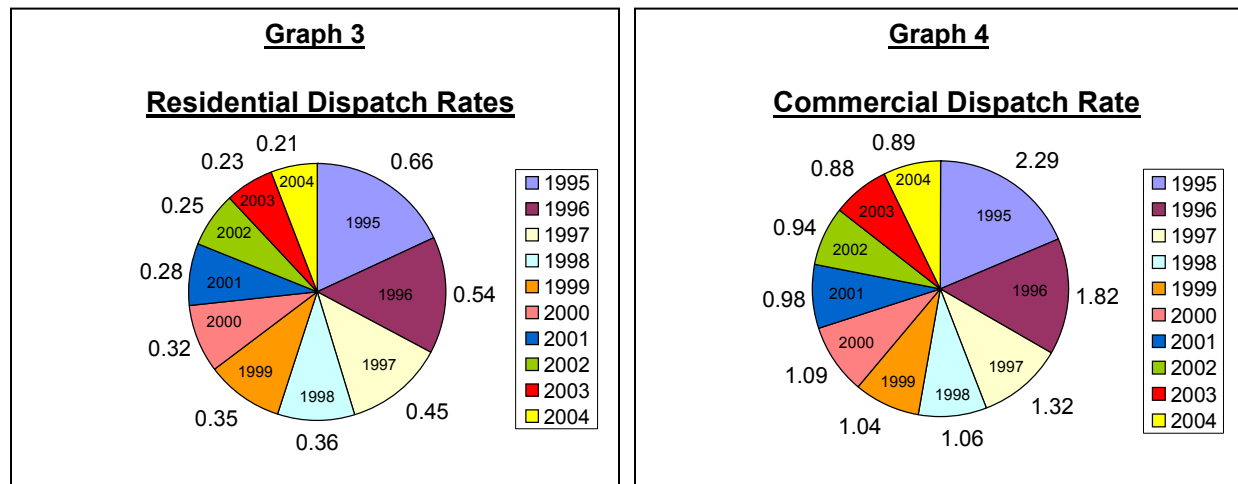
<u>TYPE</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>
Residential	N/A	.66	.54	.45	.36	.35	.32	.28	.25	.23	.21
Commercial	N/A	2.29	1.82	1.32	1.06	1.04	1.09	.98	.94	.88	.89
Both	1.43	.98	.78	.61	.48	.44	.44	.38	.35	.32	.30

Nationwide statistics often reveal reduction in false alarms for the first several years after enactment and enforcement of a false alarm reduction ordinance begins. However, after the first few years, the numbers generally either level off with no further reduction or actually start to increase. Since the Montgomery County false alarm reduction program has been in effect, it has consistently reduced the false alarm dispatch rate (with the exception of 2000, which remained constant) and has done so for a full nine years. Few, if any, other jurisdictions can boast such a phenomenal success rate.

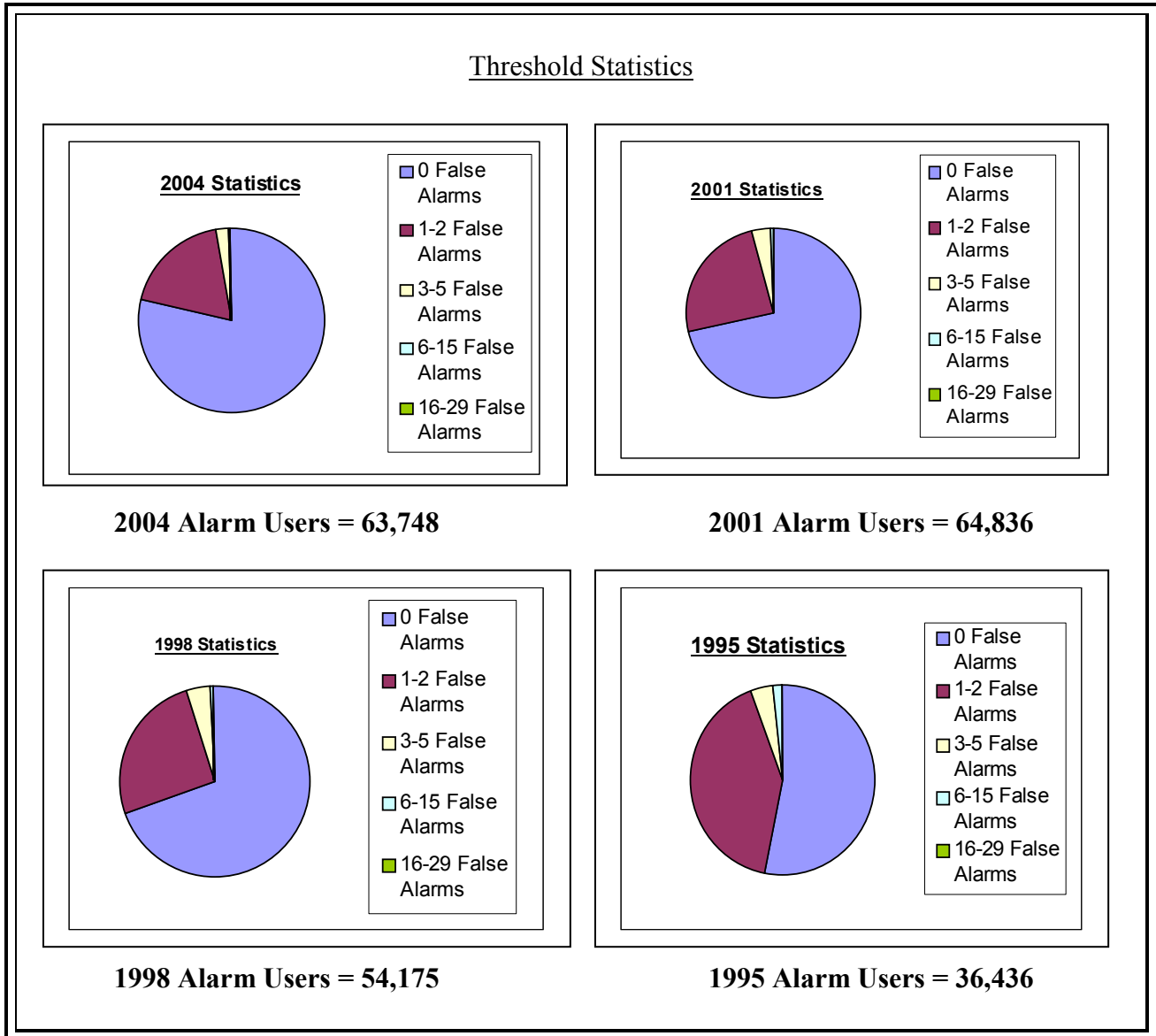
Commercial false alarm dispatch rates have been reported as high as 4.0 and residential false alarm dispatch rates as high as 1.0 or above. A dispatch rate of 4.0 means that *every* alarm user has four actual responses *every* year. Using 2004 statistics, that would equate to 35,152 actual responses to alarm activations for *commercial alarm users alone*; a figure almost 16,000 over the *total* responses for residential and commercial alarm users *combined* in 2004.

Assuming Montgomery County’s dispatch rate would have risen a modest amount to 2.0 without enforcement of the alarm law, police officers would have actually responded to 127,496 false alarm activations in 2004, which would represent a *564% increase* in response to false alarms. At \$90 per dispatch, those 127,496 alarm activations would require approximately 41 police officers to do absolutely nothing but respond to burglar alarms at a staggering cost of \$11,474,640. This is clearly a cost that no local jurisdiction can absorb.

The following pie charts (Graphs 3, 4 and 5) graphically depict the significant reductions in residential, non-residential and combined false alarm dispatch rates.



In 2004, an impressive 80.7% of all residential and commercial alarm users experienced no false alarms at all. **A total of 51,454 alarm users, had zero false alarm activations to which police officers responded in 2004.** The following pie graphs show that each year more alarm users (as a percentage of total alarm users for a given year) achieve the zero false alarm threshold. This statistic, which is supported by the low false dispatch rate, is indicative of the success of the overall false alarm reduction program. These reductions become more significant when viewed with the steady increase in the number of alarm users each year.



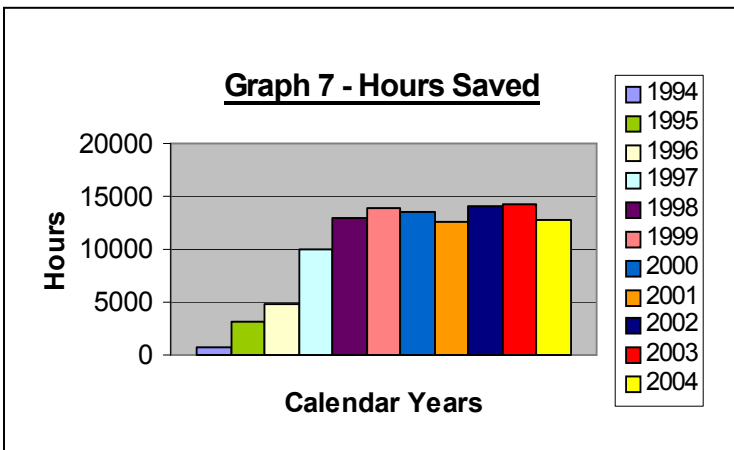
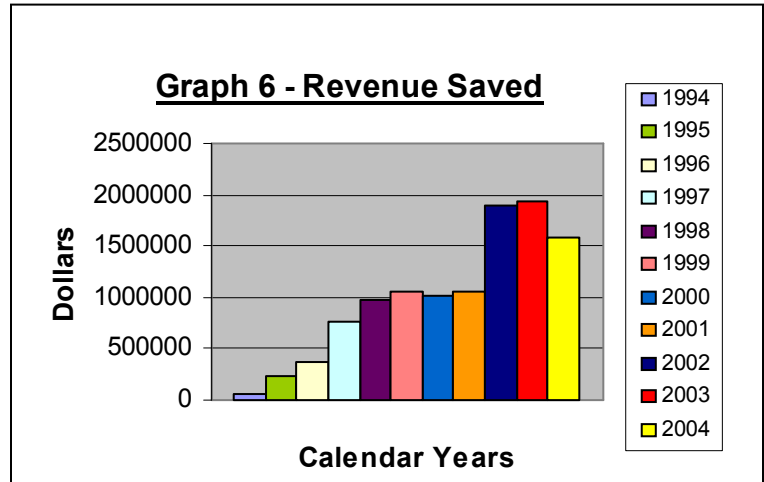
As a direct result of the FARS's strict enforcement of the alarm law, there were 17,492 alarm calls to which police officers were not required to respond in 2004. **This equates to savings in 2004 of approximately \$1,574,280 and 12,794 hours of police officer time, or 12.30 police work years.** (Monetary savings are based on a cost of \$90 per response. Work

year savings are based on an average of 20 minutes per alarm response by two officers.) This timesaving is substantial, particularly when the department is being asked to do more with less each year.

The following graphs illustrate the revenues, hours and work years saved as a result of the false alarm reduction program.

Graph 6 shows that the actual revenue saved in 2004 as a result of police officers responding to 17,492 less false alarms was \$1,574,280. Since the FARS began enforcement of the alarm statute, the total revenue saved by Montgomery County has been \$10,887,310.

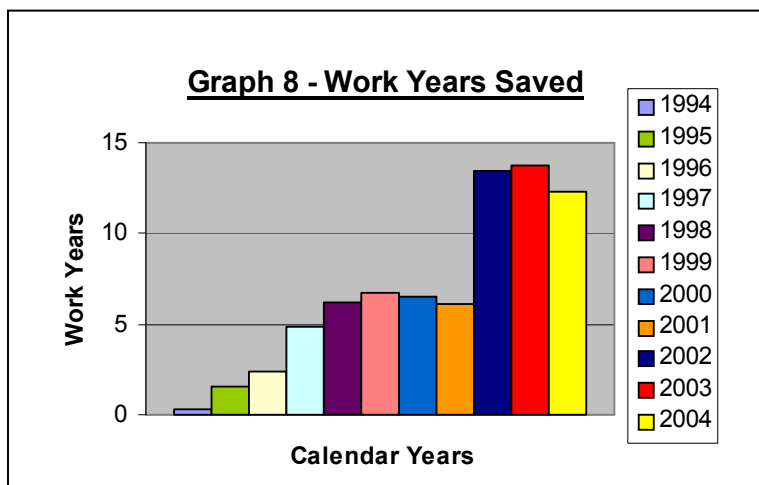
(The dramatic difference in 2002 savings and subsequent years is due to using a more realistic figure of \$90 per response, as opposed to \$55 in 2001 and \$50 for previous years.)



Graph 7 shows that the actual hours saved in 2004 as a result of police officers responding to 17,492 less false alarms was 12,794 hours. Since the FARS began enforcement of the alarm statute, Montgomery County has recovered 113,037 hours in police officer time.

Graph 8 shows that 12.30 actual work years were saved in 2004 as a result of enforcement of the alarm statute. Since enforcement began, Montgomery County has recovered a total of 74.12 work years of police officer time.

(The dramatic difference starting in 2002 vs. previous years is due to erroneously using a full 2080 hours as a work year measure between 1994 and 2001, which is not an accurate figure.)



The total savings in dollars, hours and work years since 1994 have been significant and are depicted in Chart 3 below. As stated previously in this report, absent strict enforcement of the alarm statute, Montgomery County would have **paid** more than \$11,000,000 in 2004 alone responding to false alarms. The \$10,887,310 savings to the county is, therefore, even more significant.

Chart 3 – Cumulative Savings

Year	Revenue Saved	Hours Saved	Work Years Saved
1994	\$ 55,750	743	.35
1995	\$ 242,750	3,236	1.56
1996	\$ 366,950	4,892	2.35
1997	\$ 752,850	10,038	4.82
1998	\$ 968,550	12,914	6.21
1999	\$1,046,600	13,954	6.71
2000	\$1,008,600	13,448	6.47
2001	\$1,046,430	12,684	6.10
2002	\$1,895,760	14,043	13.5
2003	\$1,928,790	14,301	13.75
2004	\$1,574,280	12,794	12.30
TOTAL	\$10,887,310	113,037	74.12

In calendar year 2004, the FARS had 515 registered federal, state and local government facilities, all of which were held to the same strict standards as all other alarm users. Of the 515 government alarm users, 161 or 31.3%, had at least one false alarm. This shows an increase of 11.3% over 2003. Those 161 alarm users collectively had 318 false alarms. A total of 354 different government alarm users (68.8%) had **zero** false alarms, which is down from a high of 400 in 2003.

As is evident in Chart 4 – Government Alarm Users, false alarms in government facilities rose fairly dramatically in 2004. Some of this increase is due to the registration of certain federal facilities, which are currently learning about the costs of false alarms, both in terms of dollars spent and in officer safety issues. FARS staff will work more closely with all government alarm users in the coming year to effect reduction in police responses to those alarms. The following chart reflects government alarm user activity for 1999 through 2004.

Chart 4 – Government Alarm Users

# of False Alarms	# of Alarm Users - 1999	# of Alarm Users – 2000	# of Alarm Users - 2001	# of Alarm Users - 2002	# of Alarm Users - 2003	# of Alarm Users - 2004
0	332	355	355	404	400	354
1	72	54	50	69	74	94
2	22	17	33	22	17	34
3	13	14	5	10	2	12
4	2	7	4	3	3	9
5	1	1	2	0	0	3
6	0	1	1	3	1	3
7	1	0	2	2	0	3
8	0	1	1	0	0	0
9	1	2	0	2	0	1
10-13	1	0	0	1	0	2
14-21	0	0	1	0	0	0

Revenue

The following two charts reflect revenue collected by the FARS for alarm user registration and renewal fees, false alarm response fees, alarm business license and administrative fees, civil citations and appeal filing fees. The first chart covers *calendar* year 2004. The second chart covers *fiscal* year 04. The FY04 chart is included only as a reference, because budget projections are based on fiscal rather than calendar years. The more accurate chart is the calendar year 2004 chart, as false alarms and the resultant false alarm response fees, are calculated on a calendar year basis.

Chart 5 – Calendar Year Revenue

CALENDAR YEAR 2004	ACTUAL REVENUES
<u>Alarm User Registration Fees</u>	
Residential	\$168,870
Commercial	<u>28,380</u>
TOTAL	\$197,250
<u>Alarm User Registration Renewal Fees</u>	
Residential	\$194,575
Commercial	<u>31,440</u>
TOTAL	\$226,015
<u>False Alarm Response Fees</u>	
Residential	\$ 95,229
County Attorney Collections	<u>12,450</u>
Total Residential	\$107,679
Commercial	\$375,839
County Attorney Collections	<u>37,885</u>
Total Commercial	\$413,724
TOTAL	\$521,403
<u>Alarm Business Fees</u>	
License	\$ 71,460
Civil Citations	22,250
Administrative Fees	<u>3,446</u>
TOTAL	\$ 97,176
<u>Appeal Filing Fees</u>	
Residential	\$ 720
Commercial	<u>285</u>
TOTAL	\$ 1,005
GRAND TOTAL	\$1,042,849

Chart 6 – Fiscal Year Revenue

FISCAL YEAR 04	ACTUAL REVENUES
<u>Alarm User Registration Fees</u>	
Residential	\$170,200
Commercial	<u>27,930</u>
TOTAL	\$198,130
<u>Alarm User Registration Renewal Fees</u>	
Residential	\$202,630
Commercial	<u>37,890</u>
TOTAL	\$240,520
<u>False Alarm Response Fees</u>	
Residential	\$111,210
County Attorney Collections	<u>12,341</u>
Total Residential	\$123,551
Commercial	\$361,931
County Attorney Collections	<u>42,978</u>
Total Commercial	\$404,909
TOTAL	\$528,460
<u>Alarm Business Fees</u>	
License	\$ 72,310
Civil Citations	17,750
Administrative Fees	<u>8,332</u>
TOTAL	\$ 98,392
<u>Appeal Filing Fees</u>	
Residential	\$ 555
Commercial	<u>255</u>
TOTAL	\$ 810
GRAND TOTAL	\$1,066,312

Collection of false alarm response fees is always a priority for the FARS. Strict enforcement of this aspect of the alarm law clearly shows that Montgomery County is serious about false alarms. **The FARS collection rate in 2004 was an extraordinary 90.5% of all false alarm response fees billed.** This is down slightly from last years collection figure of 91.5%. The suspension of police response provision in Chapter 3A, Alarms, for failure to remit false alarm response fees greatly enhances the FARS’s ability to collect on unpaid bills.

The following chart reflects the amount billed for false alarm response fees in 2004 versus the amount collected for both residential and commercial alarm users. Please note that the “collected” amount in the following chart reflects payments made against false alarms that occurred in 2004. The actual collection of monies for those calendar year 2004 false alarms extended into calendar year 2005, and, therefore, reflects different totals from the Calendar Year Revenue Chart.

Chart 7 – Calendar Year 2004 Billed vs. Collected
False Alarm Response Fees

False Alarm Response Fees	Billed	Collected	Past Due (>30 & <60 days overdue)	Delinquent (>50 days overdue)
Commercial	\$426,450	\$385,325	\$30,875	\$9,800
Residential	\$97,550	\$88,625	\$3,475	\$4,475
Total	\$524,000	\$473,950	\$34,350	\$14,575

*Represents fees collected in 2004and 2005against false alarm response fees billed in 2004

The FARS is in the process of attempting to collect the past due amounts listed above. The FARS has sent overdue notices to all affected alarm users. The \$14,575 listed above has been referred to the Office of the County Attorney for collection and the affected alarm users have been placed in a non-response status until payment is received.

General Statistics

Chart 8 shows false alarm reduction statistics from 1994, when the new alarm law was in effect but false alarm response fees were not yet being imposed, through 2004. The chart shows the actual number of requests for dispatch, the number of calls that were ultimately dispatched and responded to, requests where no response was required or was refused, verified calls and the percentage of false alarm reduction. Verified calls include actual criminal activity, as well as suspicious situations such as an open door with no other evidence of criminal activity. Circumstances under which no response may occur include cancellation of response by the alarm company, duplicate calls for the same alarm activation, blanket cancellations by supervisory police personnel and refusals where the alarm company or alarm user was in a violation status.

Chart 8 – False Alarm Reduction

Year	Requests for Dispatch	Dispatched	No Response	Verified Calls	% Reduction	% Reduction From Base
2004	38,248	19,190	17,492	1,566	-10.5%	-55.2%
2003	44,673	21,452	21,431	1,790	-8.3%	-49.9%
2002	46,409	23,402	21,064	1,943	-5.8%	-45.3%
2001	45,702	24,855	19,026	1,821	-7.5%	-41.9%
2000	48,603	26,877	20,172	1,554	+0.35%	-37.2%
1999	48,434	25,951	20,932	1,551	+0.03%	-39.4%
1998	46,839	25,877	19,371	1,591	-11.4%	-39.6%
1997	45,791	29,219	15,057	1,515	-9.8%	-32.0%
1996	40,534	32,390	7,339	805	-9.1%	-24.3%
1995	40,967	35,624	4,855	488	-16.8%	-15.7%
1994	43,936	42,821	1,115*			

*Does not include dispatch vs. non-dispatch or verified calls for January, February or March, 1994, as statistics for those months are not available.

Chart 9 reflects the number of alarm users each year since 1994. Alarm user registrations have more than doubled since implementation and enforcement of the false alarm reduction program began in 1994. The FARS received 6,575 new alarm user registration forms in 2004. This increase, coupled with the 55.2% decrease in alarm activations to which police officers must respond each year, is truly remarkable. The success and results of this program are what make it a model for other municipalities across the country.

Chart 9 – Alarm Users

Year	Residential	Commercial	Combined
2004	54,960	8,788	63,748
2003	57,223	9,241	66,474
2002	57,026	9,499	66,525
2001	55,024	9,812	64,836
2000	51,743	9,591	61,334
1999	48,654	9,489	58,143
1998	44,827	9,348	54,175
1997	39,192	8,879	48,008
1996	34,048	8,102	42,150
1995	39,398	7,049	36,436
1994			29,756

Chart 9 does not reflect an increase of overall alarm users by 6,575 (the number of new registered alarm users), because some alarm users each year move out of the area or remove their alarm systems and are no longer required to have an alarm user registration. Additionally, with alarm user registration renewal, the FARS is much better able to keep the alarm user database current by removing those alarm users, who no longer have an alarm system or have moved. This allows the FARS to perform statistical analysis using more accurate numbers, which provides for more meaningful and accurate reporting.

The following charts depict the number of alarm users that had a specific number of false alarms from 1995 through 2004. The charts also show the percentage of change between 2003 vs. 2004, as well as the percentage of change between the base year of 1995 and 2004, which shows the reduction of false alarms since inception of the program. Chart 10 shows residential alarm users. Chart 11 shows commercial alarm users, and Chart 12 reflects total alarms (both residential and commercial combined.)

In 2004, 51,454 alarm users had ZERO false alarms to which police officers were required to respond. This represents 80.7% of all alarm users, which is up from 2003 statistics where 79.4 alarm users had zero false alarms. Therefore, the most compelling statistic in these charts is in the number of alarm users that appear on the 0 row (meaning they have had no false alarms for the entire calendar year).

While the number of residential alarm users, who had no false alarms actually decreased from 2003 to 2004, the total number of alarm users also decreased, making this figure appear somewhat skewed. As a percentage of the total, 83.9% of residential alarm users had no false alarms in 2004, which reflects an actual increase of 1.5% over 2003. When viewing any of the statistical data in this report, it is important to look at those numbers in relation to the total number of alarm users. Since 1995, 154.5% more residential alarm users were able to remain within the zero false alarm threshold, and they continued to reduce their false alarms at every threshold level.

Chart 10
Residential Alarm Users
With Specific Numbers of False Alarms

# of False Alarms	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	% Change (03-04)	% Base Change (95-04)
0	18116	23328	28428	33946	37,384	40,227	44,044	46,338	47,130	46098	-2.2%	+154.5%
1	11271	10720	10701	10881	11,270	11,516	10,980	10,688	10,103	8862	-12.3%	-21.4%
2	4153	3852	3516	3379	3,292	3,395	2,950	2,750	2,306	1840	-20.2%	-55.7%
3	1171	540	371	1012	985	945	793	664	565	421	-25.5%	-64.0%
4	668	513	333	309	261	251	217	184	143	98	-31.5%	-85.3%
5	292	168	106	106	89	91	68	54	38	22	-42.1%	-92.5%
6	128	57	32	40	32	30	21	14	14	5	-64.3%	-96.1%
7	50	25	13	15	10	11	7	2	9	3	-66.7%	-94.0%
8	19	12	5	6	2	3	4	1	5	2	-60.0%	-89.5%
9	9	4	1	2	2	0	1	0	2	1	-50.0%	-88.9%
10	7	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	-85.7%
11	6	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	+100%	-83.3%
12	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
13	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
14	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
15	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
16	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%

While the number of commercial alarm users, who had no false alarms actually decreased from 2003 to 2004, the total number of alarm users also decreased, making this figure appear somewhat skewed. As a percentage of the total, 39.0% of commercial alarm users had no false alarms in 2004, which reflects the exact same percentage as for 2003. When viewing any of the statistical data in this report, it is important to look at those numbers in relation to the total number of alarm users. Since 1995, 127.7% more commercial alarm users were able to remain within the zero false alarm threshold.

Chart 11
Commercial Alarm Users With Specific Numbers of False Alarms

# of False Alarms	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	% Change (03-04)	% Base Change (95-04)
0	2352	4020	4820	5412	5416	5457	5906	5739	5632	5356	-4.9%	+127.7%
1	4697	4082	4059	3936	4073	4134	3906	3760	3609	3432	-4.9%	-26.9%
2	2699	2580	2457	2290	2334	2474	2256	2098	1864	1730	-7.2%	-35.9%
3	1435	1019	837	1335	1347	1433	1299	1169	1014	957	-5.6%	-33.3%
4	1113	1039	770	789	781	861	744	697	570	560	-1.7%	-49.7%
5	763	648	445	478	475	527	459	409	359	360	+0.3%	-52.8%
6	490	403	292	286	287	332	285	274	228	239	+4.8%	-51.2%
7	331	250	177	183	176	216	185	171	139	158	+13.7%	-52.3%
8	217	177	123	119	112	141	125	115	98	108	+10.2%	-50.2%
9	145	120	80	80	80	99	85	78	76	68	-10.5%	-53.1%
10	109	84	67	58	58	68	48	45	48	48	0%	-60.0%
11	75	57	45	37	42	46	35	32	28	35	+25.0%	-53.3%
12	49	40	32	27	28	32	25	24	20	23	+15.0%	-53.1%
13	35	33	17	19	18	26	22	17	12	14	+16.7%	-60.0%
14	30	25	11	11	13	20	18	12	7	8	+14.3%	-73.3%
15	24	23	8	8	10	14	11	9	5	7	+40.0%	-70.8%
16	18	20	5	3	5	7	9	8	4	5	+25.0%	-72.2%
17	11	15	5	3	1	7	8	7	3	5	+66.7%	-54.5%
18	11	10	3	2	0	6	7	7	3	4	+33.3%	-63.6%
19	8	7	1	2	0	3	4	3	2	2	0%	-75.0%
20	5	6	1	0	0	1	3	2	1	2	+100%	-60.0%
21	5	4	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	+100%	-80.0%
22	4	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	+100%	-75.0%
23	2	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	+100%	-50.0%
24	2	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
25	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
26	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
27	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
28	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
29	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%

While the total number of alarm users, who had no false alarms actually decreased from 2003 to 2004, the total number of alarm users also decreased, making this figure appear somewhat skewed. As a percentage of the total, a full 80.7% of residential and commercial alarm users combined had no false alarms in 2004, which reflects an actual increase of 1.3% over 2003. When viewing any of the statistical data in this report, it is important to look at those numbers in relation to the total number of alarm users. Since 1995, 151.4% more residential and commercial alarm users combined are able to remain within the zero false alarm threshold.

Chart 12
Both Residential and Commercial Alarm Users With Specific Numbers of False Alarms

# of False Alarms	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	% Change (03-04)	% Base Change (95-04)
0	20468	27348	33248	39358	42800	45684	49950	52077	52762	51454	-2.5%	+151.4%
1	15968	14802	14760	14817	15343	15650	14886	14448	13712	12294	-10.3%	-23.0%
2	6852	6432	5973	5669	5626	5869	5206	4848	4170	3470	-16.8%	-49.3%
3	2606	1559	1208	2347	2332	2378	2092	1833	1579	1378	-12.7%	-47.1%
4	1781	1552	1103	1098	1042	1112	991	881	713	658	-7.7%	-63.0%
5	1055	816	551	584	564	618	527	463	397	382	-3.8%	-63.8%
6	618	460	324	326	319	362	306	288	242	244	+0.08%	-60.5%
7	381	275	190	198	186	227	192	173	148	161	+0.08%	-57.7%
8	236	189	128	125	114	144	129	116	103	110	+6.8%	-53.4%
9	154	124	81	82	82	99	86	78	78	69	-11.5%	-55.2%
10	116	84	67	59	59	68	48	45	49	49	0%	-57.7%
11	81	57	45	37	43	46	35	32	28	36	+2.2%	-55.5%
12	52	40	32	27	29	32	25	24	20	23	+15.0%	-55.8%
13	36	33	17	19	19	26	22	17	12	14	+16.7%	-61.1%
14	32	25	11	11	14	20	18	12	7	8	+14.3%	-75.0%
15	26	23	8	8	11	14	11	9	5	7	+40.0%	-73.1%
16	19	20	5	3	6	7	9	8	4	5	+25.0%	-73.7%
17	11	15	5	3	1	7	8	7	3	5	+66.7%	-54.5%
18	11	10	3	2	0	6	7	7	3	4	+33.3%	-63.6%
19	8	7	1	2	0	3	4	3	2	2	0%	-75.0%
20	5	6	1	0	0	1	3	2	1	2	+100%	-60.0%
21	5	4	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	+100%	-80.0%
22	4	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	+100%	-75.0%
23	2	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	+100%	-50.0%
24	2	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
25	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
26	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
27	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
28	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
29	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%

Major Accomplishments

Maryland General Assembly

Two separate bills relating to false alarm reduction programs were introduced during the Maryland General Assembly in 2004. Through the united efforts of many different individual counties and associations, local governments will be protected from releasing confidential information and will continue to have the ability to legislate false alarm reduction programs on a local level.

Confidentiality of Alarm User Records

The Director of the Montgomery County Police Department, False Alarm Reduction Section, was successful in garnering a great deal of support from municipalities throughout the State of Maryland to assist in the passage of a bill that requires custodians of alarm user records to deny inspection of the part of a record that identifies or contains personal information about a person, who maintains an alarm or security system.

In January 2004, Senator Ida Ruben proposed legislation that would finally hold alarm user information confidential and prohibit its dissemination to any person not of interest. The release of this type of information has the potential to place our citizens' personal safety at considerable risk. Dissemination of information on our constituency's security status violates their trust and makes them potential targets of crime. Prior to the passage of this bill, there was no legal way to hold this information confidential. The Director was able to amass support from numerous jurisdictions across the state, as well as the Maryland Chiefs of Police Association, Maryland Sheriffs Association, Maryland Association of Counties and the Maryland Burglar and Fire Alarm Association. In person testimony was given by most of the supporters, and letters urging successful passage of the bill were also accepted into the record. I am delighted to report that Sen. Ruben's bill passed both the Senate and House and was signed into law as emergency legislation by Governor Ehrlich on May 11, 2004.

Prohibition on Alarm User Registration and Renewal Fees; Suspended Response Status

Another piece of legislation was also introduced in the House, which would have prohibited jurisdictions from collecting alarm user registration and renewal fees and would have prohibited non-response of public safety personnel for failure to register as required. House Bill 182, introduced by Delegates Fulton (Baltimore County) and Goodwin (Baltimore City), would have had a severe negative impact on Montgomery County's efforts to reduce false alarms to which police officers respond each year by removing a critical enforcement mechanism. The proposed bill would have cost Montgomery County approximately \$1,000,000 in lost revenues and recurring increased costs associated with retooling our current business practices and hiring new staff.

The FARS Director gathered support from all jurisdictions in Maryland that currently have a false alarm reduction ordinance, as well as the Maryland Chiefs of Police Association, Maryland Sheriffs Association, Maryland Association of Counties and the Maryland Burglar and Fire Alarm Association in an effort to defeat the bill. The Director argued that false alarms are a local problem, which is best handled on a local level, including the authority to set criteria surrounding response to burglar alarm activations and the imposition of fees to offset the staggering costs associated with response to false alarms. Again, in person testimony and letters urging the defeat of this bill were accepted into the record.

House Bill 182 received an unfavorable report by the Economic Matters Committee on March 22, 2004, and was never voted out of committee. As such, jurisdictions will continue to have the ability to legislate false alarm reduction programs on a local level.

The FARS will continue to monitor legislation during every legislative session so that the hard work and excellent successes of Montgomery County will not go for naught.

Complete Alarm User Renewal Cycle

December 31, 2004 marked the end of the first complete cycle of alarm user renewal registrations in which the FARS staff initiated contact with every one of our almost 64,000 registered alarm users.

The FARS sent out approximately 33,000 renewal notices to alarm users in 2004. For calendar year 2004, a total of only 265 commercial and 2,329 residential alarm users had failed to renew their registrations as required, despite receiving two separate notices from the FARS to do so. These numbers show greater compliance with the renewal provisions of the ordinance, as they are down from 2003 non-renewals and represent only 7.9% of the total alarm user renewal notices sent in 2004. These 2,594 alarm users were eligible to receive the imposition of the \$100 fee for each response to an alarm activation due to their failure to renew.

On a full biennial renewal cycle, of the 4,592 alarm users, who failed to renew in either 2003 or 2004 as required, 280 of them went on to account for 338 false alarm activations and were, therefore, assessed the additional \$100 fee. Ninety-two of those 280 alarm users subsequently renewed their alarm user registrations.

Notwithstanding the small number of non-renewals, the renewal process has been extremely effective in cleaning up the database and in allowing for more meaningful and accurate statistical analysis and reporting. Based on removing alarm users, who no longer have an alarm system or who have vacated their premises, the 2004 statistical analyses shown in this report provides the most accurate measure of the entire false alarm reduction program to date.

Enforcement

FARS staff continued its efforts to garner greater compliance by alarm companies through the issuance of Class A civil citations for violations of Chapter 3A, Alarms. A total of

48 civil citations were issued for failure to cease requesting dispatch on customers in a violation status and not providing the legally mandated information when requesting dispatch. Thirty-four of the 48 total citations were issued to one national company. The good news is that the number of citations required in 2003 for violations was down again from 106 in 2001, 87 in 2002, and 49 in 2003. This shows that most alarm companies are complying with the provisions of the alarm law, and our goal is to have zero circumstances in which the imposition of civil citations are necessary.

Certified False Alarm Reduction Professional

The FARS Office Services Coordinator has been named a “Certified False Alarm Reduction Professional” by the False Alarm Reduction Association, an international organization of public safety false alarm reduction professionals, after completing a grueling exam. The exam covered such topics as principles of alarm system operation, assessing staffing needs for a FARU, false alarms and their causes, principles of developing and implementing a false alarm reduction program, dispatch rates, mobile security alarms, verification and dispatch cancellation, among other things. Successful completion of the exam denotes a “significant level of expertise in the management, coordination, preparation and implementation of a false alarm reduction program.” This one-of-a-kind certification program provides public safety false alarm reduction professionals with a mechanism to demonstrate their very specific, highly specialized expertise in false alarm reduction. The FARS now boasts all three of its staff as Certified Alarm Managers, which clearly demonstrates their dedication to and knowledge of the false alarm reduction issue.

Collection Efforts

When an alarm user fails to pay a false alarm response fee, the FARS advises the alarm user’s alarm company that it may no longer request dispatch for that user and refers the account to the Office of the County Attorney for collection action. In 2004, the FARS referred 485 different alarm user accounts to the Office of the County Attorney for collection of outstanding/delinquent fees that totaled \$67,725.

Additionally, the Office of the County Attorney files suit in District Court against those alarm users, who do not pay their response fees despite both the FARS and the County Attorney’s Office best collection efforts. A total of 162 suits were filed in District Court in 2004, with 110 of those alarm users paying all fees due prior to trial.

Computer System Enhancements/Modifications

Archiving Module

FARS staff worked diligently with its computer vendor, CACI, Inc., to enhance and modify the False Alarm Tracking and Billing System (FATB), which is the custom software program that manages the alarm user, alarm business and alarm incident data. A completely new module was written, which provides for the on-line archiving of old data. The exciting part of

the archival process is that no data is lost; rather, it is moved out of the production database to a separate database, which is accessible by FARS staff from each alarm user's account, should the need arise to look at false alarms or payment information that is more than three years old. The effect of archiving is that the production database is much less crowded and the entire system operates more efficiently, as it is not required to look at and/or calculate ten years worth of data at one time.

Windows 2003 Operating System; SQL 2000

The FARS computer system worked on an NT 4.0 operating system platform and a SQL 7 database management tool. At the time of development of the system, these software packages were the "latest and greatest" on the market. As of December 31, 2004, NT 4.0 was no longer supported by Microsoft. Because the FARS computer system is mission critical, the operating system was upgraded to Windows 2003, the most robust and current operating system available. Additionally, SQL 7 was upgraded to the most current version; i.e., SQL 2000, as SQL 7 is not supported by the new operating system. These two enhancements to the computer system at the FARS required massive amounts of work on both the part of the FARS software vendor, as well as the FARS staff, as the upgrades were not seamless. Comprehensive test plans were developed to ensure that the FATB system would continue to operate properly after upgrade. After extensive testing was performed, the Windows 2003 operating system and the SQL 2000 database management tool upgrades were successfully launched on the FARS computer system.

Public Relations

Once again, the Montgomery County FARS performed outreach to our citizens and business community, to the alarm industry and to local jurisdictions to assist with false alarm reduction efforts. Montgomery County's false alarm reduction program was mentioned in many news media outlets including the *Washington Post*, *Associated Press*, and *Security News Magazine*.

Due to the success of the Montgomery County false alarm reduction program, it is showcased in the False Alarm Reduction Association's new regional training program, which will be given in various locations throughout North America in the coming years. The positive exposure Montgomery County will receive through its inclusion in this course is immeasurable.