

## ***FALSE ALARM REDUCTION PROGRAM***

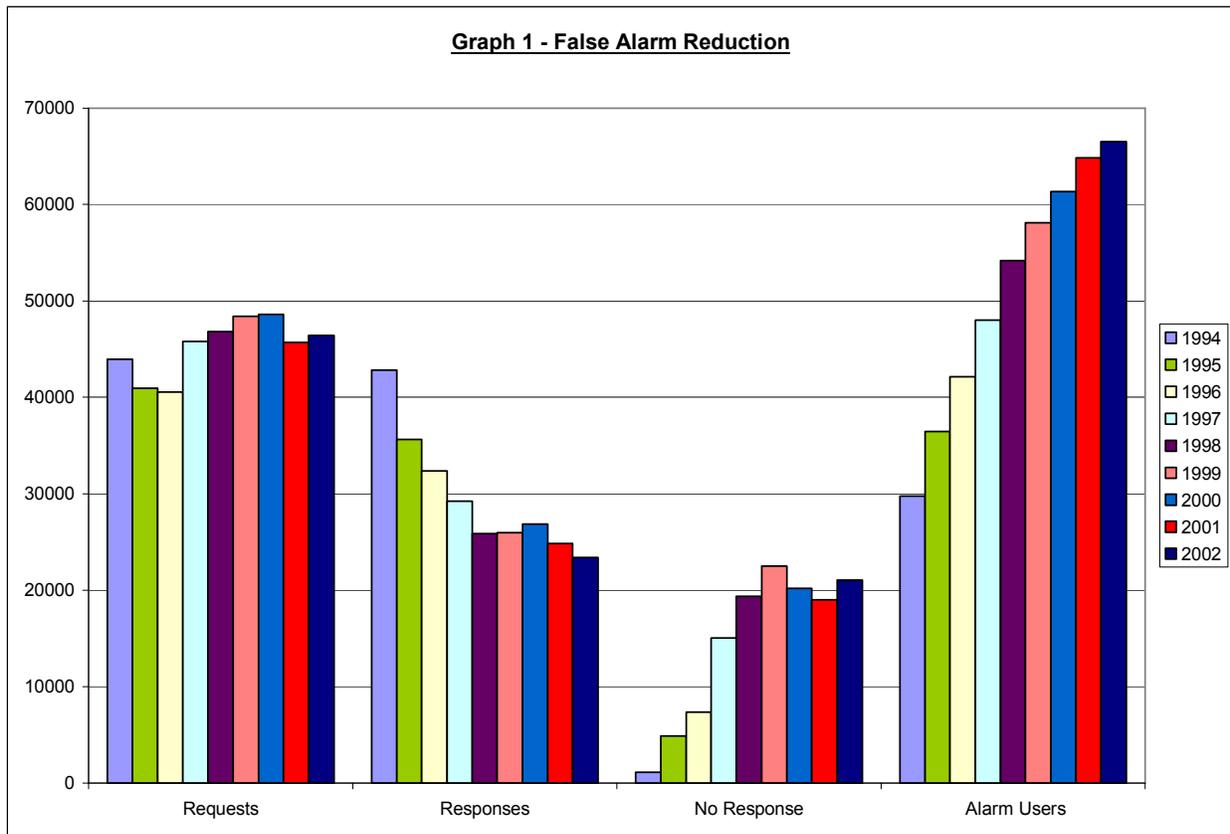


## ***ANNUAL REPORT FOR YEAR ENDING 2002***

## False Alarm Reduction

The False Alarm Reduction Section (FARS) of the Montgomery County Department of Police completed its seventh year of enforcement under the amended Chapter 3A, Alarms, of the Montgomery County Code. The FARS reports that the incidence of false alarms continued its downward trend between 2001 and 2002, despite an increase of 8,299 new alarm users. The FARS also performed outreach to almost 100 different problem accounts in its “Major Offender” program, once again was successful in stopping state legislation that would have pre-empted Montgomery County from enforcing its alarm law, and significantly reduced false alarm dispatch rates for both residential and commercial alarm users.

**In calendar year 2002, false alarms to which police officers were required to respond were reduced by 5.8 % over the previous year. The FARS now shows a full 45.3% reduction in false alarms since enforcement of the False Alarm Reduction Program began in earnest in March 1995.** Additionally, police officers responded to 19,419 *less* alarm calls in 2002 over 1994. These statistics, coupled with a 123% increase in the number of registered alarm users over the same time period, clearly shows that substantial false alarm reduction is being achieved and that the alarm law is having its intended effect.



Graph 1 – False Alarm Reduction, provides information on the number of *requests* for dispatch vs. *actual responses* (dispatched). The graph also provides information on calls where no response was made, as well as the total number of alarm users. The graph shows that the number of actual alarm calls to which police officers have responded has continued to decrease, while the number of alarm users has steadily increased within the same time period. In 2002, there were a total of 46,409 requests for dispatch to alarm activations. However, police responded to only 23,402 of those requests, or 50.5%. There were a total of 21,064 alarm activations to which the police were not required to respond in 2002.

Absent enforcement of the alarm statute, coupled with the 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 5.8% between 2001 and 2002.

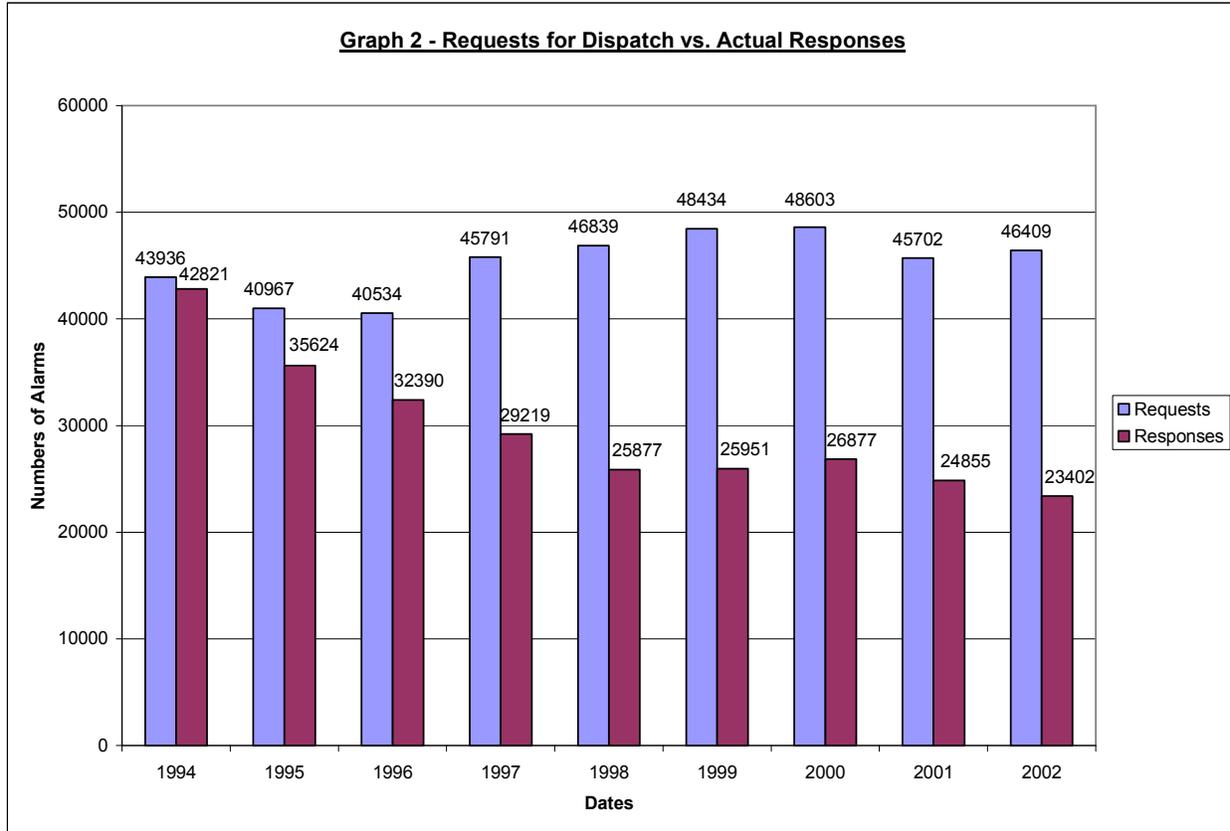
Graph 1 also shows that the County continues to maintain a reduction relative to the total number of requests for dispatch vs. the total number of alarm users. In 1994, Montgomery County police officers responded on 97.5% of all requests for dispatch (43,936 requests for dispatch with 42,821 actual responses). However, in 2002, police officers responded to only 50.5% of all requests for dispatch (46,409 requests for dispatch with only 23,402 actual responses). This represents a 46.7% reduction between requests and dispatches, even with 36,769 *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 (21,064) 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 2002, alarm companies cancelled an impressive 9,085 requests for dispatch, an increase of more than 1,146 from 2001. 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 calltakers. 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 3,074 requests for dispatch that were denied as a result of the violation status of the alarm user or alarm business. Unfortunately, this number is up from 2001 when 2,469 requests for dispatch were denied.

Graph 2 and Chart 1 – Requests for Dispatch vs. Actual Responses on the next page depict the difference between the requests for dispatch and the actual responses since 1994.

Requests for dispatch in 2002 were slightly lower than 1998 levels, while the actual responses to requests is at a new all-time low of 23,402. This, coupled with the increase in new alarm users, is extremely encouraging and shows how well the alarm law is working.



**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>
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%

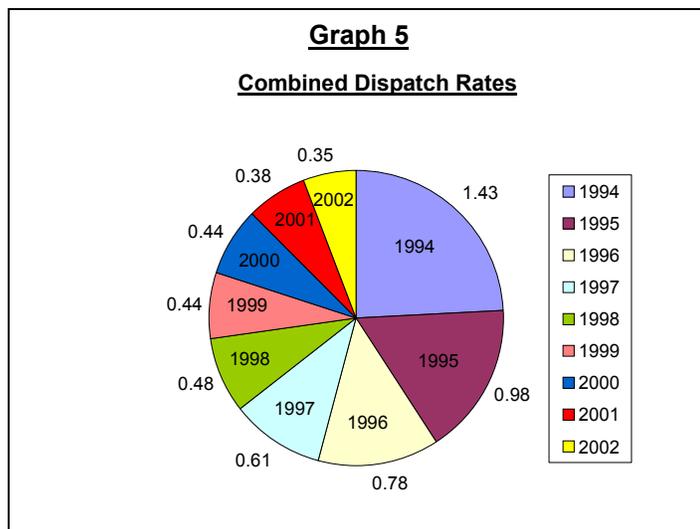
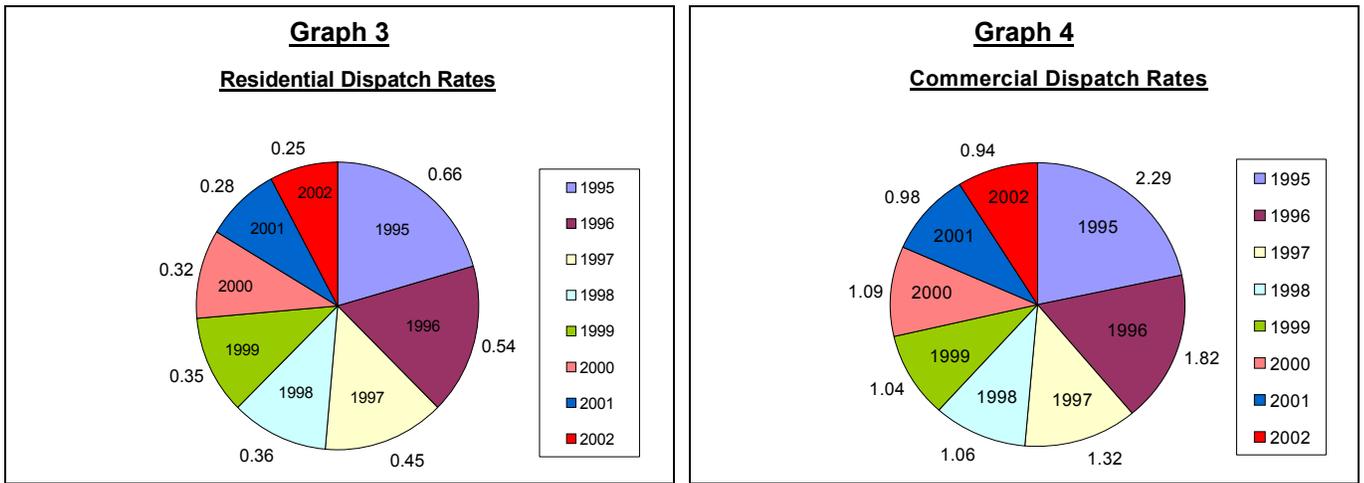
The false alarm dispatch rate is perhaps the truest measure of false alarm reduction, as it calculates the number of false alarm dispatches relative to the total number of alarm users. The false alarm dispatch rate is the only rate that takes into account the growth of the alarm user base. Both residential and commercial false alarm dispatch rates continued to decline in 2002 over 2001. **The National Burglar and Fire Alarm Association, an alarm industry trade group, states that Montgomery County has the lowest reported residential, commercial and combined false alarm dispatch rate of any jurisdiction in the country.** The residential false alarm dispatch rate for 2002 was .25. This means that overall, residential alarm users experience, on average, only 1 false alarm about every four years, which is a remarkable statistic. The commercial false alarm dispatch rate for 2002 was .94, which is a further reduction from 2001 levels and marks two years running that the commercial rate fell below the 1.0 mark. Combined residential and commercial false alarm dispatch rates fell to an all-time low of .35 and is the lowest combined reported dispatch rate in the entire country.

**Chart 2 – False Alarm Dispatch Rates**

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

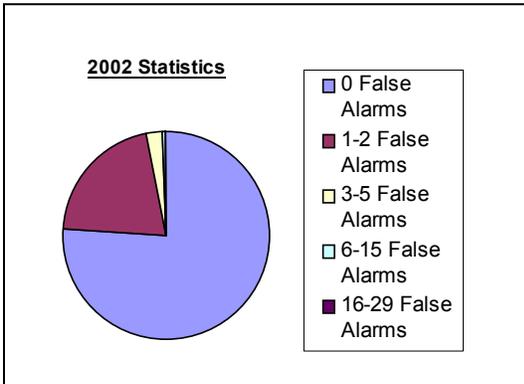
Commercial false alarm dispatch rates have been reported as high as 4.0 and residential false alarm dispatch rates as high as 1.0 or above. A dispatch rate of 4.0 means that *every* alarm user has four actual responses *every* year. Assuming Montgomery County's dispatch rate would have risen a modest amount to 2.0 without enforcement of the alarm law, police officers would have actually responded to 133,050 alarm activations in 2002, 97% of which would turn out to be false alarms. At \$90 per dispatch, those 133,050 alarm activations would require approximately 43 police officers to do absolutely nothing but respond to burglar alarms at a staggering cost of \$11,974,500. 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.

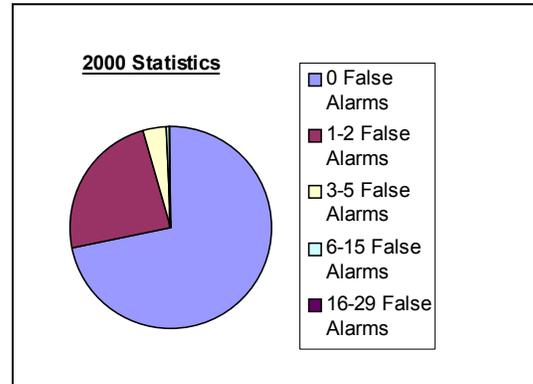


In 2002, 4.1% *more* residential and commercial alarm users experienced no false alarms at all. **A total of 52,077 alarm users, or 78.2%, had zero false alarm activations to which police officers responded in 2002.** The pie graphs on the following page show that each year more alarm users achieve the 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.

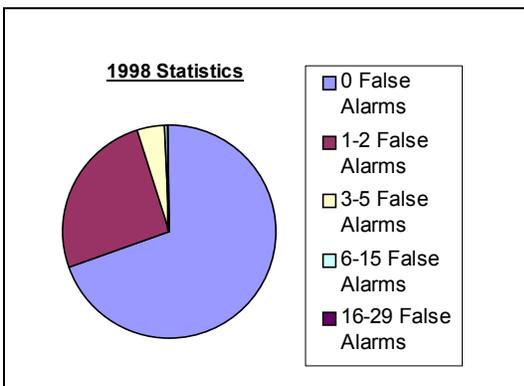
### Threshold Statistics



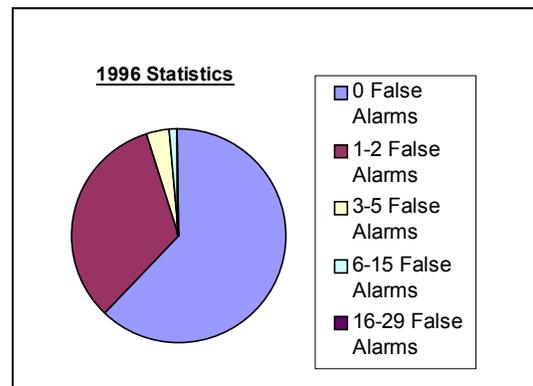
**2002 Alarm Users = 66,525**



**2000 Alarm Users = 61,334**



**1998 Alarm Users = 54,175**



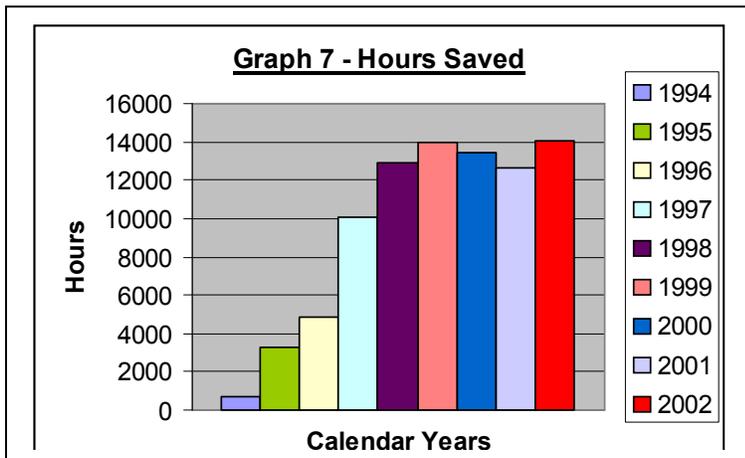
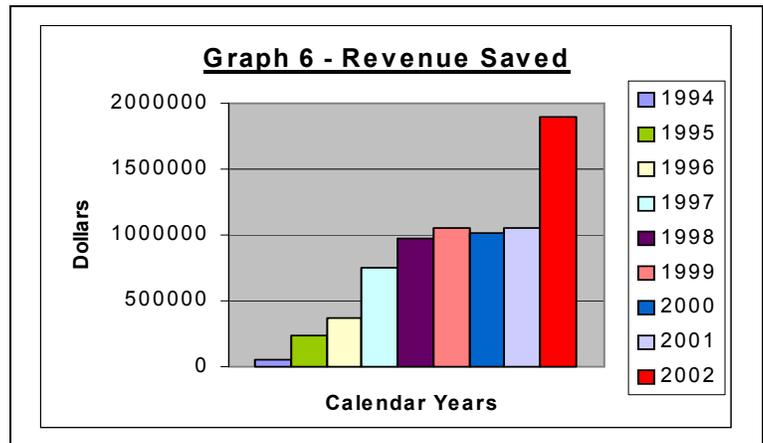
**1996 Alarm Users = 42,150**

As a direct result of the FARS's strict enforcement of the alarm law, there were 21,064 alarm calls to which police officers were not required to respond in 2002. **This equates to savings in 2002 of approximately \$1,895,760 and 14,043 hours of police officer time, or 13.5 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 2002 as a result of police officers responding to 21,064 less false alarms was \$1,895,760. Since the FARS began enforcement of the alarm statute, the total revenue saved by Montgomery County has been \$7,384,240.

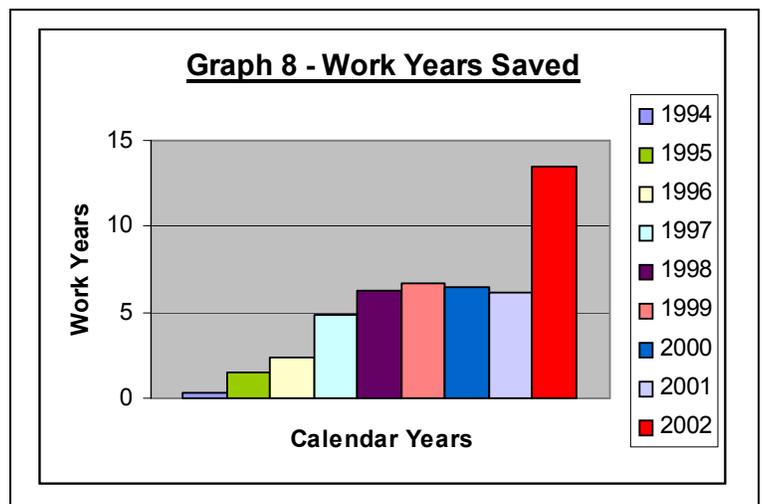
(The dramatic difference in 2002 savings is due to using a more realistic figure of \$90 per response, as opposed to \$55 in 2001 and \$50 for previous years.)



**Graph 7** shows that the actual hours saved in 2002 as a result of police officers responding to 21,064 less false alarms was 14,043 hours. Since the FARS began enforcement of the alarm statute, Montgomery County has recovered 85,942 hours in police officer time.

**Graph 8** shows that 13.5 actual work years were saved in 2002 as a result of enforcement of the alarm statute. Since enforcement began, Montgomery County has recovered a total of 48.07 work years of police officer time.

(The dramatic difference between 2002 and previous years is due to erroneously using a full 2080 hours as a work year measure between 1994 and 2001, which is not a realistic 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 2002 alone responding to false alarms. The \$7,384,240 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
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$7,384,240</b>	<b>85,942</b>	<b>48.07</b>

In calendar year 2002, the FARS had 473 registered federal, state and local government facilities, all of which were held to the same strict standards as all other alarm users. Of the 473 government alarm users, 112, or 24%, had at least one false alarm. This shows a slight increase over 2001. Those 112 alarm users collectively had 215 false alarms. A total of 404 different government alarm users (85.4%) had **zero** false alarms, which showed great improvement over 2001 and surpasses statistics for all other alarm users by a fairly wide margin (78.2%). The following chart reflects government alarm user activity for 1999 through 2002.

**Chart 4 – Government Alarm Users**

# of False Alarms	# of Alarm Users 1999	# of Alarm Users 2000	# of Alarm Users 2001	# of Alarm Users 2002
0	332	355	355	404
1	72	54	50	69
2	22	17	33	22
3	13	14	5	10
4	2	7	4	3
5	1	1	2	0
6	0	1	1	3
7	1	0	2	2
8	0	1	1	0
9	1	2	0	2
10-13	1	0	0	1
14-21	0	0	1	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 2002. The second chart covers *fiscal* year 02. The FY02 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 2002 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 2002	ACTUAL REVENUES
<b><u>Alarm User Registration Fees</u></b>	
Residential	\$216,600
Commercial	<u>31,170</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$247,770</b>
<b><u>Alarm User Registration Renewal Fees</u></b>	
Residential	\$ 5,000
Commercial	<u>240</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 5,240</b>
<b><u>False Alarm Response Fees</u></b>	
Residential	\$ 58,219
County Attorney Collections	<u>5,920</u>
Total Residential	<b>\$ 64,139</b>
Commercial	\$338,111
County Attorney Collections	<u>57,104</u>
Total Commercial	<b>\$395,215</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$459,354</b>
<b><u>Alarm Business Fees</u></b>	
License	\$ 36,210
Civil Citations	35,550
Administrative Fees	<u>24,184</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 95,944</b>
<b><u>Appeal Filing Fees</u></b>	
Residential	\$ 450
Commercial	<u>300</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 750</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$809,058</b>

Biennial renewal of alarm user registrations began on January 1, 2003. Notification was sent to alarm users in December for those registrations slated for renewal in January and some alarm users submitted the renewal prior to the end of the year. As such, the calendar year revenue chart shows a nominal \$5,240 collected in renewal fees for registrations that expired in January 2003 but where fees were collected in December 2002.

**Chart 6 – Fiscal Year Revenue**

<b>FISCAL YEAR 2002</b>	<b>ACTUAL REVENUES</b>
<b><u>Registration Fees</u></b>	
Residential	\$190,170
Commercial	<u>28,170</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$218,340</b>
<b><u>False Alarm Response Fees</u></b>	
Residential	\$ 64,431
County Attorney Collections	<u>5,930</u>
Total Residential	\$ 70,361
Commercial	\$338,202
County Attorney Collections	<u>55,726</u>
Total Commercial	\$393,928
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$464,289</b>
<b><u>Alarm Business Fees</u></b>	
License	\$ 34,730
Civil Citations	34,800
Administrative Fees	12,070
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 81,600</b>
<b><u>Appeal Filing Fees</u></b>	
Residential	\$ 600
Commercial	<u>330</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 930</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$765,159</b>

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 2002 was an extraordinary 91.3% of all false alarm response fees billed.** This is up from last year's collection figure of 89.2%. 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 2002 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 2002. The actual collection of monies for those calendar year 2002 false alarms extended into calendar year 2003, and, therefore, reflects different totals from the Calendar Year Revenue Chart.

**Chart 7 – Calendar Year 2002 Billed vs. Collected  
False Alarm Response Fees**

<b>False Alarm Response Fees</b>	<b>Billed</b>	<b>Collected</b>	<b>Past Due (&gt;30 &amp; &lt;60 days overdue)</b>	<b>Delinquent (&gt;50 days overdue)</b>
Commercial	\$418,475	\$382,400	\$23,725	\$12,025
Residential	\$55,150	\$50,200	\$2,625	\$2,225
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$473,625</b>	<b>\$432,600</b>	<b>\$26,350</b>	<b>\$14,250</b>

\*Represents fees collected in 2002 and 2003 against false alarm response fees billed in 2002.

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 \$14,250 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 2002. 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
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 8,299 new alarm user registration forms in 2002. This increase, coupled with the 45.3% 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**

Type	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Residential		29,398	34,048	39,129	44,827	48,654	51,743	55,024	57,026
Commercial		7,049	8,102	8,879	9,348	9,489	9,591	9,812	9,499
Both	29,756	36,436	42,150	48,008	54,175	58,143	61,334	64,836	66,525

The chart above does not reflect an increase of overall alarm users of 8,299 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 the advent of alarm user registration renewal and the FARS's outreach to almost 68,000 alarm users at the end of December 2002, we received numerous pieces of returned mail, for which we were able to investigate and inactivate almost 1,800 alarm users.

The following charts depict the number of alarm users that had a specific number of false alarms from 1995 through 2002. The charts also show the percentage of change between 2001 vs. 2002, as well as the percentage of change between the base year of 1995 and 2002, 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.)

As stated earlier in this report, each year an increasing number of alarm users have no false alarms at all. **In 2002, 52,077 alarm users had ZERO false alarms to which police officers were required to respond.** This is up significantly from 49,950 in 2001. A full 2,127 additional alarm users had zero false alarms in 2002 over 2001. 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).

**Chart 10**  
**Residential Alarm Users**  
**With Specific Numbers of False Alarms**

# of False Alarms	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	% Change (01-02)	% Base Change (95-02)
0	18116	23328	28428	33946	37,384	40,227	44,044	46,338	+5.2%	+156%
1	11271	10720	10701	10881	11,270	11,516	10,980	10,688	-2.6%	-5.2%
2	4153	3852	3516	3379	3,292	3,395	2,950	2,750	-6.8%	-33.7%
3	1171	540	371	1012	985	945	793	664	-16.3%	-43.3%
4	668	513	333	309	261	251	217	184	-15.2%	-72.4%
5	292	168	106	106	89	91	68	54	-20.6%	-81.5%
6	128	57	32	40	32	30	21	14	-33.3%	-89.1%
7	50	25	13	15	10	11	7	2	-71.4%	-96.0%
8	19	12	5	6	2	3	4	1	-75.0%	-94.7%
9	9	4	1	2	2	0	1	0	-100%	-100%
10	7	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
11	6	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
12	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
13	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
14	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
15	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
16	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

**Chart 11**  
**Commercial Alarm Users With Specific Numbers of False Alarms**

# of False Alarms	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	% Change (01-02)	% Base Change (95-02)
0	2352	4020	4820	5412	5416	5457	5906	5739	-2.8%	+144%
1	4697	4082	4059	3936	4073	4134	3906	3760	-3.7%	-19.9%
2	2699	2580	2457	2290	2334	2474	2256	2098	-7.0%	-22.3%
3	1435	1019	837	1335	1347	1433	1299	1169	-10.0%	-18.5%
4	1113	1039	770	789	781	861	744	697	-6.3%	-37.4%
5	763	648	445	478	475	527	459	409	-10.9%	-46.4%
6	490	403	292	286	287	332	285	274	-3.8%	-44.1%
7	331	250	177	183	176	216	185	171	-7.6%	-48.3%
8	217	177	123	119	112	141	125	115	-8.0%	-47.0%
9	145	120	80	80	80	99	85	78	-8.2%	-46.2%
10	109	84	67	58	58	68	48	45	-6.2%	-58.7%
11	75	57	45	37	42	46	35	32	-8.6%	-57.3%
12	49	40	32	27	28	32	25	24	-4.0%	-51.0%
13	35	33	17	19	18	26	22	17	-22.7%	-51.4%
14	30	25	11	11	13	20	18	12	-33.3%	-60.0%
15	24	23	8	8	10	14	11	9	-18.2%	-62.5%
16	18	20	5	3	5	7	9	8	-11.1%	-55.5%
17	11	15	5	3	1	7	8	7	-12.5%	-36.4%
18	11	10	3	2	0	6	7	7	0	-36.4%
19	8	7	1	2	0	3	4	3	-25.0%	-62.5%
20	5	6	1	0	0	1*	3	2	-33.3%	-60.0%
21	5	4	1	0	0	1*	2	0	-100%	-100%
22	4	3	1	0	0	1*	0	0	0	0
23	2	4	0	0	0	1*	0	0	0	0
24	2	4	0	0	0	1*	0	0	0	0
25	2	2	0	0	0	1*	0	0	0	0
26	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
27	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
28	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
29	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**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	% Change (01-02)	% Base Change (95-01)
0	20468	27348	33248	39358	42800	45684	49950	52077	+4.3%	+154.4%
1	15968	14802	14760	14817	15343	15650	14886	14448	-2.9%	-9.5%
2	6852	6432	5973	5669	5626	5869	5206	4848	-6.9%	-29.2%
3	2606	1559	1208	2347	2332	2378	2092	1833	-12.4%	-29.7%
4	1781	1552	1103	1098	1042	1112	991	881	-11.1%	-50.5%
5	1055	816	551	584	564	618	527	463	-12.1%	-56.1%
6	618	460	324	326	319	362	306	288	-5.9%	-53.4%
7	381	275	190	198	186	227	192	173	-9.9%	-54.6%
8	236	189	128	125	114	144	129	116	-10.1%	-50.8%
9	154	124	81	82	82	99	86	78	-8.2%	-46.2%
10	116	84	67	59	59	68	48	45	-6.2%	-58.7%
11	81	57	45	37	43	46	35	32	-8.6%	-57.3%
12	52	40	32	27	29	32	25	24	-4.0%	-51.0%
13	36	33	17	19	19	26	22	17	-22.7%	-51.4%
14	32	25	11	11	14	20	18	12	-33.3%	-60.0%
15	26	23	8	8	11	14	11	9	-18.2%	-62.5%
16	19	20	5	3	6	7	9	8	-11.1%	-55.5%
17	11	15	5	3	1	7	8	7	-12.5%	-36.4%
18	11	10	3	2	0	6	7	7	0	-36.4%
19	8	7	1	2	0	3	4	3	-25.0%	-62.5%
20	5	6	1	0	0	1	3	2	-33.3%	-60.0%
21	5	4	1	0	0	1	2	0	-100%	-100%
22	4	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
23	2	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
24	2	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
25	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
26	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
27	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
28	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
29	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

## **Major Accomplishments**

### **CAD Conversion**

As stated in our last report, the FARS currently utilizes a two-way electronic interface with the Police Department's Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. This interface allows the FARS to very quickly and efficiently exchange data with the Emergency Communications Center operators regarding registered alarm users, licensed alarm businesses and accounts that have been placed into or taken out of a denied response status, as well as provides the mechanism to retrieve all alarm call activity for enforcement and billing purposes.

Over the course of 2002, FARS staff worked tirelessly to ensure that the aforementioned two-way electronic interface continues to operate when the new CAD system comes on line. It would be catastrophic to the false alarm reduction efforts and the incredible success we have had to date should this interface not operate. Countless meetings were held with TRW and PRC to communicate the basic functionality of the interface and to prepare a detailed functional requirements document from which the vendor would work to design the interface. A significant amount of time and many problems later, it appears that we have been successful in maintaining the functionality of the FARS to CAD and CAD to FARS interfaces. Extensive testing of both process and data was performed in conjunction with ECC personnel and the department's IT Division. We anticipate that all system bugs will be corrected and that we will be ready for switch-over to the new CAD in April 2003.

### **Major Offender Program**

The Major Offender Program was, once again, successful in reaching out to those alarm users that incurred the most false alarms in 2002. FARS staff identified and worked with 94 different alarm users, who were experiencing false alarm problems. Of those 94 alarm users, only 8 were not successful in reducing or eliminating their false alarms. Through the FARS's supportive intervention, 86 alarm users were successful in drastically reducing or even eliminating their false alarms.

### **Successful Defeat of Pre-Emption Attempt**

Unfortunately, as has happened in past years, an attempt was made to introduce and pass legislation on a state level that would pre-empt local jurisdictions from enacting and enforcing their own false alarm reduction ordinances. In 2002, the Maryland Burglar and Fire Alarm Association introduced pre-emptive legislation through Del. Brian McHale of Baltimore, which would have set a state standard for regulation of false alarms. This proposed bill would have had a devastating affect on Montgomery County, by removing many of our most effective false alarm reduction components and would have cost in the neighborhood of \$1 million to retool our existing computer program and hire staff to coordinate additional responsibilities.

The FARS director gathered support from all jurisdictions in Maryland that currently have a false alarm reduction ordinance, as well as the Maryland Chief's of Police Association and the Maryland Association of Counties in an effort to defeat the bill. Additionally, the FARS director attempted to meet directly with Del. McHale to explain law enforcement's concerns regarding the bill and to work with him to develop compromise legislation, which would not preempt the local jurisdictions from enacting and enforcing laws that best meet the needs of their own communities. While no meeting ever took place, the FARS director was able to speak with Del. McHale's staff regarding the issues. On February 27, 2002 Del. McHale formally withdrew his bill. In a letter to Chairman John F. Wood, Jr., Commerce and Government Matters Committee, McHale stated, "As you may recall, the effected parties in this matter were to meet this past summer. Evidentially that meeting never occurred and many contentious points remain unresolved and far from agreement."

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.

### **Alarm Law Amendments**

In the continuing effort to enhance the success of the false alarm reduction program, amendments to Chapter 3A, Alarms, of the Montgomery County Code were introduced in June 2002 and passed on November 26, 2002. Based on two programs already initiated by the FARS, amendments were passed to increase the annual Alarm Business License fee from \$100 to \$200 to better cover the costs of coordinating licensing efforts with the State of Maryland, and instituted a formal biennial renewal of alarm user registrations at a cost of \$10. Failure to renew the alarm user registration when notified to do so will now result in the imposition of a \$100 fee for each response to a false alarm from an alarm system whose registration has expired. The fee is in addition to any other response fees imposed and applies even to the first false alarm each year. Finally, the number of "free" false alarms in a calendar year was reduced from two to one. Based on statistics, there is a greater reduction of false alarms at a level just before the imposition of fees. Therefore, the county should realize a further reduction in false alarms based on the lower number of "free" activations.

The FARS staff designed postcards advising of the law changes and sent over 68,000 to alarm users the first two weeks of December. Additionally, FARS staff sent personalized letters to every licensed alarm company advising of the changes and how they would affect the dealers and users of alarm systems. FARS staff also updated its "Burglar Alarm Law" brochure and registration forms to accurately reflect the new law. Finally, FARS staff worked closely with its software programmer to enhance the False Alarm Tracking and Billing System, the custom software program used by the FARS to enforce the mandates of the alarm law, to accommodate the renewal process, increased fees and new penalty for non-compliance.

## **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 87 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. Fifty-three of the 87 total citations were issued to one national company. The good news is that the number of citations required in 2002 for violations was down from 106 in 2001. This shows that most alarm companies are complying with the provisions of the alarm law.

## **Certified False Alarm Reduction Professional**

The FARS director 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 was offered for the first time by the FARA at its annual international training conference and the FARS director is one of 12 people who successfully attained certification.

## **School and County Facilities**

FARS staff worked closely with security personnel in both County government and the Montgomery County Public Schools to address false alarm problems and to develop a strategy for reducing the number of unnecessary police responses to those locations. FARS staff will start sending monthly reports beginning in January 2003 to MCPS and quarterly reports to County Security in an effort to quickly identify those facilities that are experiencing problems and to determine whether the issue is related to user error or equipment malfunction. The specific cause(s) of the false alarm problem should be able to be identified rapidly and will reduce false alarms to which police officers must respond.

## **Informational Holiday Brochure**

Using information provided by the FARA, FARS staff published an informational Holiday bulletin in late November. The purpose of the bulletin was to proactively advise alarm users of the possible false alarms that could occur during the holiday season and how to avoid them and the commensurate false alarm response fees that could be charged as a result. The bulletin was sent to all alarm users who had a false alarm that was registered against their alarm user record. The bulletin contained helpful hints on avoiding false alarms due to holiday decorations, inclement weather and family and friends home for the holidays. A copy of the bulletin is attached at the end of this report.

## **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 2002, the FARS referred 323 different alarm user accounts to the Office of the County Attorney for collection of outstanding/delinquent fees that totaled \$61,765.