



FALSE ALARM REDUCTION PROGRAM

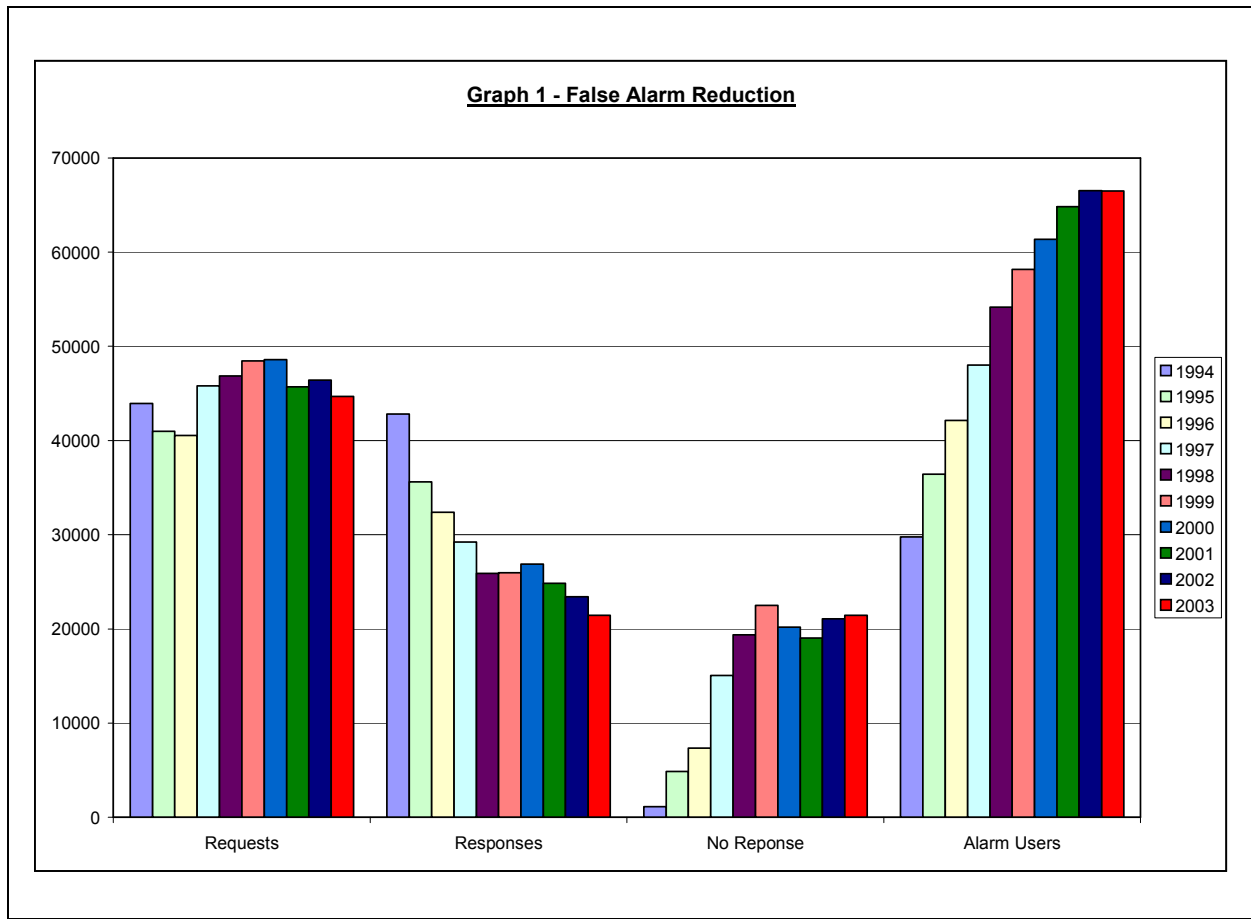


ANNUAL REPORT FOR YEAR ENDING 2003

False Alarm Reduction

The False Alarm Reduction Section (FARS) of the Montgomery County Department of Police completed its eighth 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 2002 and 2003, despite an increase of 7,234 new alarm users. The FARS also performed outreach to 50 different problem accounts in its “Major Offender” program, successfully completed conversion of the program to the new CAD 9-1-1 system, updated its web site, performed numerous outreach to the community and significantly reduced false alarm dispatch rates for both residential and commercial alarm users.

In calendar year 2003, false alarms to which police officers were required to respond were reduced by 8.3 % over the previous year. The FARS now shows a full 49.9% reduction in false alarms since enforcement of the False Alarm Reduction Program began in earnest in March 1995. Additionally, police officers responded to 21,369 *less* alarm calls in 2003 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 this year the number of alarm users remained almost exactly the same as last year. In 2003, there were a total of 44,673 requests for dispatch to alarm activations, down by 1736 over the previous year. Additionally, police responded to only 21,452 of those requests, or 52%. There were a total of 21,431 alarm activations to which the police were not required to respond in 2003.

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 8.3% between 2002 and 2003.**

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 2003, police officers responded to only 52% of all requests for dispatch (44,673 requests for dispatch with only 21,452 actual responses). This represents a 48% reduction between requests and dispatches, even with 36,718 *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 (21,431) 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 2003, alarm companies cancelled a very impressive 10,057 requests for dispatch, an increase of almost 1,000 calls over 2002. 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 2,121 requests for dispatch that were denied as a result of the violation status of the alarm user or alarm business. This represents 953 *fewer* times that alarm companies requested dispatch after being advised of the violation status of their customers. This decrease is a direct result of enforcement action taken by FARS staff and shows that alarm companies are finally realizing the impact of false alarms and Montgomery County's commitment to enforcing Chapter 3A, Alarms.

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. Requests for dispatch in 2003 declined by more than 2000 calls, while the actual responses to requests is at a new all-time low of 21,452. This, coupled with the increase in new alarm users, is extremely encouraging and shows how well the alarm law is working.

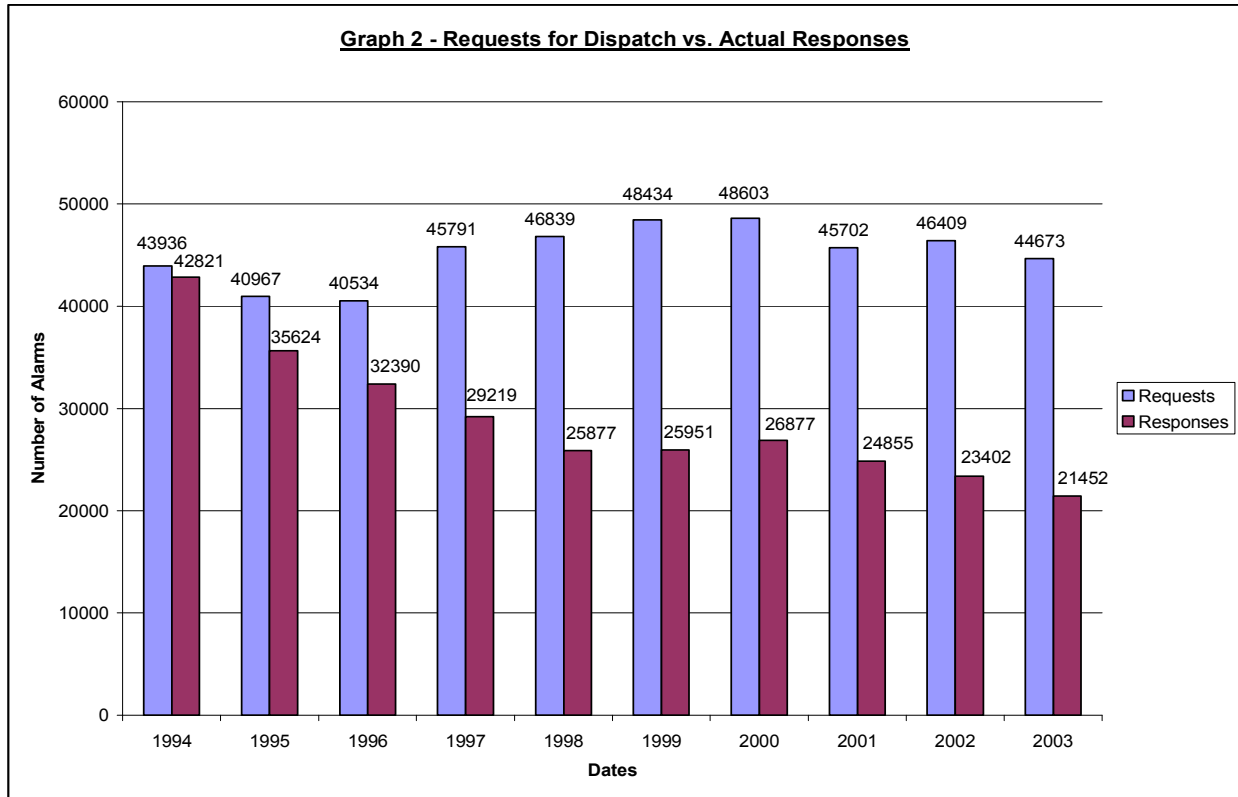


Chart 1 – Requests for Dispatch vs. Actual Responses

<u>Year</u>	<u>Requests for Dispatch</u>	<u>Actual Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Total Calls Responded To</u>
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 that takes into account the growth of the alarm user base. Both residential and commercial false alarm dispatch rates continued to decline in 2003 over 2002. **For the third year in a row, 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 2003 was .23. 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 2003 was .88, which is a further reduction from 2002 levels and marks three 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 .32 and is the lowest combined reported dispatch rate in the entire country.

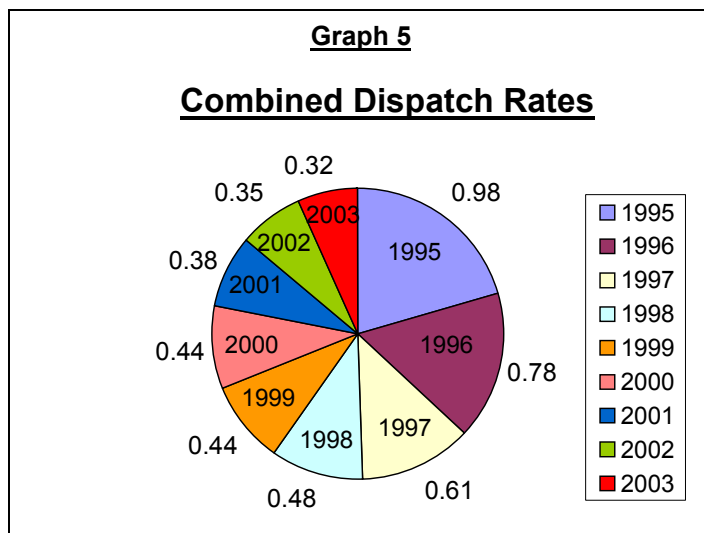
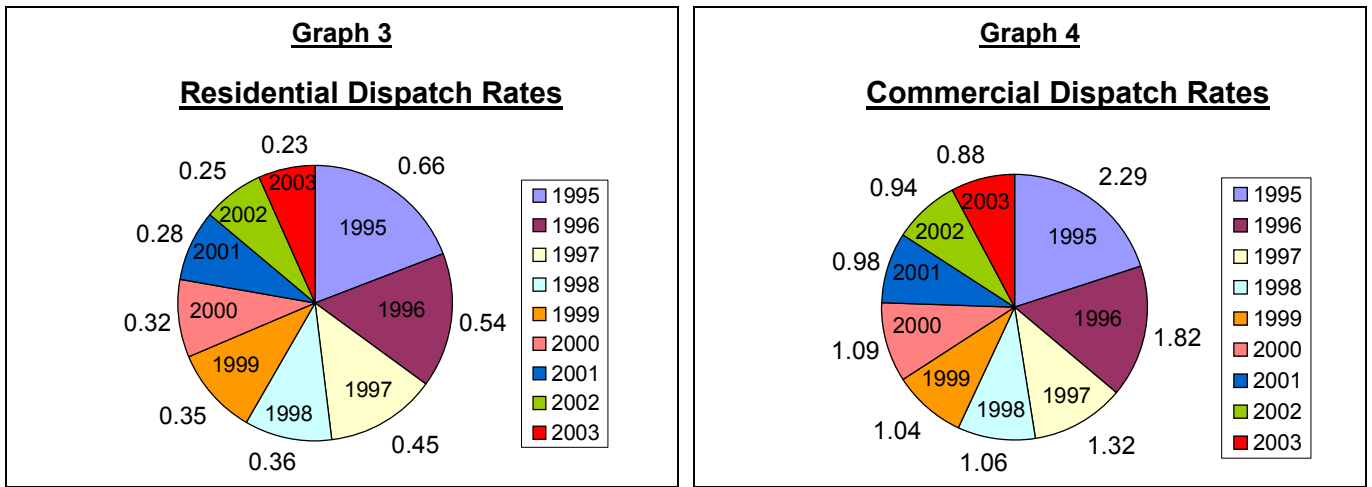
Chart 2 – False Alarm Dispatch Rates

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

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 2003 statistics, that would equate to 36,964 actual responses to alarm activations for commercial alarm users *alone*, instead of the 21,431; a figure more than 15,000 over the *total* responses for residential and commercial alarm users *combined* in 2003.

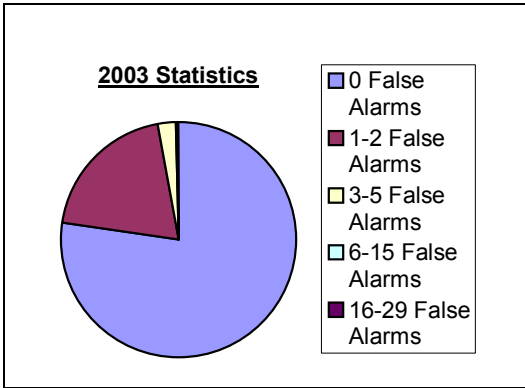
Assuming Montgomery County’s dispatch rate would have risen a modest amount to 2.0 without enforcement of the alarm law, police officers would have actually responded to 132,948 alarm activations in 2003, 97% of which would turn out to be false alarms. At \$90 per dispatch, those 132,948 alarm activations would require approximately 43 police officers to do absolutely nothing but respond to burglar alarms at a staggering cost of \$11,965,320. 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.

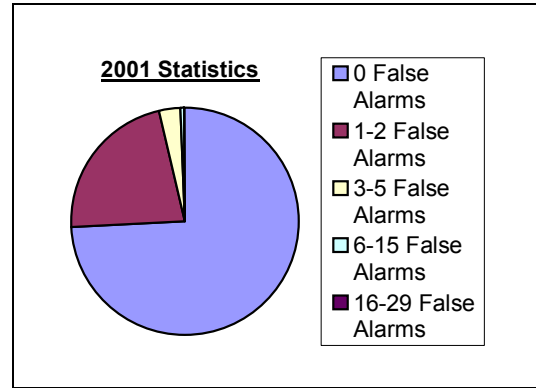


In 2003, 1.3% *more* residential and commercial alarm users experienced no false alarms at all. **A total of 52,762 alarm users, or 79.4%, had zero false alarm activations to which police officers responded in 2003.** The pie graphs on the following page show that each year more alarm users achieve the 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.

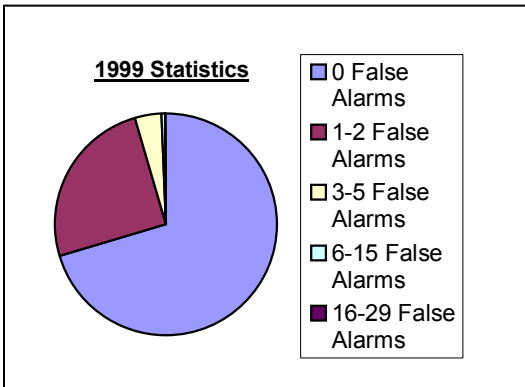
Threshold Statistics



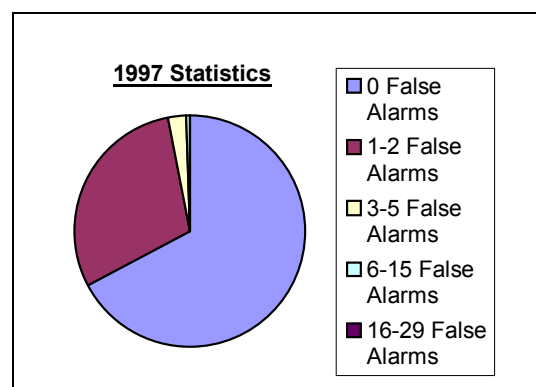
2003 Alarm Users = 66,474



2001 Alarm Users = 64,836



1999 Alarm Users = 58,143



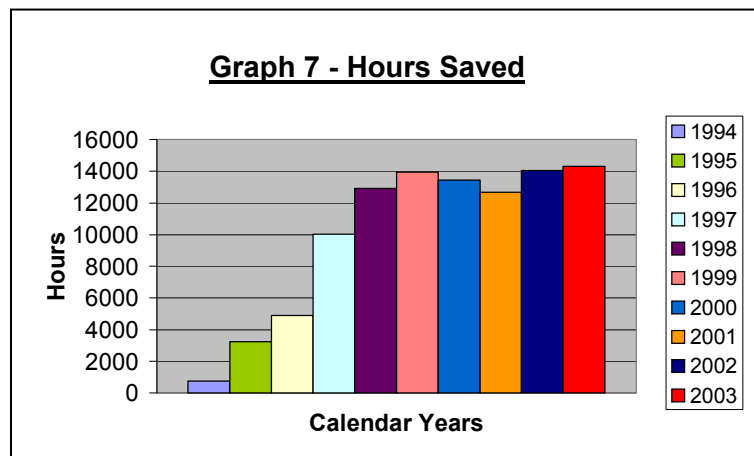
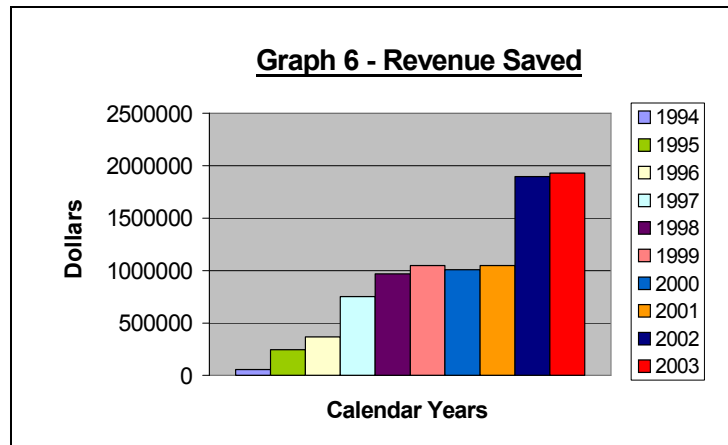
1997 Alarm Users = 48,008

As a direct result of the FARS's strict enforcement of the alarm law, there were 21,431 alarm calls to which police officers were not required to respond in 2003. **This equates to savings in 2003 of approximately \$1,928,790 and 14,301 hours of police officer time, or 13.75 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 2003 as a result of police officers responding to 21,431 less false alarms was \$1,928,790. Since the FARS began enforcement of the alarm statute, the total revenue saved by Montgomery County has been \$9,313,030.

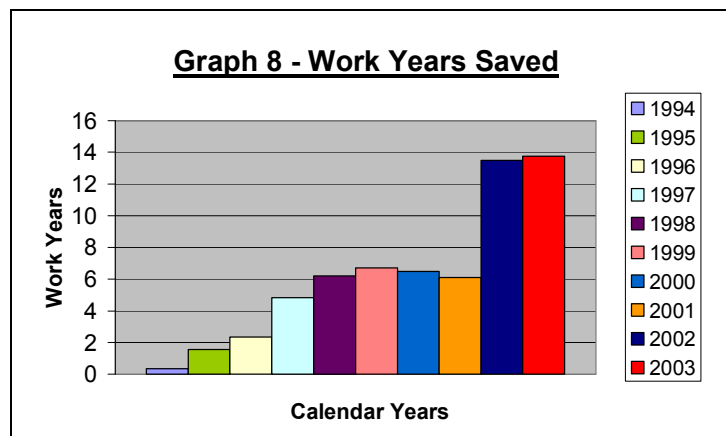
(The dramatic difference in 2002 savings and subsequent years is due to using a more realistic figure of \$90 per response, as opposed to \$55 in 2001 and \$50 for previous years.)



Graph 7 shows that the actual hours saved in 2003 as a result of police officers responding to 21,431 less false alarms was 14,301 hours. Since the FARS began enforcement of the alarm statute, Montgomery County has recovered 100,243 hours in police officer time.

Graph 8 shows that 13.75 actual work years were saved in 2003 as a result of enforcement of the alarm statute. Since enforcement began, Montgomery County has recovered a total of 61.82 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 2003 alone responding to false alarms. The \$9,313,030 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
TOTAL	\$9,313,030	100,243	61.82

In calendar year 2003, the FARS had 497 registered federal, state and local government facilities, all of which were held to the same strict standards as all other alarm users. Of the 497 government alarm users, only 97 or 20%, had at least one false alarm. This shows a decrease of 4% over 2002. Those 97 alarm users collectively had 132 false alarms. A total of 400 different government alarm users (80.5%) had **zero** false alarms, which surpasses statistics for all other alarm users by a slight margin (79.4%). The following chart reflects government alarm user activity for 1999 through 2003.

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
0	332	355	355	404	400
1	72	54	50	69	74
2	22	17	33	22	17
3	13	14	5	10	2
4	2	7	4	3	3
5	1	1	2	0	0
6	0	1	1	3	1
7	1	0	2	2	0
8	0	1	1	0	0
9	1	2	0	2	0
10-13	1	0	0	1	0
14-21	0	0	1	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 2003. The second chart covers *fiscal* year 03. The FY03 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 2003 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 2003	ACTUAL REVENUES
<u>Alarm User Registration Fees</u>	
Residential	\$190,210
Commercial	<u>29,610</u>
TOTAL	\$219,820
<u>Alarm User Registration Renewal Fees</u>	
Residential	\$208,560
Commercial	<u>31,250</u>
TOTAL	\$239,810
<u>False Alarm Response Fees</u>	
Residential	\$103,610
County Attorney Collections	<u>7,531</u>
Total Residential	\$111,141
Commercial	\$356,042
County Attorney Collections	<u>59,727</u>
Total Commercial	\$415,769
TOTAL	\$526,910
<u>Alarm Business Fees</u>	
License	\$ 66,760
Civil Citations	26,500
Administrative Fees	<u>16,523</u>
TOTAL	\$109,783
<u>Appeal Filing Fees</u>	
Residential	\$ 570
Commercial	<u>225</u>
TOTAL	\$ 795
GRAND TOTAL	\$1,097,118

Chart 6 – Fiscal Year Revenue

FISCAL YEAR 03	ACTUAL REVENUES
<u>Alarm User Registration Fees</u>	
Residential	\$222,630
Commercial	<u>30,600</u>
TOTAL	\$253,230
<u>Alarm User Registration Renewal Fees</u>	
Residential	\$104,100
Commercial	<u>13,990</u>
TOTAL	\$118,090
<u>False Alarm Response Fees</u>	
Residential	\$ 71,328
County Attorney Collections	<u>5,840</u>
Total Residential	\$ 77,168
Commercial	\$377,262
County Attorney Collections	<u>60,345</u>
Total Commercial	\$437,607
TOTAL	\$514,775
<u>Alarm Business Fees</u>	
License	\$ 51,790
Civil Citations	36,300
Administrative Fees	<u>23,026</u>
TOTAL	\$111,116
<u>Appeal Filing Fees</u>	
Residential	\$ 630
Commercial	<u>315</u>
TOTAL	\$ 945
GRAND TOTAL	\$998,156

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 2003 was an extraordinary 91.5% of all false alarm response fees billed.** This is up slightly from last year's collection figure of 91.3%. 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 2003 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 2003. The actual collection of monies for those calendar year 2003 false alarms extended into calendar year 2004, and, therefore, reflects different totals from the Calendar Year Revenue Chart.

**Chart 7 – Calendar Year 2003 Billed vs. Collected
False Alarm Response Fees**

False Alarm Response Fees	Billed	Collected	Past Due (>30 & <60 days overdue)	Delinquent (>50 days overdue)
Commercial	\$384,550	\$352,575	\$25,575	\$6,000
Residential	\$113,675	\$103,175	\$6,575	\$3,800
Total	\$498,225	\$455,750	\$32,150	\$9,800

*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 \$9,800 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 2003. 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
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 7,234 new alarm user registration forms in 2003. This increase, coupled with the 49.9% 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	2003
Residential		29,398	34,048	39,129	44,827	48,654	51,743	55,024	57,026	57,233
Commercial		7,049	8,102	8,879	9,348	9,489	9,591	9,812	9,499	9,241
Both	29,756	36,436	42,150	48,008	54,175	58,143	61,334	64,836	66,525	66,474

Chart 9 does not reflect an increase of overall alarm users of 7,234 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 alarm user registration renewal also provides an opportunity for alarm users, who no longer use their alarm systems, to request cancellation of their registration. This, in turn, 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 2003. The charts also show the percentage of change between 2002 vs. 2003, as well as the percentage of change between the base year of 1995 and 2003, 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 2003, 52,762 alarm users had ZERO false alarms to which police officers were required to respond.** This is up once again from 2002 statistics with 685 additional alarm users having zero false alarms in 2003 over 2002. 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	2003	% Change (02-03)	% Base Change (95-03)
0	18116	23328	28428	33946	37,384	40,227	44,044	46,338	47,130	+1.7	+156
1	11271	10720	10701	10881	11,270	11,516	10,980	10,688	10,103	-5.5	-10.4
2	4153	3852	3516	3379	3,292	3,395	2,950	2,750	2,306	-16.1	-44.5
3	1171	540	371	1012	985	945	793	664	565	-14.9	-51.7
4	668	513	333	309	261	251	217	184	143	-22.3	-78.6
5	292	168	106	106	89	91	68	54	38	-29.6	-87.0
6	128	57	32	40	32	30	21	14	14	0	-89.1
7	50	25	13	15	10	11	7	2	9	+350	-82.0
8	19	12	5	6	2	3	4	1	5	+400	-73.7
9	9	4	1	2	2	0	1	0	2	+200	-77.8
10	7	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	+100	-100
11	6	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	-100
12	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	-100
13	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	-100
14	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	-100
15	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	-100
16	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	-100

Chart 11
Commercial Alarm Users With Specific Numbers of False Alarms

# of False Alarms	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	% Change (02-03)	% Base Change (95-03)
0	2352	4020	4820	5412	5416	5457	5906	5739	5632	-1.8	+139
1	4697	4082	4059	3936	4073	4134	3906	3760	3609	-4.0	-23.2
2	2699	2580	2457	2290	2334	2474	2256	2098	1864	-11.1	-30.9
3	1435	1019	837	1335	1347	1433	1299	1169	1014	-13.2	-29.3
4	1113	1039	770	789	781	861	744	697	570	-18.2	-48.8
5	763	648	445	478	475	527	459	409	359	-12.2	-52.9
6	490	403	292	286	287	332	285	274	228	-16.8	-53.4
7	331	250	177	183	176	216	185	171	139	-18.7	-58.0
8	217	177	123	119	112	141	125	115	98	-14.8	-54.8
9	145	120	80	80	80	99	85	78	76	-2.6	-47.6
10	109	84	67	58	58	68	48	45	48	+6.7	-56.0
11	75	57	45	37	42	46	35	32	28	-12.5	-62.7
12	49	40	32	27	28	32	25	24	20	-16.7	-59.2
13	35	33	17	19	18	26	22	17	12	-29.4	-65.7
14	30	25	11	11	13	20	18	12	7	-41.7	-76.7
15	24	23	8	8	10	14	11	9	5	-44.5	-79.2
16	18	20	5	3	5	7	9	8	4	-50.0	-77.8
17	11	15	5	3	1	7	8	7	3	-57.1	-72.7
18	11	10	3	2	0	6	7	7	3	-57.1	-72.7
19	8	7	1	2	0	3	4	3	2	-25.0	-75.0
20	5	6	1	0	0	1*	3	2	1	-50.0	-80.0
21	5	4	1	0	0	1*	2	0	0	0	-100
22	4	3	1	0	0	1*	0	0	0	0	-100
23	2	4	0	0	0	1*	0	0	0	0	-100
24	2	4	0	0	0	1*	0	0	0	0	-100
25	2	2	0	0	0	1*	0	0	0	0	-100
26	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100
27	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100
28	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100
29	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100

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	% Change (02-03)	% Base Change (95-03)
0	20468	27348	33248	39358	42800	45684	49950	52077	52762	+1.3	+158
1	15968	14802	14760	14817	15343	15650	14886	14448	13712	-5.1	-14.1
2	6852	6432	5973	5669	5626	5869	5206	4848	4170	-14.0	-39.1
3	2606	1559	1208	2347	2332	2378	2092	1833	1579	-14.0	-39.4
4	1781	1552	1103	1098	1042	1112	991	881	713	-19.1	-60.0
5	1055	816	551	584	564	618	527	463	397	-14.2	-62.4
6	618	460	324	326	319	362	306	288	242	-16.0	-60.8
7	381	275	190	198	186	227	192	173	148	-14.4	-61.1
8	236	189	128	125	114	144	129	116	103	-11.2	-56.3
9	154	124	81	82	82	99	86	78	78	0	-49.3
10	116	84	67	59	59	68	48	45	49	+8.9	-61.2
11	81	57	45	37	43	46	35	32	28	-12.5	-62.7
12	52	40	32	27	29	32	25	24	20	-16.7	-59.2
13	36	33	17	19	19	26	22	17	12	-29.4	-65.7
14	32	25	11	11	14	20	18	12	7	-41.7	-76.7
15	26	23	8	8	11	14	11	9	5	-44.5	-79.2
16	19	20	5	3	6	7	9	8	4	-50.0	-77.8
17	11	15	5	3	1	7	8	7	3	-57.1	-72.7
18	11	10	3	2	0	6	7	7	3	-57.1	-72.7
19	8	7	1	2	0	3	4	3	2	-25.0	-75.0
20	5	6	1	0	0	1	3	2	1	-50.0	-80.0
21	5	4	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	-100
22	4	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	-100
23	2	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	-100
24	2	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	-100
25	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	-100
26	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100
27	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100
28	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100
29	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100

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.

On July 20, 2003, Montgomery County successfully "flipped the switch" on a new CAD system. I am happy to report that the extensive testing done by the FARS and county contractors resulted in a smooth transition from the old CAD to the new. Approximately 70,000 records (both alarm user registration and alarm business license information) were loaded onto the new CAD for use by ECC staff when handling alarm calls. On Monday morning, July 21, 2003, FARS staff successfully downloaded all alarm calls for the previous day from the CAD system using the new electronic extract process. There was no interruption of service, and the FARS was pleased with the transition.

With the advent of the new CAD system, the FARS was able to procure a CAD terminal in its office. Direct access to CAD with the remote terminal allows staff to be much more responsive to citizens, who call with questions about an alarm response. Additionally, it allows staff to query event histories, as well as location information, among other things, which assists in adjudicating appeals that are filed. The remote CAD terminal has been a positive addition to the FARS.

Finally, two FARS staff members have become fully trained on the new CAD system and actually work at the ECC part-time to assist due to severe staffing shortages. This extra training has given FARS staff a much better understanding of the overall operation of the CAD system, which helps them in their work at the FARS, as well as broadens their own knowledge base of the Police Department and county as a whole.

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 2003. FARS staff identified and worked with 50 different alarm users, who were experiencing false alarm problems. Of those 50 alarm users, only 1 was not successful in reducing or eliminating their false alarms. Through the FARS's supportive intervention, 49 of the worst false alarm offenders were successful in changing their alarm usage behavior in a positive manner. Additionally, staff began a more aggressive campaign to reach problem alarm users by making cold calls and speaking with management on site. This approach was highly successful and will be continued in 2004.

Full Implementation of Alarm User Renewal

In calendar year 2003, the FARS completed its first full year of implementation of the Alarm User Renewal process, which was added to the alarm law on November 26, 2002. FARS staff worked with their computer programmer to enhance the False Alarm Tracking and Billing System (custom software) to accommodate alarm user renewals. In an effort to spread out the workload of biennial renewals, formulas were developed and implemented to give all existing alarm users a renewal date within the 2-year mandated period. At the end of the first biennial period, all alarm users will have been required to renew their registrations.

In 2003, the FARS sent out approximately 33,000 renewal notices to alarm users. As of December 31, 2003, a total of only 286 commercial and 2,433 residential alarm users had failed to renew their registrations as required, despite receiving two separate notices from the FARS to do so. These 2,719 alarm users are now eligible to receive the imposition of the \$100 fee for each response to an alarm activation due to their failure to renew. Of the 2,719 alarm users, who failed to renew in 2003 as required, 105 of them went on to account for 128 false alarm activations and were, therefore, assessed the additional \$100 fee. Thirty-seven of those 105 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.

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 49 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. Forty-two of the 49 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 and 87 in 2002. 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 Program Specialist 2 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 two of its four staff as Certified Alarm Managers, with a third person taking the exam in April of 2004.

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 2003, 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.

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 163 suits were filed in District Court in 2003, with only a handful of those cases actually going to trial, to which the County prevailed in all. A new procedure was implemented between the FARS and the County Attorney's Office to better track these cases and to follow up when necessary and appropriate.

National Summit on Security

All FARS staff attended and participated in the National Summit on Security (NSS) held at the DC Convention Center on October 1, 2003. In conjunction with the NSS, there was a special program developed jointly between the alarm industry and law enforcement entitled, "Public Safety Summit on Alarm Response Management." This day-long Summit, sponsored by the False Alarm Reduction Association, National Burglar and Fire Alarm Association, Security Industry Alarm Coalition and numerous state chartered burglar alarm associations, included a guided tour of the NSS Expo, where participants were exposed to hundreds of different security and manufacturing vendors with the latest in technological advances in the life safety and security field. Staff also participated in two separate interactive round-table exercises on false alarm management using real world scenarios. Finally, staff participated in several breakout sessions on understanding alarms, creation and revision of alarm ordinances and regional meetings. All of this training allowed staff to hone their skills and knowledge, which, in turn, allows staff to be more responsive to our customers.

Public Relations

Once again, the Montgomery County FARS performed outreach to our citizens and business community, to the alarm industry and to area jurisdictions to assist with false alarm reduction efforts. FARS staff spent considerable time working with Frederick and Loudoun Counties, and the cities of Baltimore, Hyattsville and Washington D.C. to assist in the implementation and enhancement of their false alarm reduction ordinances and programs. Additionally, FARS staff worked closely with several industry groups including the National Burglar and Fire Alarm Association, the National Capital Alarm Association, Maryland Burglar and Fire Alarm Association, Security Industry Association, Security Industry Alarm Coalition,

the Installation Quality Certification program and Underwriters Laboratories on national false alarm reduction efforts. Montgomery County's false alarm reduction program was mentioned in many news media outlets including the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Security Sales & Integration*, CBS and WMAL.

Finally, due to the success of the Montgomery County false alarm reduction program, the FARS director was a featured speaker on a panel at the International Association of Chiefs of Police convention in Philadelphia. Hundreds of law enforcement management personnel attended the panel discussion and learned how Montgomery County, as well as several other communities, were successful in drastically reducing false alarms.