



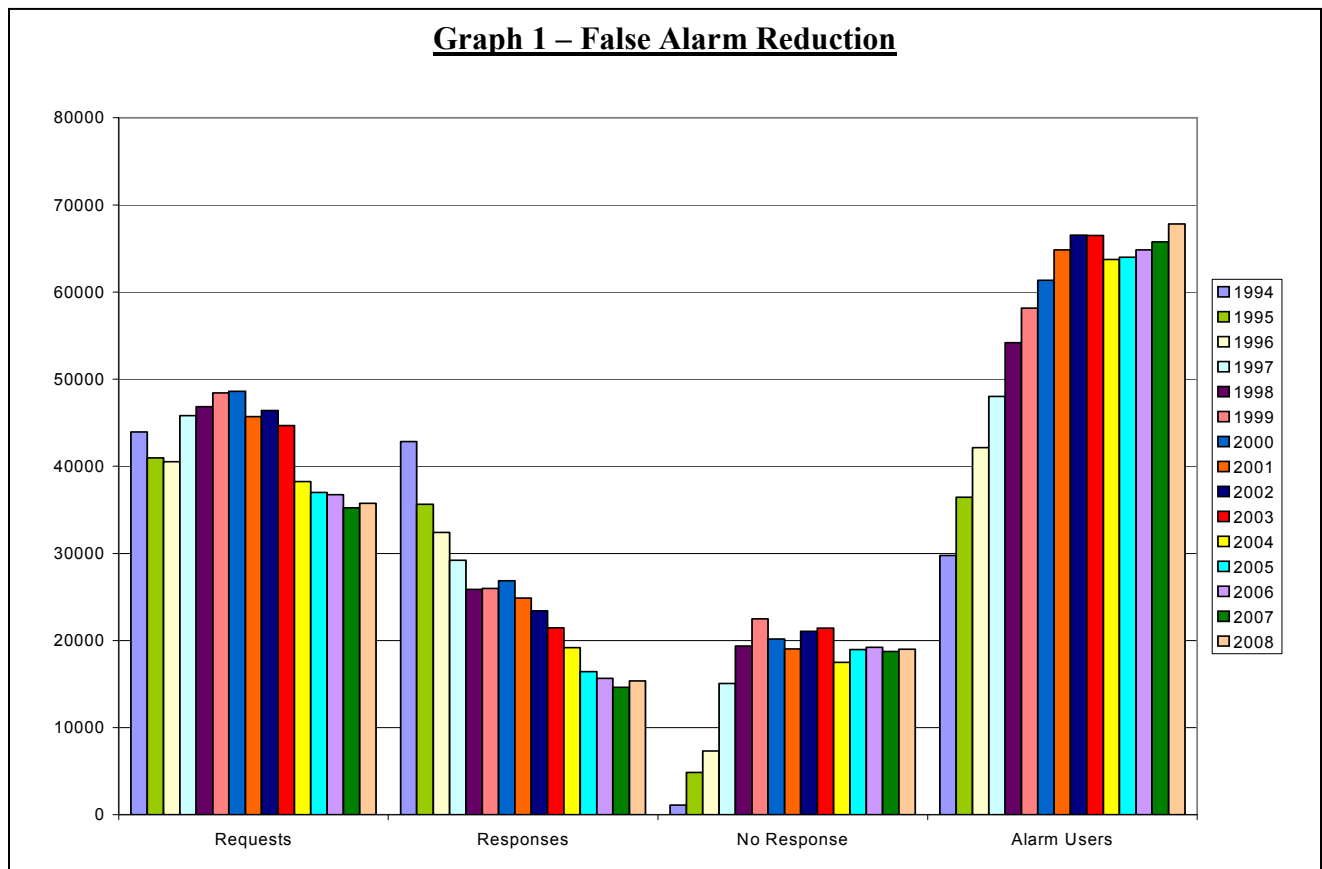
***MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
FALSE ALARM REDUCTION PROGRAM***

***ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR YEAR ENDING 2008***

## False Alarm Reduction

The False Alarm Reduction Section (FARS) of the Montgomery County Department of Police completed its thirteenth year of enforcement under the amended Chapter 3A, Alarms, of the Montgomery County Code. The FARS reports that false alarms between 2007 and 2008 remained virtually constant, despite an increase of 6,237 new alarm users. This is still viewed as a success, because false alarms did not substantially increase even though there were more alarm users. In the past year, the FARS actively worked on increasing enforcement of the alarm statute through the issuance of civil citations to alarm companies and alarm users, worked closely with the county's Office of Consumer Protection on several projects, performed training for alarm companies, and helped create a regional chapter of FARA.

In calendar year 2008, false alarms to which police officers were required to respond rose by .05%. Coupled with the increase of more than 6,000 new alarm users in 2008, that 1/100<sup>th</sup>% increase is statistically insignificant and is more than offset by the substantial revenue, hours and work years saved. Additionally, police officers responded to more than 27,000 *fewer* alarm calls in 2008 over 1994. These statistics, coupled with a 130% increase in the number of registered alarm users over the same time period, clearly shows that substantial and *sustained* false alarm reduction is still being achieved even after 13 years. Montgomery County's alarm law remains an excellent tool in reducing false alarms and in 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.

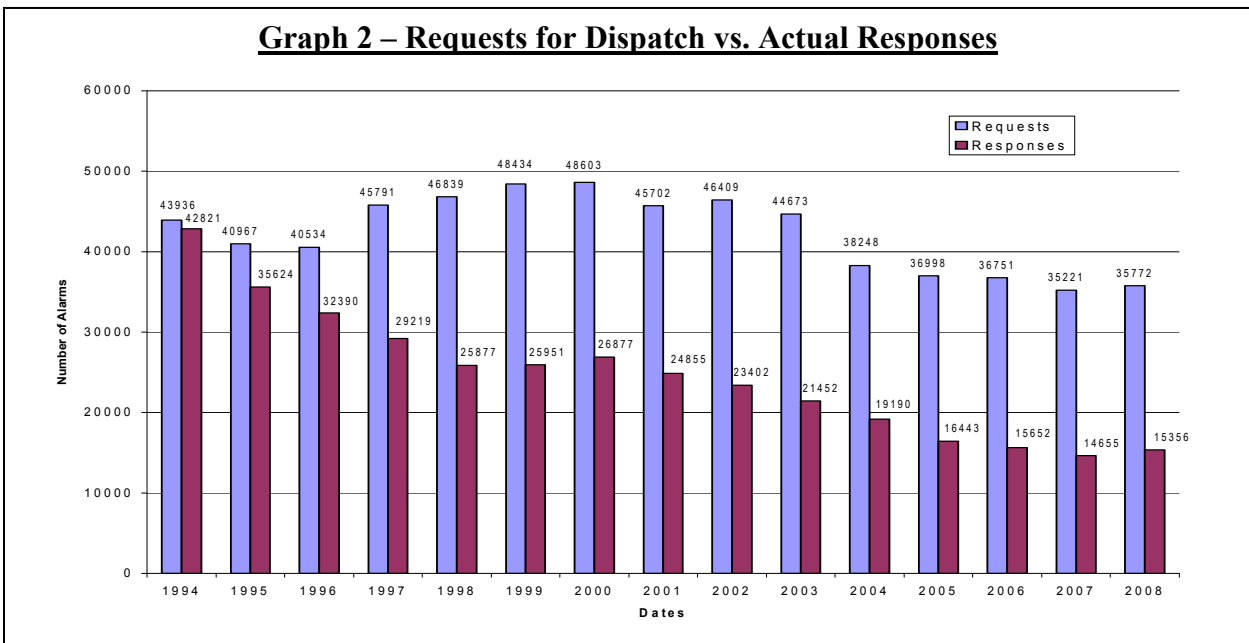


After thirteen years, it may be that false alarms are at the lowest point they will ever be. As stated later in this report, the dispatch rate shows that alarm users, on average, have only one false alarm every five years. That is a remarkable statistic, and one that is not matched anywhere in the United States to our knowledge. It was anticipated that, at some point, false alarm reduction would plateau and that the challenge would then be in maintaining that reduction. It may be that we have reached that threshold this past year. The FARS staff is committed to furthering the reduction but, absent any reduction, will work to maintain the incredible decrease in false alarms through the implementation of new programs and policies.

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 number of actual alarm calls to which police officers respond rose slightly by 701 calls (15,356 vs. 14655). The extra day in February due to leap year in 2008 accounted for some of that increase. Still, police responded to only 15,356 of the total 35,772 requests made, or 43%. There were a total of 19,010 alarm activations to which the police were not required to respond in 2008.

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 2008, police officers responded to only 43% of all requests for dispatch (35,772 requests for dispatch with only 15,356 actual responses). Part of the reason for this discrepancy in requests for dispatch vs. actual response is due to the requirement that an alarm company cancel a police response when it is determined that an alarm activation is false. The high number of non-responses (19,010) 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 2008, alarm companies cancelled 8,653 requests for dispatch, which represents 24.2% 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. The legally mandated non-response provisions of the alarm law resulted in only 2,192 requests for dispatch that were denied as a result of the violation status of the alarm user or alarm business. This represents only 6.1% of the total requests for alarm dispatch. The FARS will continue to work to reduce this percentage to even more negligible numbers.



**Chart 1 – Requests for Dispatch vs. Actual Responses**

<b><u>Year</u></b>	<b><u>Requests for Dispatch</u></b>	<b><u>Actual Responses</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage of Total Calls Responded To</u></b>
1994	43,936	42,821	97.5%
1995	40,967	35,624	87.0%
1996	40,534	32,390	79.9%
1997	45,791	29,219	63.8%
1998	46,839	25,877	55.3%
1999	48,434	25,951	53.9%
2000	48,603	26,877	55.3%
2001	45,702	24,855	54.4%
2002	46,409	23,402	50.5%
2003	44,673	21,452	52.0%
2004	38,248	19,190	49.8%
2005	36,998	16,443	44.4%
2006	36,751	15,652	42.6%
2007	35,221	14,655	41.6%
2008	35,772	15,356	43.0%

The false alarm dispatch rate is 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 Montgomery County False Alarm Reduction Section reports it has the lowest false alarm dispatch rates of any jurisdiction in the entire country. The residential false alarm dispatch rate rose by a slim 1/100% in 2008 to .15. Overall, residential alarm users experience less than one false alarm every five years, which is a truly remarkable statistic. The commercial false alarm dispatch rate for 2007 remained at an incredible low of .70. Combined residential and commercial false alarm dispatch rates reflect the same 1/100<sup>th</sup>% increase as residential alarm users.

**Chart 2 – False Alarm Dispatch Rates**

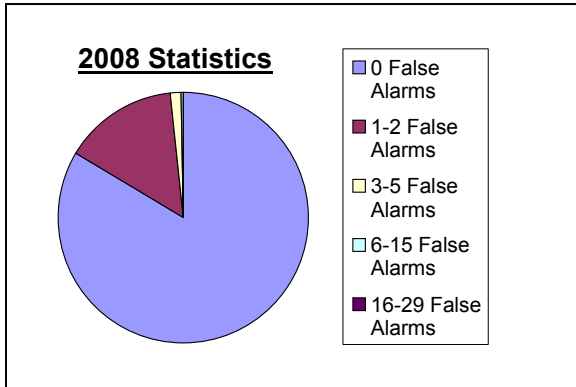
<b><u>Year</u></b>	<b><u>Residential</u></b>	<b><u>Commercial</u></b>	<b><u>Combined</u></b>
1994	N/A	N/A	1.43
1995	.66	2.29	.98
1996	.54	1.82	.78
1997	.45	1.32	.61
1998	.36	1.06	.48
1999	.35	1.04	.44
2000	.32	1.09	.44
2001	.28	.98	.38
2002	.25	.94	.35
2003	.23	.88	.32
2004	.21	.89	.30
2005	.18	.86	.26
2006	.16	.76	.24
2007	.14	.70	.22
2008	.15	.70	.23

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 137,122 false alarm

activations in 2008. At \$95 per dispatch, those 137,122 alarm activations would require approximately 44 police officers to do absolutely nothing but respond to burglar alarms at a staggering cost of \$13,026,590. This is clearly a cost that no local jurisdiction can absorb.

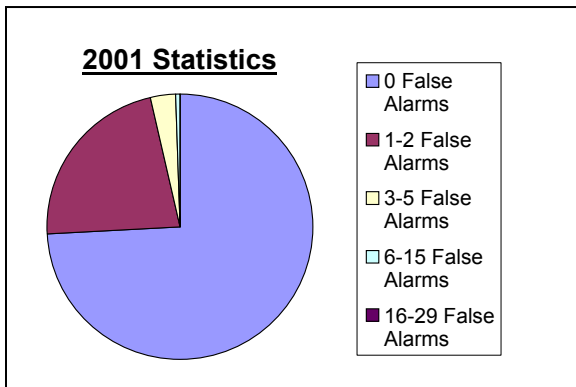
In 2008, an impressive 85.1% of all residential and commercial alarm users experienced no false alarms at all. **A total of 57,687 alarm users, had zero false alarm activations to which police officers responded in 2008.** The following pie graphs show that more alarm users (as a percentage of total alarm users for a given year) are achieving 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.

**Graph 3 – Threshold Statistics**



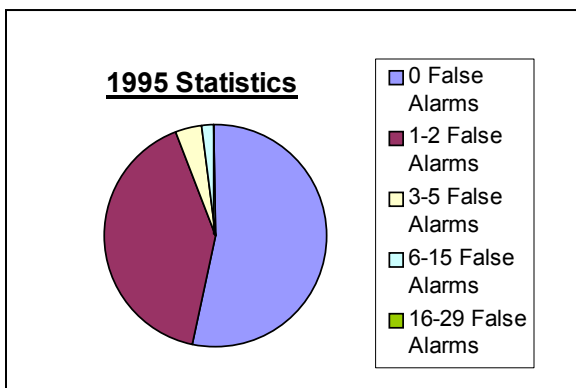
False Alarms	Alarm Users
0	57,687
1-2	10,110
3-5	1,024
6-15	168
16-29	4

**Total 2008 Alarm Users = 67,797**



False Alarms	Alarm Users
0	49,950
1-2	14,886
3-5	2,092
6-15	306
16-29	9

**Total 2001 Alarm Users = 64,836**



False Alarms	Alarm Users
0	20,468
1-2	15,968
3-5	1,559
6-15	618
16-29	19

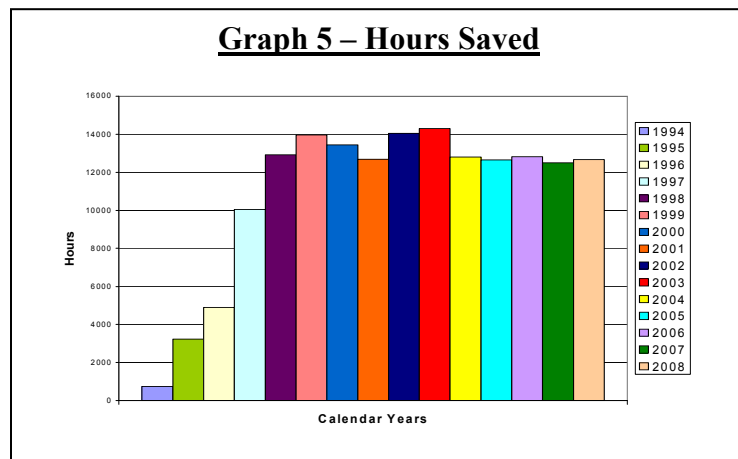
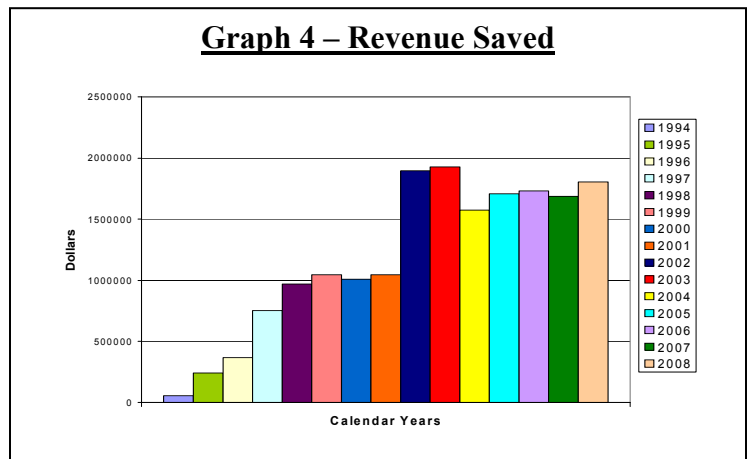
**Total 1995 Alarm Users = 36,436**

As a direct result of the FARS's strict enforcement of the alarm law, there were 19,010 alarm calls to which police officers were not required to respond in 2008. **This equates to savings in 2008 of approximately \$1,805,950 and 12,673 hours of police officer time, or 12.18 police work years.** (Monetary savings are based on a cost of \$95 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 4** shows that the actual revenue saved in 2008 as a result of police officers responding to 19,010 less false alarms was \$1,805,950. Since the FARS began enforcement of the alarm statute, the total revenue saved by Montgomery County has been \$17,820,290.

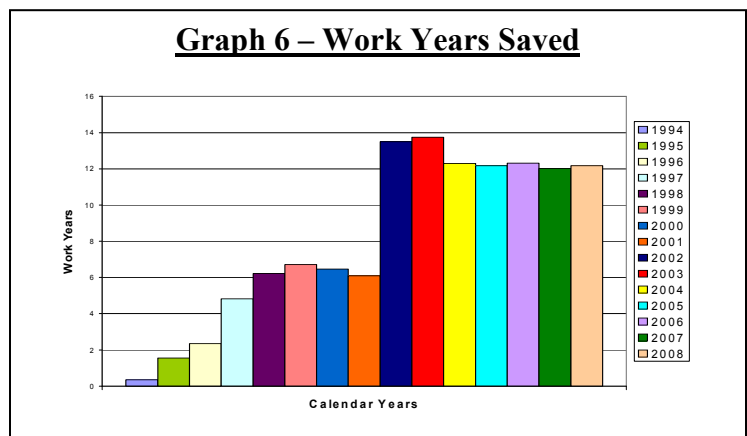
(The dramatic difference in 2002 savings and subsequent years is due to using a more realistic figure of \$90 per response, as opposed to \$55 in 2001 and \$50 for previous years.)



**Graph 5** shows that the actual hours saved in 2008 as a result of police officers responding to 19,010 less false alarms was 12,673 hours. Since the FARS began enforcement of the alarm statute, Montgomery County has recovered 163,687 hours in police officer time.

**Graph 6** shows that 12.18 actual work years were saved in 2008 as a result of enforcement of the alarm statute. Since enforcement began, Montgomery County has recovered a total of 122.81 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 \$13,000,000 in 2008 alone responding to false alarms. The \$17,820,290 savings to the county is, therefore, even more significant.

**Chart 3 – Cumulative Savings**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Revenue Saved</b>	<b>Hours Saved</b>	<b>Work Years Saved</b>
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
2005	\$1,708,740	12,657	12.17
2006	\$1,730,700	12,820	12.32
2007	\$1,687,590	12,500	12.02
2008	\$1,805,950	12,673	12.18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$17,820,290</b>	<b>163,687</b>	<b>122.81</b>

**Government Alarm Users**

In calendar year 2008, the FARS had 519 registered federal, state and local government facilities, all of which were held to the same strict standards as all other alarm users. Of the 519 government alarm users, 110 or 21.2%, had at least one false alarm. Those 110 alarm users collectively had 205 false alarms. A total of 409 different government alarm users (78.8%) had **zero** false alarms, an increase of .2% over 2007. This reflects that government facilities still rank better than all other commercial alarm users, which is at 67.7.

There was an overall decrease in the number of government alarm users from 551 in 2007 to 519 in 2008.

**Chart 4 – Government Alarm Users**

<b># of False Alarms</b>	<b># of Alarm Users - 1999</b>	<b># of Alarm Users - 2001</b>	<b># of Alarm Users - 2002</b>	<b># of Alarm Users - 2003</b>	<b># of Alarm Users - 2004</b>	<b># of Alarm Users - 2005</b>	<b># of Alarm Users - 2006</b>	<b># of Alarm Users - 2007</b>	<b># of Alarm Users - 2008</b>
0	332	355	404	400	354	424	431	433	409
1	72	50	69	74	94	71	80	64	71
2	22	33	22	17	34	24	27	33	15
3	13	5	10	2	12	7	7	13	12
4	2	4	3	3	9	3	4	2	5
5	1	2	0	0	3	3	4	1	2
6	0	1	3	1	3	2	3	4	2
7	1	2	2	0	3	3	0	0	2
8	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
9	1	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0
10-13	1	0	1	0	2	4	3	0	1
14-21	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	1	0

Chart 4 is different from Charts 10-12, which appear later in this report, in that the number of alarm users at each threshold level is **not** included in the preceding level. For example, the chart reflects that 71 government alarm users had one false alarm and 15 government alarm users had two false alarms. The 15 at the two threshold are **not** included in the 71 count for one false alarm. Another way to view this report is that 71 government alarm users had one and only one false alarm. An additional 15 government alarm users had two and only two false alarms. An additional 12 government alarm users had three and only three false alarms and so on. Adding up the 2008 column will show the total number of government alarm users at 519.



## 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 2008. The second chart covers *fiscal* year 08. The FY08 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 2008 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 2008	ACTUAL REVENUES
<b><u>Alarm User Registration Fees</u></b>	
Residential	\$160,980
Commercial	<u>26,130</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$187,110</b>
<b><u>Alarm User Registration Renewal Fees</u></b>	
Residential	\$215,665
County Attorney Collections	<u>320</u>
Total Residential	<b>\$215,985</b>
Commercial	\$35,230
County Attorney Collections	<u>140</u>
Total Commercial	<b>\$35,370</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$251,355</b>
<b><u>False Alarm Response Fees</u></b>	
Residential	\$ 63,751
County Attorney Collections	<u>12,458</u>
Total Residential	<b>\$ 76,209</b>
Commercial	\$234,764
County Attorney Collections	<u>30,964</u>
Total Commercial	<b>\$265,728</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$341,937</b>
<b><u>Alarm Business Fees</u></b>	
License	\$78,125
Civil Citations	15,220
Administrative Fees	<u>1,169</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$94,514</b>
<b><u>Appeal Filing Fees</u></b>	
Residential	\$405
Commercial	<u>135</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$540</b>
<b><u>Alarm User Civil Citations</u></b>	
Residential	\$ 0
Commercial	<u>100</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$100</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$875,556</b>

**Chart 6 – Fiscal Year Revenue**

FISCAL YEAR 08	ACTUAL REVENUES
<b><u>Alarm User Registration Fees</u></b>	
Residential	\$158,820
Commercial	<u>30,890</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$189,710</b>
<b><u>Alarm User Registration Renewal Fees</u></b>	
Residential	\$222,583
Commercial	<u>42,460</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$265,043</b>
<b><u>False Alarm Response Fees</u></b>	
Residential	\$56,892
County Attorney Collections	<u>14,205</u>
Total Residential	<b>\$71,097</b>
Commercial	\$253,277
County Attorney Collections	<u>34,910</u>
Total Commercial	<b>\$288,187</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$359,284</b>
<b><u>Alarm Business Fees</u></b>	
License	\$78,125
Civil Citations	5,970
Administrative Fees	<u>914</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$85,009</b>
<b><u>Appeal Filing Fees</u></b>	
Residential	\$285
Commercial	<u>135</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$420</b>
<b><u>Alarm User Civil Citations</u></b>	
Residential	\$ 0
Commercial	<u>100</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$100</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$899,566</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 2008 was an extraordinary 92.5% of all false alarm response fees billed. 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 2008 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 2008. The actual collection of monies for those calendar year 2008 false alarms extended into calendar year 2009, and, therefore, reflects different totals than the Calendar Year Revenue Chart.

**Chart 7 – Calendar Year 2008 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;51 days overdue)</b>	<b>Delinquent (&gt;50 days overdue)</b>
Commercial	\$302,425	\$281,550	\$10,675	\$10,025
Residential	\$67,850	\$61,000	\$500	\$6,350
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$370,275</b>	<b>\$342,550</b>	<b>\$11,175</b>	<b>\$16,375</b>

\*Represents fees collected in 2008 and 2009 against false alarm response fees billed in 2008.

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 \$16,375 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 2008. The chart shows the actual number of requests for dispatch, the number of calls that were ultimately dispatched and to which response was made, 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**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Requests for Dispatch</b>	<b>Dispatched</b>	<b>No Response</b>	<b>Verified Calls</b>	<b>% Reduction</b>	<b>% Reduction From Base</b>
1994	43,936	42,821	1,115*			
1995	40,967	35,624	4,855	488	-16.8%	-15.7%
1996	40,534	32,390	7,339	805	-9.1%	-24.3%
1997	45,791	29,219	15,057	1,515	-9.8%	-32.0%
1998	46,839	25,877	19,371	1,591	-11.4%	-39.6%
1999	48,434	25,951	20,932	1,551	+0.03%	-39.4%
2000	48,603	26,877	20,172	1,554	+0.035%	-37.2%
2001	45,702	24,855	19,026	1,821	-7.5%	-41.9%
2002	46,409	23,402	21,064	1,943	-5.8%	-45.3%
2003	44,673	21,452	21,431	1,790	-8.3%	-49.9%
2004	38,248	19,190	17,492	1,566	-10.5%	-55.2%
2005	36,998	16,443	18,986	1,569	-14.3%	-61.6%
2006	36,751	15,652	19,230	1,869	-4.8%	-64.4%
2007	35,221	14,655	18,751	1,815	-6.4%	-66.6%
2008	35,772	15,356	19,010	1,406	+0.05%	-64.1%

\*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 6,237 new alarm user registration forms in 2008. This increase, coupled with the 64.1% 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**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Residential</b>	<b>Commercial</b>	<b>Combined</b>
1994	N/A	N/A	29,756
1995	39,398	7,049	36,436
1996	34,048	8,102	42,150
1997	39,192	8,879	48,008
1998	44,827	9,348	54,175
1999	48,654	9,489	58,143
2000	51,743	9,591	61,334
2001	55,024	9,812	64,836
2002	57,026	9,499	66,525
2003	57,223	9,241	66,474
2004	54,960	8,788	63,748
2005	55,095	8,875	63,970
2006	55,752	9,083	64,835
2007	56,511	9,231	65,742
2008	58,586	9,211	67,797

Chart 9 does not reflect an increase of overall alarm users by 6,237 (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 2008 for select years. The charts also show the percentage of change between 2007 vs. 2008, as well as the percentage of change between the base year of 1995 and 2008, 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 alarm users (both residential and commercial combined).

**In 2008, 57,687 alarm users had ZERO false alarms to which police officers were required to respond.** This represents 85.1% of all alarm users. 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).

Charts 10-12 are calculated slightly different from the commensurate Chart 4, which reflects government alarm users only. The total number of alarm users for each category will be reflected in the zero and one false alarm rows. Those alarm users, who had two false alarms are included in the number that had one false alarm. Those alarm users with three false alarms, are included in the number that had two and one false alarms respectively. For example, Chart 10

shows that 51,451 alarm users had zero false alarms and 7,135 alarm users had one false alarm. Those two lines add up to the total number of residential alarm users (58,586). Looking further, of the 7,135 alarm users, who had one false alarm, 1,313 of those alarm users went on to have a second false alarm. Of those 1,313, alarm users, 247 went on to have a third false alarm. The column proceeds in the same fashion throughout the entire chart.

The number of residential alarm users, who had no false alarms from 2007 to 2008, rose by 3.2%. As a percentage of the total, 87.7% of residential alarm users had no false alarms in 2008. Keep in mind that 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, 184% more residential alarm users were able to remain within the zero false alarm threshold.

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

# of False Alarms	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2008	% Change (07-08)	% Base Change (95-08)
0	18116	28428	37384	44044	47130	47510	49872	51451	+3.1%	+184.0%
1	11271	10701	11270	10980	10103	7585	6639	7135	+7.5%	-36.7%
2	4153	3516	3292	2950	2306	1392	1171	1313	+12.1%	-68.4%
3	1171	371	985	793	565	327	244	247	+1.2%	-78.9%
4	668	333	261	217	143	99	57	59	+3.5%	-91.2%
5	292	106	89	68	38	30	15	18	+2.0%	-93.8%
6	128	32	32	21	14	12	6	3	-50.0%	-97.6%
7	50	13	10	7	9	3	3	2	-33.3%	-96.0%
8	19	5	2	4	5	1	1	0	-100%	-100%
9	9	1	2	1	2	0	1	0	-100%	-100%
10	7	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	-100%
11	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
12	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
13	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
14	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
15	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
16	1	0	1	0		0	0	0	0	-100%

In 1995, one residential alarm user had 16 separate false alarms. The highest number of false alarms by a residential alarm user in 2008 was seven, which reflects a decrease in the threshold alarms for residential alarm users and is the lowest threshold figure for residential alarm users since inception of the false alarm reduction program.

The number of commercial alarm users, who had no false alarms from 2007 to 2008, rose .3%. As a percentage of the total, 67.7% of commercial alarm users had no false alarms in 2008. Keep in mind that 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, 165.1% 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	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2008	% Change (07-08)	% Base Change (95-08)
0	2352	4820	5416	5906	5632	5730	6217	6236	+3.3%	+165.1%
1	4697	4059	4073	3906	3609	3145	3014	2975	-1.3%	-37.6%
2	2699	2457	2334	2256	1864	1502	1455	1417	-2.6%	-47.5%
3	1435	837	1347	1299	1014	853	756	777	+2.8%	-45.8%
4	1113	770	781	744	570	473	447	444	-.6%	-59.8%
5	763	445	475	459	359	305	263	286	+8.7%	-62.5%
6	490	292	287	285	228	186	160	165	+3.1%	-66.3%
7	331	177	176	185	139	121	98	104	+6.1%	-70.3%
8	217	123	112	125	98	85	71	70	-1.4%	-67.3%
9	145	80	80	85	76	63	48	52	+8.3%	-64.1%
10	109	67	58	48	48	43	31	34	+9.7%	-68.8%
11	75	45	42	35	28	30	22	22	0	-70.7%
12	49	32	28	25	20	21	15	19	+26.7%	-61.2%
13	35	17	18	22	12	16	11	16	+45.4%	-54.3%
14	30	11	13	18	7	13	8	11	+37.5%	-63.3%
15	24	8	10	11	5	8	7	8	+14.3%	-66.7%
16	18	5	5	9	4	8	5	4	-2.0%	-77.8%
17	11	5	1	8	3	7	4	4	0	-63.6%
18	11	3	0	7	3	6	3	0	-100%	-100%
19	8	1	0	4	2	6	2	0	-100%	-100%
20	5	1	0	3	1	4	0	0	0	-100%
21	5	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	-100%
22	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
23	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
24	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
25	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
26	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
27	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
28	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
29	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%

More alarms users than ever had no false alarms in 2008. As a percentage of the total, a full 85.1% of residential and commercial alarm users combined had no false alarms in 2008. Keep in mind that 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, 181.8% 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	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2008	% Change (07-08)	% Base Change (95-08)
0	20468	33248	42800	49950	52762	53240	56089	57687	+2.8%	+181.8%
1	15968	14760	15343	14886	13712	10730	9653	10110	+4.7%	-36.7%
2	6852	5973	5626	5206	4170	2894	2626	2730	+4.0%	-60.1%
3	2606	1208	2332	2092	1579	1180	1000	1024	+2.4%	-60.7%
4	1781	1103	1042	991	713	572	504	503	-.02%	-71.7%
5	1055	551	564	527	397	335	278	304	+9.3%	-71.1%
6	618	324	319	306	242	198	166	168	+1.2%	-73.1%
7	381	190	186	192	148	124	101	106	+4.9%	-72.2%
8	236	128	114	129	103	86	72	70	-1.4%	-67.3%
9	154	81	82	86	78	63	49	52	+8.3%	-64.1%
10	116	67	59	48	49	43	31	34	+9.7%	-68.8%
11	81	45	43	35	28	30	22	22	0	-70.7%
12	52	32	29	25	20	21	15	19	+26.7%	-61.2%
13	36	17	19	22	12	16	11	16	+45.4%	-54.3%
14	32	11	14	18	7	13	8	11	+37.5%	-63.3%
15	26	8	11	11	5	8	7	8	+14.3%	-66.7%
16	19	5	6	9	4	8	5	4	-2.0%	-77.8%
17	11	5	1	8	3	7	4	4	0	-63.6%
18	11	3	0	7	3	6	3	0	-100%	-100%
19	8	1	0	4	2	6	2	0	-100%	-100%
20	5	1	0	3	1	4	0	0	0	-100%
21	5	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	-100%
22	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
23	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
24	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
25	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
26	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
27	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
28	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
29	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%



## **Major Accomplishments**

### **Joint Efforts with the Montgomery County Office of Consumer Protection**

Notifications Regarding AMP: As of February 18, 2008, cellular phone companies were no longer required to carry analog service. As such, any analog radio equipment, which sent a wireless signal to communicate to a central monitoring station that an alarm activation had occurred, had the potential to stop working as of that date if remedial action were not taken.

FARS staff sent letters to all alarm and monitoring companies licensed to conduct business in Montgomery County notifying them of the potential problem, and asking them to take corrective measures to ensure that their customers' alarm systems would continue to communicate properly with their monitoring stations.

Additionally, FARS staff worked with the Montgomery County OCP to alert citizens of potential problems. OCP put out a press release reminding citizens of the possibility that their alarm systems would stop communicating alarm activations as of February 18, 2008.

Summer Sales Initiative: For the past several years, some out-of-state alarm companies have sent sales people throughout the United States to sell alarm systems. Unfortunately, some of those sales persons were less than reputable, and many citizens throughout the state were sold duplicate service and/or had their existing alarm systems rendered inoperable. FARS staff worked closely with the Maryland Burglar and Fire Alarm Association, Maryland Chapter of the False Alarm Reduction Association, and with the Montgomery County Office of Consumer Protection in an effort to educate our citizens about the potential for abuse,. Flyers and bill stuffers were developed and distributed to public safety throughout the region to use in educating citizens. This joint public/private partnership enabled us to provide educational materials to our citizens through the public safety community, the alarm industry, and the consumer protection agencies, which would not otherwise have happened, and will provide our citizens with the tools they need to make smart consumer decisions in the future.

### **Training**

National Electronic Security Alliance and the Texas Burglar and Fire Alarm Association: The FARS Director was invited by NESAA and TBFAA to serve as an instructor on false alarm prevention techniques and developing cooperative working relationships at the TBFAA/NESAA annual training convention in Dallas on October 23-24, 2008. These types of invitations are made to Montgomery County FARS staff because we are known internationally to be in the forefront of false alarm prevention programs. We were able to highlight Montgomery County's successful program and share with others in public safety and in the alarm industry how they could be successful as well. The courses were well received by the attendees, and there was great interaction among the participants. The FARS director was invited back next October to provide the FARA two-day regional training to public safety and the alarm industry.

## Emergency Communications Center

The first point of contact with the Police Department when attempting to request dispatch to an alarm activation is with the Emergency Communications Center (ECC). While police officers only responded to 15,356 requests for dispatch in 2008, the ECC telecommunicators and dispatchers handled all 35,772 attempts to dispatch. It is critical that ECC personnel obtain specific training to handle these types of calls and gain a greater understanding of why we do what we do and how it will impact them in their new positions. For the past seven years, FARS staff have provided specialized training to all new ECC recruits as part of their overall training. The training includes an overview of the alarm law and executive regulation, why the law and regulation were enacted, the scope of the problem, ECC and FARS standard operating procedures, review of actual calls and what was done correctly or incorrectly, and discussion of the successes of the false alarm reduction program. Several current FARS staff have served as trainers for the ECC recruit classes, and found them to be extremely worthwhile in helping to ensure a cohesive approach within the Police Department to the alarm management issue.

## **Creation of Regional FARA Chapter**

The False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA), originally co-formed by the FARS director to unite public safety false alarm reduction professionals in our common purpose, debated the value of allowing FARA members to create local regional chapters to further the cause. The entire membership voted to permit local chapters. Maryland was the first regional chapter formally recognized by FARA. This occurred due to the wonderful working relationships that have been developed over the years with regional alarm coordinators and their employees. We were able to quickly put together our application for recognition and had volunteers ready to serve as board members, because we were already a cohesive group dedicated to bettering our profession. Regional chapters allow us to network better and can increase awareness of and enhance our impact on local issues. We may also have a stronger voice collectively than any one of us has alone.

## **Increased Enforcement**

The FARS increased its enforcement of the mandates of Chapter 3A, Alarms, of the Montgomery County Code through the issuance of Class A civil citations to alarm companies and Class C civil citations to alarm users for various violations.

The FARS director began a campaign in August to garner greater compliance by alarm companies when requesting dispatch to alarm activations. The alarm law requires that monitoring companies provide the alarm user registration and alarm business license numbers when requesting dispatch. The reason for requiring this information is twofold; first, by providing an alarm user registration number, the 9-1-1 call takers can simply key that number into their system and all alarm user information for that particular user will populate their screens. They then confirm data rather than having to re-key it for each alarm call for service. It speeds up the processing time and reduces the likelihood of typing errors. Second, it is a way to help ensure that both alarm users and alarm companies are complying with the registration and

licensing provisions of Chapter 3A. FARS staff have spoken with many alarm companies to re-educate them through this process and to gain greater compliance. FARS staff wrote more than 100 civil citations to alarm companies between August and December of 2008.

One of the provisions of the alarm law requires alarm users to upgrade their alarm system to meet current county installation standards upon the sixth false alarm in a calendar year. Failure to perform that upgrade subjects the alarm users to the issuance of a Class C civil citation. Understanding the importance of maintaining good, working alarm systems and how that affects the reduction of false alarms, FARS staff began issuing civil citations to alarm users who failed to upgrade when required.

Both of these initiatives seek to change behavior in the alarm company and the alarm user thereby resulting in fewer false alarm to which police officers are required to respond.

### **Major Offender Program**

FARS staff successfully increased the number of accounts handled through the Major Offender Program, even though the FARS operated short-staffed for almost the entire year. FARS staff identified and worked with 60 different alarm users, who were experiencing false alarm problems. The vast majority of those alarm users were successful in reducing their false alarms after intervention by FARS staff, which is the purpose of the program. Due to the staffing shortage in the FARS office, most contact was made via telephone, but some on-site visits did occur.