

Response to SIAC Press Release

The Security Industry Alarm Coalition issued a press release on May 14, 2019. You can [click here](#) to view. The release contained a number of inaccuracies, which are addressed below.

The goal of the city's alarm ordinance is to reduce the epidemic number of false alarm calls from alarm monitoring companies into the emergency 9-1-1 system. Nearly 10,000 false alarms calls are made each year, posing a threat to public safety by the unnecessary diversion of public safety resources.

The alarm industry is understandably concerned about the implications of the ordinance, as the change challenges an outdated and decades-old model. In any other industry, a 99.5% failure rate would raise serious concern. Yet, the alarm industry strives for the status quo. In addition, it is an industry that anchors its business model on the use of taxpayer-funded public services. No other for-profit industry misuses taxpayer dollars in a similar manner.

The City adopted the changes to its alarm ordinance in June 2018, giving the alarm industry a full year to work with both the city and its customers. The City held several outreach meetings with industry representatives, but rather than work towards the successful reduction of false alarm calls, the industry sued the city and misused the City's outreach efforts to complain about the change. When the industry was asked to suggest viable options to reduce false alarms, there was no response. It is also important to note that the City adopted the alarm industry's recommended ordinance model in 2013, and saw no substantial decrease in the number of false alarm calls. The changes were necessitated on a need to reduce the alarm industry's disruption of public safety services for the community. In fact, at least a quarter of all calls from alarm companies reporting an activation fail to comply with the state law requiring two-call verification prior to requesting dispatch, a state law that was the result of lobbying efforts by the alarm industry. Alarm companies are failing their customers in meeting basic requirements of the law.

Alarm companies have been on notice and had an entire year to plan for the City's amended ordinance, but unfortunately, they failed to communicate any of this with their own customers. Inexplicably, most alarm companies did not contact their customers until after the City proactively began planned communication, reaching out directly to registered alarm users. The May 20 Expo is the result of community's dissatisfaction with the response from their current providers and is designed to answer questions about what alarm companies are offering.

Industry technology has advanced tremendously over the past ten years, and these innovations have left some flat footed alarm companies scrambling to adapt. However, we have also heard from several alarm companies who agree that audio/video verification is good for the industry, and several more that already offer those options. The fact is most alarm companies have not kept pace and their equipment is outdated, another factor contributing to excessive false alarms.

The ordinance provides choice, giving the consumer the ability to work with a traditional alarm company, a self-monitoring system, a hybrid model combining both traditional sensor system with self-monitored video, or a private guard response in lieu of audio or video monitoring. Customers should be concerned if their alarm company is suggesting an upgrade cost of \$1,000 or more, as that is a possible sign that their system is already outdated. Customers who pay a monthly monitoring fee should also question upcharges and what services are received to merit such an increase. From talking with alarm companies and users, and conducting price searches of our own, customers may have no cost impact (for example, ADT is offering private guard response at no additional cost), and those choosing to add video monitoring equipment can do so at pricing starting at \$200. Again, it is a choice made by the consumer, not a mandate of the city.

Having a monitored alarm system is a personal choice. According to Safewise, only 14% of U.S. residents have a burglar alarm system installed in their homes. In Sandy Springs, there are 14,000 registered residential and business alarm systems; those systems producing 10,000 false alarm calls each year. The cost burden of this unnecessary diversion of police resources is borne by ALL residents, including the more than 85% of homeowners who choose NOT to have a monitored alarm system, while alarm companies continue to profit through monthly fees and up charges.

Again, the City's objective in implementing these changes is to reduce the excessive number of false alarm calls placed by alarm companies, diverting public safety resources away from where they are needed to protect our community.