

# Verified Alarm Response Options

City Council Briefing  
December 5, 2005

# Prior Action / Review

- On July 21, 2005, the Commission on Productivity and Innovation received a briefing and approved recommendation of a Verified Response policy for burglar alarms to City Council
- On August 16, 2005, the City Council Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee was briefed
- On September 14, 2005, City Council authorized a public hearing to be held on October 12, 2005 by Resolution No. 05-2645
- On September 28, 2005, the City Council authorized an amendment to Chapter 15C, 15D, 16, 17, 18 and 28 of the Dallas City to revise and establish various fees for City Services by Resolutions No. 05-2824
- On October 12, 2005, a public hearing was held and taken under advisement until October 26, 2005
- October 26, 2005, a public hearing was held

# The Problem

- The Dallas Police Department received approximately 62,000 burglar alarm calls in 2004
  - Approximately 32,300 from residential permit sites, averaging approximately 0.56 per permit
  - Approximately 29,700 from commercial permit sites, averaging approximately 2.0 per permit
- Of these calls, 97.2% (approximately 60,100) turned out to be false alarms
- Responding to these false alarms took approximately 47,000 police officer hours
  - Using DPDs calculation of 4.4 hours of active work per 8 hour shift, that is 41 police officer FTEs at a cost of approximately \$3.485 million in police time
- These statistics are not unusual, but are seen in police departments across the nation
  - “The vast majority of alarm calls – between 94 and 98 percent – are false (higher in some jurisdictions)” (U.S. Department of Justice)
- In Dallas, 86% of the citizens and businesses do not have alarm permits; 14% have alarm permits

# The Problem (Cont.)

- Responding to false alarms consumes a large amount of police officer time
- DPD and Special Collections are burdened with tracking false alarms, permits, billing, and the collections process
  - DPD Alarm Unit consists of 2 Sergeants, 4 Senior Corporals, 1 Office Assistant, costing approximately \$500,000
  - Special Collections has 3.6 FTEs for false alarm billing and collections, costing approximately \$180,000

# The Proposed Solution

- Verified response
  - Police would not respond to a burglar alarm signal
  - Police would be dispatched after an individual (the monitoring company, a witness, or private responder) has visually verified that a crime has or is occurring
  - Alarm companies could use their own resources or private security guard responders to verify alarms
  - Police would continue responding to human activated alarms (hold-up, panic, and duress alarms), as well as 911 calls

# Objectives

- Reduce amount of time officers spend responding to false alarms
- Reduce response time to burglar alarm calls
- Reduce response time to higher priority police service needs
- Eliminate “subsidy” created by 86% of the citizens and businesses without alarms subsidizing alarm response for 14% that do
- Improve morale of police officers
- Reduce call volume for dispatchers

# Option 1: Verified Response for Residential and Commercial

- Description
  - Police would not respond to burglar alarm signals for residential or commercial properties until they are verified by the monitoring company, a witness, or private responder, who has visually verified that an actual crime has or is occurring
  - The police would continue responding to human activated alarms, such as hold-ups, panic, and duress, as well as 911 calls for police
- Permits, fees, and fines
  - Annual Residential Alarm Permit Fee \$0
  - Annual Commercial Alarm Permit Fee for Hold Up, Panic, Duress Alarms \$100
  - False Hold Up, Panic, Duress Alarm Fines within a 12-month period
    - Residential (no freebies) \$100 each
    - Commercial (no freebies)

1st call	\$100
2nd call	\$200
3rd call	\$300
4 or more	\$400 each
  - Revocation of alarm permit after eight false alarms

# Option 1: Verified Response for Residential and Commercial (cont.)

- Efficiencies Gained
  - Implementation of Verified Response for both residential and commercial has been estimated to result in the equivalent gain of approximately **41 police officers** (\$3,485,000) plus an additional **4 FTEs** in the Alarm Unit (\$340,000) by no longer requiring these officers to respond to false alarms
- Financial Impact
  - Projected Revenue from Permit Fees (Commercial only) \$1,482,400
  - Projected Revenue from False Alarm Fines \$806,800
  - Total Projected Annual Revenue \$2,289,200
  - FY05-06 Budget \$4,706,383
  - Option 1 would result in an annual estimated **net revenue loss of \$2,417,183** (\$1,515,343 in FY05-06)

# Option 2: Verified Response for Commercial and Implementation of State Law Provisions for Residential

- Description
  - Verified Response on all commercial burglar alarm signals
  - Prior to police response, a commercial alarm would have to be verified by the monitoring company, a witness, or private responder
  - The police would continue responding to human activated alarms, such as hold-ups, panic, and duress, as well as 911 calls for police at commercial sites
  - Continue current police response to all residential alarm signals
  - Incorporate the recent changes in State Law and implement new fine schedules for residential
  - Require alarm monitoring companies to practice “enhanced call verification”, or ECV, before notifying police of an alarm signal at a residential site

# Option 2: Verified Response for Commercial and Implementation of State Law Provisions for Residential (cont.)

- Permits, fees, and fines
  - Annual Residential Alarm Permit Fee \$50
  - Annual Commercial Alarm Permit Fee for Hold Up, Panic, Duress Alarms \$50
    - Note: Current Commercial Alarm Permit Fee is \$100
  - False Residential Burglar Alarm Fines (three “freebies”) within a 12-month period
    - Note: Current ordinance gives five “freebies”

4th and 5th calls	\$50 each
6th and 7th calls	\$75 each
8 or more	\$100 each
  - False Hold Up, Panic, Duress Alarm Fines within a 12-month period
    - Residential (no freebies) \$100 each
    - Commercial (no freebies)

1st call	\$100
2nd call	\$200
3rd call	\$300
4 or more	\$400 each
  - Revocation of alarm permit after eight false alarms

# Option 2: Verified Response for Commercial and Implementation of State Law Provisions for Residential (cont.)

- Efficiencies Gained
  - Commercial alarms account for approximately 48% of all burglar alarm signals (29,700 in 2004) and outnumber residential alarms almost 4 to 1 on a per permit basis
  - Verified Response to commercial alarm signals could significantly reduce the number of burglar alarms officers respond to each year
  - Answering commercial alarms requires the equivalent of approximately **20 officers** per year (\$1,700,000)
- Financial Impact
  - Projected Revenue from Permit Fees \$3,640,350
  - Projected Revenue from False Alarm Fines \$874,300
  - Total Projected Annual Revenue \$4,514,650
  - FY05-06 Budget \$4,706,383
  - Option 2 would result in an annual estimated **net revenue loss of \$191,733** (\$127,823 in FY05-06)

# Summary of Options

	Total Revenue	Annual Budget Variance	Estimated Efficiencies Gained (Police FTEs)	Notes
<b>Option 1: VR Commercial &amp; Residential</b>	\$2,289,200	(\$2,417,183)	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximizes police resource efficiency gains</li> <li>Eliminates most false alarms</li> <li>Results in greatest revenue loss</li> <li>Negative feedback from public hearings</li> </ul>
<b>Option 2: VR Commercial</b>	\$4,514,650	(\$191,733)	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of alarm calls per commercial permit (about 2 to 1) is almost four times higher than the number of alarm calls per residential permit (about .56 to 1)</li> <li>Less perceived risk to personal safety</li> <li>Moderate police resource efficiency gains</li> <li>Eliminates approximately half of false alarms</li> <li>Some revenue loss</li> </ul>