

NORTHAMPTON POLICE DEPARTMENT Administration & Operations Manual		
Policy: Commercial & Private Alarm Response Procedures		AOM: O-601
Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards Referenced:		Issuing Authority <hr/> Jody Kasper Chief of Police
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I. Introductory Discussion

Responding to electronic surveillance devices or burglar alarms has become a major activity for law enforcement agencies throughout the country. The overwhelming majority of these calls are false even with the implementation of false alarm fine programs. However, this does not diminish the reality that responding to an alarm is a potentially hazardous call and should always be regarded as such by police officers. Specific guidelines are necessary to address the safety and well being of the public as well as police officers and are designed to define responsibilities during responses to commercial, institutional, industrial and residential alarms. Officers, supervisors, and dispatchers must be prepared to meet these responsibilities with a thorough understanding of their duties.

II. Policy

- A. It is the policy of this department to respond to commercial, institutional, industrial and residential alarms received via the Public Safety Communication Center (PSCC) or by other means of notification to this department. Neither this department nor the PSCC will directly monitor private alarms.
- B. Any residence or place of business with an intrusion alarm that results in a notification to the Northampton Police Department shall be subject to a fine for each false alarm after the three (3) first false alarms in any calendar year. This fine will be in accordance with City Ordinance section 116-1.

A false alarm shall be defined as the activation of an alarm by any cause other than the detection of an intrusion or an attempted intrusion.

III. Procedures: Dispatcher

- A. Upon receiving a report of any commercial, institutional, industrial or residential alarm the dispatcher shall immediately dispatch two patrol units to the scene.
- B. If contact with a building representative or resident owner has been made this information will be relayed to the responding officers. Alarm verification should not be considered foolproof as offenders may answer the telephone or employee(s) may be under direct control of the offenders.
- C. In the event a key holder is not responding, the dispatcher shall be responsible for noting such on the incident card and shall advise the officer to clear.

IV. Procedures: Supervisor

- A. The Field Supervisor and/or the OIC shall monitor radio transmissions to ensure appropriate numbers of personnel are responding, their code response and their location.
- B. If there is a reported break, theft, or other serious incident in progress, an appropriate number of officers shall be assigned to establish a superior police presence and prevent escape. A directed police response to strategic locations is necessary to ensure proper placement and control of personnel at the scene. The Field Supervisor and/or the OIC shall determine the appropriate number of responding personnel and their placement.

V. Procedures: Patrol Officers

- A. Each officer should review traffic patterns when responding in an attempt to predetermine probable escape routes and possible pursuit tactics. Police Officers can become complacent in their responses to these calls because of the numerous false and accidental alarms that occur. Officers responding shall do so in the same manner as bank alarms - using extreme caution.
- B. Officers being dispatched to the scene of a reported alarm at a commercial or industrial business, institutional facility or residence shall generally respond Code One unless

- urgency exists for a Code Two response at the direction of the supervisors, or if the alarm is a hold up, panic, medical, or Aware activation.
- C. While enroute to the scene, officers shall be alert for radio transmissions that give further information. Officers should also be observant for possible getaway vehicles traveling towards them, suspects switching vehicles on side streets or in parking lots, and any other activity that indicates possible lookouts.
 - D. If the responding officer(s) do observe the getaway vehicle or the escaping suspects they shall use extreme caution in giving pursuit in accordance with *AOM 0205 Pursuit of Motor Vehicles*.
 - E. Officers on foot will respond when dispatched or when directed. Each foot patrol officer must bear in mind that they do not have a vehicle to use as a barrier and therefore must rely on available structures and other items to act as barriers for protection.
 - F. Upon arrival, a thorough exterior check of the building or residence and the surrounding area shall be made. If necessary, officers shall stand by until a representative of the building arrives to assist in conducting a thorough interior search. If a break or other crime has occurred officers shall notify the Field Supervisor or shift OIC and take proper action in accordance with departmental policy.
 - G. Backup officers responding should communicate to the officers on the scene to determine what position or location to assume upon arrival. Officers should be positioned so as to observe all exits and notify the dispatcher of the existing circumstances once these positions are staffed.
 - H. Police vehicles parked unattended at or near the scene will not be left with motors running or with keys in the ignition. These vehicles should be positioned so that easy access by police personnel can be made without causing the officer(s) to be exposed to any line of fire or open clearance.
 - I. Unless the suspects attempt to flee from the building or residence, all officers at the scene will act under the direction of the OIC. In most cases the ranking officer on the scene will assume command and will render an evaluation of the situation to the dispatcher and the Field Supervisor or the OIC of the shift.
 - J. Officers must preserve the safety of all in the immediate area. Unless exigent circumstances develop, officers should avoid the impulse to take immediate action. No police tactics should be initiated that might unnecessarily endanger the safety of the officers or the safety of the general public.
 - K. No police officer should enter the premises when there is reason to believe that the offenders are still inside, unless so directed by a superior officer.
 - L. If the offenders remain inside the premises, police officers shall maintain strict firearms discipline. Refer to *AOM 0101 Police Use of Force* and *AOM 0101tb5 Police Use of Firearms*.

- M. Trouble alarms: Patrol units shall respond to trouble alarms in the same manner as above. Officers should pay special attention to telephone lines into the building and surrounding area as offenders may cut them to disable the alarm.
- N. Cancellations: When the PSCC receives a valid cancellation notice from the alarm holder's company, the primary unit will continue for confirmation.
- O. Every alarm response requires a brief narrative by the responding officer detailing the circumstance of the activation.

VI. Medical Alert Alarms

- A. Devices designed to elicit some type of emergency response when activated to assist the carrier are referred to as Medical Alert Alarms. Under normal circumstances, the first units dispatched will be police and ambulance.
- B. If a Medical Alert Alarm has been activated and officers do not receive a response at the location by conventional methods, the Field Supervisor or the OIC shall respond to the scene. Based upon the totality of the circumstances presented (i.e., alarm activated and no response through the door or by telephone, mail not taken in or not seen by neighbors) the Field Supervisor or OIC may authorize reasonable forcible entry to determine if medical assistance is needed and necessary.

VII. AWARE Alarms

- A. Victims of domestic violence who are at greater risk of further victimization may carry an AWARE alarm. When Officers are dispatched to AWARE alarm activation, extreme caution should be used during response and investigation. If Officers arrive at a home and they are not able to make contact with the resident, it is likely that they may need to enter the home to ensure the safety of the occupants. The OIC should be contacted and advised of the situation.
- B. AWARE alarm activations are always a two Officer response and the initial Officer shall never call off a secondary unit while enroute to the call.