

**LANCASTER POLICE DEPARTMENT
GENERAL ORDERS MANUAL**

<i>Effective Date</i> September 2, 2015		<i>Amended Date</i>		<i>Directive</i> 7.14.1	
<i>Subject</i> Alarms					
<i>Reference</i>			<i>Approved</i>  Chief of Police		
<i>Distribution</i> All Personnel City Manager City Attorney		<i>TPCA Best Practices Recognition Program Reference</i> 7.26		<i>Review Date</i> December 12, 2017	
				<i>Pages</i> 6	

This Operations Directive is for internal use only and does not enhance an officer's civil or criminal liability in any way. It should not be construed as a creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violations of this Operations Directive, if proven, may only form the basis for a complaint by this Department, and only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

SECTION 1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to officers and telecommunicators regarding the department's response to alarm calls.

SECTION 2 POLICY

It is the policy of the department that all officers will respond to alarms in the manner prescribed by this directive.

SECTION 3 PROCEDURES

A. TELECOMMUNICATORS RESPONSIBILITIES

1. When communication personnel are notified of an alarm they shall dispatch the appropriate amount of officers according to the circumstances and nature of the alarm.
 - a. Robbery-in-progress alarms – Initial response to these alarms should be two officers.
 - b. Burglary-in-progress alarms – Initial response to these alarms should be two officers.
 - c. Alarms of a test nature or a disregard during business hours – These types of alarms should be checked by officers for verification. Officers should use extreme caution in the approach to the business. Initial response should be two officers.
2. Robbery or burglary reports received by public service from concerned citizens or victims shall be responded to the same as robbery or burglary-in-progress alarms. Initial response should be by two officers.
3. Responses to robberies or burglaries that have already occurred should be responded to as any other crime not in progress. Initial response should be by a primary officer. Additional officers may be assigned as needed.

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4. If the alarm company or victim notifies communications personnel that a robbery has occurred and is completed, communications personnel shall:
 - a. assign an officer accordingly;
 - b. immediately begin or maintain telephone contact with the victim or victim's representative until the responding officers arrive at the scene;
 - c. obtain a description of the suspects, whether suspects are still at or near the scene, or their direction and mode of travel, time elapsed, and a description of an escape vehicle and provide this information to responding officers; and
 - d. dispatch medical aid for victims immediately if there are injuries
5. If a robbery-in-progress alarm is received, communications personnel shall not contact the business to verify the alarm until officers are in position near the premises and the primary officer or supervisor has directed communications personnel to make the call.
6. If the primary officer or supervisor has directed communications personnel to call the business on a robbery-in-progress alarm and contact is made and verified by phone that the alarm is false, they shall request that an employee exit the business to meet the responding officers. Communications personnel shall provide a clothing description of the employee exiting the business to officers.
7. Communications personnel will document the final status of each alarm as actual or false based on the information provided by the responding officers at the conclusion of each alarm call, if requested.

B. PATROL RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Officers should use caution when responding to any alarm since homeowners, business representatives, and innocent civilians may be present upon the officers' arrival at the scene.
2. Supervisors may use their discretion regarding response to a location where there have been multiple false alarms and it is apparent that the alarm is malfunctioning resulting in numerous false alarms in a short period of time and prompting numerous police responses which taxes shift resources. If the supervisor decides no response is going to be made, communications personnel will contact the alarm company and let them know until a representative can meet with an officer the department will not respond to the location. Communication personnel will create a call and add notes stating, the name of the supervisor, the number of false alarm calls that have occurred in the short period of time, the name of the alarm company representative spoke with advising no response will be made and any other pertinent information obtained.

C. ROBBERY ALARMS

1. Officers shall proceed to the location as quickly and safely as possible and avoid alerting the suspect(s) by visual or audible means. Units not assigned to the alarm should patrol their area or set up at strategic locations to control possible escape routes.

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2. Upon arrival, officers should position themselves at a strategic location and distance from the scene, using all available cover and concealment.
3. If unable to visually determine whether a robbery is in progress, the primary officer or supervisor shall advise communications personnel to attempt to make telephone contact with the complainant after officers are deployed and the scene is contained.
4. If communications personnel verify by phone that the alarm is false, they shall request that an employee exit the business to meet the responding officers. Communications personnel shall provide a clothing description of the employee to officers.
5. If no employee approaches in a reasonable time and communications personnel have telephone contact with the business, then officers should consider the alarm to be a robbery in progress. In this event, the on-duty supervisor or primary officer should consider the possibility of a hostage situation within the business.
6. If the call is unanswered or a questionable response is provided, officers shall assume that a possible robbery is in progress.
7. If telephone contact cannot be made, officers should maintain positions and if it becomes necessary to approach the building, approach shall be made cautiously, utilizing available cover. A supervisor or primary officer will determine when and if to enter the building.
8. If an officer at the scene or communications personnel determine that a robbery is still in progress, officers should maintain containment and confront suspects after they leave the premises. Make use of all available cover, keeping in mind the possibility of multiple suspects. If the suspect(s) exits the building, make every effort to position the necessary number of officers between the building and the suspect(s) in order to prevent re-entry into the building.
9. Immediately after it has been determined that a robbery has occurred and the scene is secured, the primary officer or supervisor shall direct available personnel to begin searching the area and obtain pertinent information from witnesses and, as soon as possible, broadcast it to area units and surrounding law enforcements agencies.
10. The officer shall document the final status of each alarm as actual or false based on the information at the conclusion of each alarm call. Officers will use the appropriate disposition code and make notes when completing each alarm call. Whenever possible, officers will use their in-car computers to complete each alarm call, on instances where the in-car computer is not working or not equipped with an in-car computer, the officer will notify dispatch by telephone or police radio of the appropriate disposition code and notes that need to be added to the call.

D. RESPONSE TO ROBBERY ALARM BY PLAIN-CLOTHES PERSONNEL

1. Plain-clothes personnel may respond to alarms after informing the assigned officers of their response.

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2. If plain-clothes personnel are the first to arrive on the scene, they shall act as first responding officers and make sure that all other responding officers are aware of their exact location. When not the first to arrive, they will take direction from the officer in charge of the scene.
3. All movement of plain-clothes personnel within the perimeter of a robbery will be coordinated with the uniformed personnel on the scene.

E. COMMERCIAL BURGLARY ALARMS

1. All burglary alarms require the dispatch of two units to provide containment of the structure.
2. The field supervisor may authorize the dispatch of one unit during weather or power related alarm problems.
3. Units responding to a burglary alarm shall place themselves in position of cover and concealment which afford an opportunity to view the exterior of the structure while checking for visible signs of forced entry.
4. Units can request communications personnel to attempt notification of the owner or representative if contact is needed and has not already been done by the alarm company and one is not already present.
5. If officers request contact of the owner or representative, officers should allow a reasonable amount of time for the arrival of the owner or representative and call their supervisor for instruction when this time has passed.
6. If the business shows no physical signs of forced entry and is secured, it should only be entered and searched after a representative of the business arrives. If a representative refuses to respond or cannot be contacted, officers should add notes in the call about what the officer observed and a representative refused to respond and/or could not be contacted. The officer will use the appropriate disposition code when clearing the call. Whenever possible, officers will use their in-car computers to complete each alarm call, on instances where the in-car computer is not working or not equipped with an in-car computer, the officer will notify dispatch by telephone or police radio of the appropriate disposition code and notes that need to be added to the call.
7. If an officer discover physical signs of forced entry or is unsecured, they shall, after the arrival of sufficient numbers of officers, search the premises unescorted assuming that a suspect or suspects may be inside the business.

F. RESIDENTIAL BURGLARY ALARMS

1. Officers dispatched to a residential alarm shall first try to contact the owner or person left in charge of the residence before entering.
2. If the residence shows no physical signs of forced entry and is secured, it should only be entered and searched after the owner or person left in charge of the residence arrives. If the owner or person left in charge of the residence refuses to respond or cannot be contacted, officers should add notes in the call about what the officer observed and the owner or person left in charge of the

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residence refused to respond and/or could not be contacted. The officer will use the appropriate disposition code when clearing the call. Whenever possible, officers will use their in-car computers to complete each alarm call, on instances where the in-car computer is not working or not equipped with an in-car computer, the officer will notify dispatch by telephone or police radio of the appropriate disposition code and notes that need to be added to the call.

3. If an officer discovers physical signs of forced entry or it is unsecured they shall, after the arrival of sufficient numbers of officers, search the premises unescorted assuming that a suspect or suspects may be inside the business. In cases of forced entry then the owner or person left in charge of the residence shall not be allowed to enter until the area has been entered, searched, and deemed safe by police personnel.

G. CLEARING ALARM CALLS FOR SERVICE

1. If an offense did occur, a preliminary investigation will be conducted in accordance with departmental directives and procedures.
2. Officers responding to alarm calls are responsible for classifying the alarm notification as valid or false at the conclusion of the alarm response as per the city ordinance. Officers will classify the alarm notification as valid or false by using the correct and appropriate alarm disposition code and adding notes when clearing the call. The correct and appropriate disposition code is vitally important since the owners can be issued a fine after a determined number of false alarms, per city ordinance.
3. Valid Alarm disposition codes are:
 - a. R1 – Offense Report;
 - b. R4 – Incident Report; or
 - c. R5 – MDT Documentation
4. False Alarm disposition codes are:
 - a. A1 - False Alarm Disregarded Per Alarm Company;
 - b. A2 – False Alarm Operator Error;
 - c. A3 – False Alarm Unknown Cause;
 - d. A4 – False Alarm Weather Related; or
 - e. A5 – False Alarm Owner Not At Fault
5. Whenever possible, officers will use their in-car computers to complete each alarm call, on instances where the in-car computer is not working or not equipped with an in-car computer, the officer will notify dispatch by telephone or police radio of the correct and appropriate alarm disposition code and notes that need to be added to the call.

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6. Officer shall add notes in all alarm calls, the notes can assist other officers who have to respond to the location at a later time and/or date. The notes will also assist in determining whether or not the alarm was valid or false and possibly preventing an owner being fined after a determined number of false alarms, per city ordinance.
7. The notes can include but is not limited to the following information:
 - a. was the alarm caused by a natural disaster or severe weather;
 - b. was the alarm caused by a power or telephone outage;
 - c. was the alarm caused because of an actual or attempted criminal offense (burglary, robbery, vandalism, etc.);
 - d. what caused the alarm to be activated, if known (operator error, unsecured door, etc.);
 - e. what did the officer observe during the call (house was secured, unsecured, loose animals inside, etc.); or
 - f. any other useful information obtained by the officer

H. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

1. All members of the department shall know and comply with all aspects of this directive.
2. All Division Commanders and supervisory personnel are responsible for ensuring compliance with the provisions and intent of this directive.