

# **American Electrical Institute**

## **Florida Alarm Contractors Continuing Education**

**False Alarms 101**

**2 Hours**

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## Why are false alarms a problem?

In the United States in 2002, police responded to approximately 36 million alarm activations, at an estimated annual cost of \$1.8 billion. Most of these activations were burglar alarms. This course presents alternative strategies to address the false alarm dilemma. Purchasers of an alarm system are told to expect a police response to an alarm activation, even though they bought the system from a private alarm company with no link to a police department. The vast majority of alarm calls—between 94 and 98 percent (higher in some jurisdictions)—are false according to police records. In other words, alarms' *reliability*, which can be measured by these rates of false activations, is generally between 2 and 6 percent.

Nationwide, false alarms account for somewhere between 10 and 25 percent of *all* calls to police. For many U.S. police agencies, false burglar alarms constitute the highest volume type of call for service. In the United States alone, solving the problem of false alarms would, by itself, relieve 35,000 officers from providing an essentially private service.

An estimated 32 million security alarm systems have been installed in the United States according to a 2007 study. The industry adds roughly 3 million new systems each year. Sixty percent of those are in residences, the rest in commercial and institutional properties. At least one of every seven U.S. businesses and one of every five U.S. residences have alarms. The recent trend of wiring new residential construction with alarm capacity has the potential to significantly increase the number of alarm calls in the coming decade. Consequently, even those police agencies with recently enacted false alarm policies and ordinances may be further consumed with false alarm calls.

Alarm associations suggest that false burglar alarms are not evenly distributed: some alarm systems experience no false alarms, and others, many. In some jurisdictions, the pattern of false alarms is much more widely distributed. Whether concentrated across locations or not, the aggregate number of false alarm calls among all alarmed premises places a high demand on limited police resources.

***Exam Questions:***

**1. Approximately how many alarm activation calls did police respond to in 2002?**

- a. 36 billion
- b. 36 million
- c. 36 thousand
- d. 360 million

**2. About what percentage of alarm calls are false alarms?**

- a. Between 80-90%
- b. Between 5-10%
- c. Between 94-98%
- d. Between 50-60%

**3. For many police agencies what is the highest volume type of call for service?**

- a. False burglar alarms
- b. Fire alarms
- c. Suspicious behavior
- d. None of the above

**4. Roughly how many new alarms are added to the industry each year?**

- a. 0.5 million
- b. 1 million
- c. 2 million
- d. 3 million

**5. Approximately how many U.S. businesses use alarms?**

- a. 1 in 6
- b. 1 in 7
- c. 1 in 8
- d. 1 in 9

## **The Costs of False Burglar Alarms**

Each false alarm requires approximately 20 minutes of police time, usually for two officers. This costs the public hundreds of millions of dollars. In the vast majority of jurisdictions, the cost of responding to false alarms is not recouped through fines. Jurisdictions trying to recoup costs generally omit the lost-opportunity costs, a potentially significant part of the equation. Typical costs include:

- personnel costs of police call-takers and dispatchers,
- personnel, equipment, and costs related to backup personnel
- personnel costs associated with analyzing false alarms
- software, hardware, office space, and equipment costs for false alarm management
- administrative and staff costs of notifications, permitting, billing, and education programs
- costs of developing, printing, and distributing publications to educate the public and alarm companies about false alarms
- lost-opportunity costs, when police are unavailable to work on actual crime problems
- costs associated with call displacement, because the response to other 911 calls takes longer.

In addition, in some jurisdictions, officers have sustained injuries or their vehicles have been damaged as the result of traffic accidents while responding to false alarm calls.

One of the hidden costs of false burglar alarms is that they can distort the proper geographic distribution of police. False burglar alarms do not necessarily concentrate in the same places where crime in general, or burglary in particular, concentrates. Burglary rates are typically much higher in urban areas than in either suburban or rural areas, and residential burglaries tend to concentrate in and around low-income areas. Yet more affluent areas tend to have burglar alarms. In 2004, those at highest risk for burglary had household incomes below \$25,000. Those with incomes below \$7,500 were at the greatest risk, having twice the risk of households with incomes of \$75,000 or more. To the extent that calls-for-service data (which can be heavily skewed by alarm calls) are used to allocate police personnel to different areas, more officers might be assigned where there are a lot of false burglar alarms rather than where there is a lot of crime. No matter where they are assigned, officers spending time responding to false burglar alarms have less time available to attend to other crime problems.

***Exam Questions:***

- 6. Approximately how much time does a false alarm require of a police officer?**
  - a. 10 minutes
  - b. 15 minutes
  - c. 20 minutes
  - d. 2 hours
  
- 7. True or false? The cost of responding to false alarms is usually recouped through fines.**
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
- 8. Beyond the financial cost of responding to false alarms, jurisdictions also experience what other type of cost?**
  - a. Lost-opportunity cost
  - b. High-risk cost
  - c. Cost of additional resources
  - d. None of the above
  
- 9. Which of the following are typical costs of false alarms?**
  - a. personnel costs of police call-takers and dispatchers
  - b. personnel costs associated with analyzing false alarms
  - c. software, hardware, office space, and equipment costs for false alarm management
  - d. All of the above
  
- 10. Households at what income level were at the greatest risk for burglary?**
  - a. Above \$75,000
  - b. Above \$25,000
  - c. Below \$7,500
  - d. Below \$100,000

## Why do False Alarms Occur?

The following are common causes of false alarms:

**Faulty equipment:** Despite the fact that most of the top home security companies utilize high-quality equipment from leading manufacturers, there may be occasions where a faulty piece of equipment is the source of false alarms.

**Human error:** Most home security systems are fairly easy to use and do not require significant training. However, following a new installation, some homeowners don't take the necessary time to actually learn the system. It is important that any person with permission to enter the home understands how to operate the system.

**Low batteries or inconsistent power source:** Most wireless home security systems contain batteries that occasionally need to be changed and replaced. These system components typically give audible warnings when the battery levels are low, but in some cases, a low battery can trigger a false alarm. An inconsistent/unreliable power source can also be the cause of false alarms.

**Unlocked or loose doors and windows:** Door and window sensors are activated when the connection between the two sensors is disrupted. If a door or window is loose, it can easily be rattled by the wind and trigger an alarm. Doors that are locked with a deadbolt are typically sturdier, and can minimize unintentional sensor disturbances.

**Incorrect installation:** When the home security system is installed, it is critical that all sensors and detectors are appropriately aligned, and that all other equipment is installed according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Homeowners installing do-it-yourself home security systems may be particularly susceptible to incorrect installation problems.

**Pets, rodents, and insects:** Some motion detectors will be triggered by:

- pets,
- rodents, or
- insects

Homeowners with pets should be certain the home security system has sensors that are “pet-friendly,” as pets that are free to roam the house will trigger motion detectors and activate a false alarm. Rodents and insects can also trigger alarms.

***Exam Questions:***

**11. After installing a new security system it is very important that home owners take the necessary time to do what?**

- a. Change the batteries
- b. Check for faulty equipment
- c. Learn the system
- d. None of the above

**12. When are door and window sensors activated?**

- a. When the connection between the two sensors is disrupted
- b. When the sensors are loosened
- c. When the sensors are pushed
- d. Doors and windows do not have sensors

**13. What type of lock can minimize unintentional sensor disturbances?**

- a. Padlocks
- b. Deadbolts
- c. Switch locks
- d. Push locks

**14. Who is particularly susceptible to installing alarms incorrectly?**

- a. Alarm system contractors
- b. Alarm system agents
- c. Homeowners
- d. Electricians

**15. True or false? When the home security system is installed, it does not matter if sensors and detectors are appropriately aligned.**

- a. True
- b. False

**16. Sometimes motion detectors will be triggered by which of the following?**

- a. Insects
- b. Rodents
- c. Pets
- d. All of the above

## **Reducing the Frequency of False Alarms**

The following are steps that can be taken to reduce the frequency of false alarms.

**Choose the right home security system:** The individual circumstances of a homeowner will determine what type of system is appropriate. For example, some home security systems are installed by licensed professionals, while others are installed by the homeowner. An elderly homeowner with limited mobility would likely not have the capability to install a home security system. Pet owners would also want to ensure the sensors and detectors are pet-friendly.

Homeowners should take the time to learn about the features of the best home security systems before making a selection.

**Utilize a brief familiarization period:** Following the installation of a new home security system, many home security companies will allow a brief familiarization period. During this period, no signals received at the monitoring center will be dispatched to the police department or other authorities. False alarms that occur during this period will not have repercussions and give the homeowner a great opportunity to get familiar with the system. If a newly installed system is repeatedly broadcasting false alarms, the homeowner should reach out to the home security company for guidance and assistance.



**Appropriately train those with access to the home security system:** All family members, babysitters, relatives, neighbors, cleaning crews, repairman, and any other person that has permission to be in the home, should be appropriately trained on how to use the system. This includes understanding how to arm/disarm the system, knowledge of alarm codes and passwords, and the process for cancelling an inadvertent alarm activation.

**Install a home security system with two-way communication capabilities:** Some home security keypads utilize two-way voice technology that enables the dispatcher to hear what is happening in the home. This allows the homeowner to communicate directly to the monitoring center whether a police dispatch is necessary.

**Require dual verification:** Many home security monitoring companies will have access to audio or video resources. Following an alarm activation, requiring the monitoring center to obtain an audio or visual confirmation before dispatching authorities will help reduce false alarms.

**Conduct a short debriefing after a false alarm occurs:** After a false alarm occurs, it's important to take the time to determine what triggered the alarm and to implement measures to ensure the action is avoided in the future. If the cause of the false alarm cannot be determined, homeowners should be particularly cautious.

**Perform occasional maintenance:** Homeowners should perform occasional maintenance to ensure that all sensors, detectors, cameras, and any other home security component is secured, clean, and working as designed. Excessive dust, spider webs, and loose sensors and detectors can all be the source of false alarms.

***Exam Questions:***

**17. True or false? During a familiarization period, no signals will be dispatched to the police department.**

- a. True
- b. False

**18. Whom of the following should be trained on how to use the alarm system?**

- a. Family members
- b. Babysitters
- c. Cleaning Crews
- d. All of the above

**19. What does a two-way communication system allow homeowners to do?**

- a. Homeowners can directly communicate with the monitoring center
- b. Homeowners can directly communicate with the police
- c. The monitoring center can directly communicate with the police
- d. The monitoring center can directly communicate with neighbors

**20. What is the benefit of using a system with dual verification?**

- a. The authorities will be dispatched automatically for every alarm
- b. It will help reduce false alarms by requiring a visual or an audio confirmation before dispatching authorities
- c. Homeowners must contact authorities themselves
- d. None of the above

**21. What should be done after a false alarm occurs?**

- a. The alarm system should be uninstalled
- b. Authorities should be notified that the homeowners possess a faulty alarm system
- c. Remove all pets from the home
- d. Determine what triggered the alarm and take measures to ensure it is avoided in the future

**22. Occasional maintenance on alarms should include which of the following?**

- a. Making sure all components are secured
- b. Making sure all components are clean
- c. Making sure all components are working as designed
- d. All of the above

**23. Which of the following can be sources of false alarms?**

- a. Loose sensors and detectors
- b. Excessive dust
- c. Spider Webs
- d. All of the above

**Other ways to reduce false alarms:**

- Ensure all windows and doors are secure before setting the alarm
- Ensure the home security company is licensed and reputable
- Spray insect repellent around sensors and detectors twice a year
- Periodically test the home security system to ensure equipment is working appropriately
- Ensure that panic buttons or other emergency activation features are out of the reach of children
- Make certain that the monitoring center has current contact information and that call lists and emergency contacts are accurate
- Check the batteries of any wireless devices and the backup power to the primary keypad
- Designate an area in the home for the home security user manual and ensure contact information for the home monitoring system is accessible
- Be mindful of environmental changes (new pet, plants, HVAC systems, new home decorations, etc.) that may impact the home security system
- Use deadbolt locks
- Contact a professional exterminator if rodents, insects, or other pests are a repeated problem
- Inform the alarm company or monitoring center if you expect to be away from the home for an extended period of time

***Exam Questions:***

**24. When choosing a home security system, you should make sure the company is which of the following?**

- a. Licensed
- b. Reputable
- c. Both a and b
- d. None of the above

**25. True or false? Panic buttons should be easily within the reach of children.**

- a. True
- b. False

**26. True or false? The monitoring center should have an up-to-date list of emergency contacts.**

- a. True
- b. False

**27. Where should the home security user manual and contact information for the home monitoring system be kept?**

- a. In a designated area
- b. In the kitchen
- c. In the master bedroom
- d. In the living room

**28. Before leaving the home for an extended period of time who should be contacted?**

- a. Local authorities
- b. The alarm company or monitoring center
- c. The police department
- d. All of the above

## How will Law Enforcement Respond to False Alarms?

Police may use the responses described below to potentially reduce false alarm calls.

### 1. Requiring alarm companies to verify alarm legitimacy before calling the police (commonly called “verified response”)

Under this approach, alarm monitoring companies must verify the legitimacy of alarms (except holdup, duress, and panic alarms) before calling the police. Verified response typically involves *visual* on-scene verification of a break-in. Verification may also be established by remote *video* surveillance. *Audio* intrusion detection technology is also available. However, it is not nearly as effective as visual on-scene or video verification at this point. As for in-person verification, it is usually conducted by private security personnel who travel to the location, assess the situation, and if necessary, contact police. By requiring alarm monitoring companies to screen alarm activations, police response is reserved for true break-ins, actual attempts and holdup, duress, and panic alarms. Under this approach, only holdup, duress, and panic alarms require permits, whereas burglar alarms do not, reducing the administrative costs associated with a police-staffed false alarm program. Cities adopting verified response have found enormous decreases in the number of alarm calls, typically around 90 percent, which improves police response times to other types of calls.

**Example:** In 2000, Salt Lake City, Utah, adopted verified response using visual verification. By significantly reducing the number of calls to which officers needed to respond, the Salt Lake City Police Department gained an equivalent of five full-time officers, decreased the workload of call-takers and dispatchers, and decreased the response time to other calls for service. Area alarm industry representatives cited increased revenues (as a result of the service charge applied for verification) and similar sales levels to those before the verified response policy.

This approach may be most feasible in more populous areas: jurisdictions with few alarm customers scattered over a large area may have difficulty securing a private resource that can deliver satisfactory and cost-effective response times. However, in all likelihood, police in those jurisdictions have long response times to these alarm calls. In cities adopting verified response, insurance companies continue to provide discounts to alarm owners, as it is the monitoring itself, not whether it is done by police or private security that appears to matter.

***Exam Questions:***

**29. What is a “verified response”?**

- a. a fee for service due to a false holdup, duress, or panic alarm call
- b. a response stemming from a mobile alarm
- c. a response coming from an alarm with a permit
- d. alarm monitoring companies must verify the legitimacy of alarms (except holdup, duress, and panic alarms) before calling the police

**30. Who typically conducts in person verifications?**

- a. local law enforcement
- b. private security personnel
- c. the homeowners
- d. neighbors

**31. Cities adopting verified response have found enormous decreases in the number of alarm calls, typically around \_\_\_\_\_ percent.**

- a. 70 percent
- b. 80 percent
- c. 90 percent
- d. 100 percent

**32. True or false? The verified response approach is most feasible in sparsely populated areas.**

- a. True
- b. False

**2. Charging a fee for service for all false holdup, duress, and panic alarms.**

When an alarm is personally activated (as in a holdup, duress, or panic alarm), gaining additional verification before dispatching a police officer is unrealistic. Even though these calls would seem the most likely to be true, many will also be false. As a result, a fee for service is charged for false holdup,

duress, and panic alarm calls both so that police do not have to absorb the costs of false calls and to encourage responsible handling of these alarms.

### **3. Responding to holdup, duress, and panic alarms only if they come from a building.**

This approach is intended to stem the burgeoning use of mobile personal alarms. New technology has prompted entrepreneurs to market mobile alarms: some handheld, some worn on clothing, others in automobiles. If police response is promised as part of these advances, the volume of false alarm calls could increase dramatically. To combat this potential problem, police agencies can adopt policies providing for police response only when an alarm originates from a building.

### **4. Establishing an ordinance requiring owners to obtain alarm permits and to pay escalating fines for false alarms.**

Many police agencies rely on a local alarm ordinance to guide policy and establish false alarm fines. Some ordinances provide for fixed fines, others include escalating fines against repeat abusers, and a few apply a cost-recovery system. Typically, fines are allocated to the general fund and not to the police budget. Invariably, alarm owners are not fined until they have several false alarms (usually three or four). Many ordinances also require alarm owners to obtain a permit. In theory, alarm permits help police departments to track and fine alarm abusers and to notify the most chronic abusers of the suspension of police response. However, some jurisdictions have found that some alarm companies do not make their customers aware of the permit requirement, and many alarm owners do not apply for required permits, which severely compromises this response's effectiveness. This approach is administratively costly and requires continued officer dispatch (except in the most chronic cases). Some residents resent police fines for services, as they mistakenly believe their taxes cover them. As a result, it may be difficult to collect fines; collection rates can be as low as 60 percent without significant follow-up. Finally, some jurisdictions have experienced initial reductions in the number of false alarms after an ordinance has been passed, but in general, these initial decreases do not endure over the long term.

***Exam Questions:***

**33. True or false? All personally activated alarms are guaranteed to be true.**

- a. True
- b. False

**34. To combat the potential problem arising from mobile alarms, police agencies can adopt policies providing for police response only when an alarm originates from a \_\_\_\_\_.**

- a. Person
- b. Automobile
- c. Building
- d. Neighbor

**35. What do many ordinances require alarm owners to obtain for their alarm?**

- a. A mobile tracking device
- b. Private security personnel
- c. An audio intrusion device
- d. A permit

**36. Many jurisdictions have trouble collecting fines for false alarms. Collection rates can be as low as what percent?**

- a. 60%
- b. 70%
- c. 80%
- d. 90%

**5. Setting a cost recovery-based fee for all false alarm calls.**

A fee for service would cover all costs associated with responding to false alarms. These include lost-opportunity costs for officers responding to false alarms rather than proactively working on reducing crime and disorder problems. A fee for service differs from a fine in that it is not punitive; it is meant only to recover costs. It is unclear whether a fee for service reduces false alarms, though it does



reimburse the city for providing a police response to calls. Cost-recovery policies incorporate follow-up action against nonpayers.

#### **6. Charging permit fees and fines directly to alarm companies.**

To lessen the administrative burden inherent in strategies requiring alarm users to obtain permits and to pay fines in the event of a false alarm, some jurisdictions charge these fees directly to the alarm installation or monitoring company. Not only does this practice ensure that all new alarms are registered with police, but it also greatly reduces the number of contacts that police alarm administrators must make. Rather than contacting thousands of alarm owners, alarm administrators make contact with a much smaller number of installers and monitoring companies.

#### **7. Outsourcing the administration of permits, fines, and fees.**

Administering permits, fines, and fees can be cumbersome and, if not implemented properly, the deterrent value of an ordinance is lost. These administrative duties of the police's alarm administrator can be outsourced to a private firm in exchange for a portion of the fees.

#### **8. Requiring alarm monitoring companies to make two calls to owners of activated systems before calling police.**

Most jurisdictions require alarm monitoring companies to make a single contact with the owner of an activated alarm system to learn whether the alarm was inadvertently set off during routine operations (e.g., arming or disarming the system). A practice labeled "enhanced call verification" requires monitoring companies to attempt contact using two or more phone numbers (for example, an owner's home phone and cell phone) before calling police. Jurisdictions adopting this strategy have noted modest reductions (around 25 to 40 percent) in the number of false alarm calls to police. Customer satisfaction may increase because fines for police response to false alarms are avoided.

Furthermore, not all alarm companies comply with these directives, fearing liability if police are not called to the scene when a crime is in fact occurring. It is important to note that these efforts to contact the alarm owner are not the equivalent of verification. The person called may be out of town or away from the location and would have no idea if their premise was being burgled. Finally, police cannot verify or enforce the "enhanced call verification" approach.

***Exam Questions:***

**37. How does a fee for service differ from a fine?**

- a. it is not punitive; it is meant only to recover costs
- b. it is punitive; it is no meat not to recover costs
- c. police cannot charge a fee for service
- d. police cannot issue a fine

**38. Why would a jurisdiction choose to charge permit fees to alarm companies rather than individuals?**

- a. it is illegal to charge individuals
- b. individuals are not allowed to hold alarm permits
- c. Alarm permits can only be given to alarm monitors
- d. to ensure that all new alarms are registered with police

**39. True or false? The administrative duties of the police's alarm administrator cannot be outsourced to a private firm in exchange for a portion of the fees.**

- a. True
- b. False

**40. At least how many phone numbers must monitoring companies attempt to contact the home owners with in the "enhanced call verification" practice?**

- a. None
- b. 1
- c. 2
- d. 3

**9. Accepting dispatch cancellations.**

Some police agencies will cancel a dispatch upon request by an alarm company. The alarm company cancellation is usually based on telephone, not visual, verification. This approach can lead to decreases in the number of alarm calls, but it also inadvertently increases the number of incoming calls to dispatchers, because cancellation calls must be fielded and dispatched.

### **10. Alerting alarm companies about false-alarm abusers.**

Some police agencies contact alarm companies with the names of customers who are false-alarm abusers. This practice can reduce false alarms if alarm companies work with alarm owners to remedy the abuse. This approach depends on the alarm company's willingness to follow up with its customers, and its capacity to bring abusers into line. It works best if both the alarm companies and the abusers are charged for costs.

### **11. Setting criteria for temporarily suspending police response.**

After a predetermined number of false alarms, some jurisdictions withhold police response to subsequent alarm activations. Other jurisdictions will not dispatch police to locations that do not have a valid alarm permit on file. Alarm owners should be warned of the intent to suspend police response and should receive official notification of the suspension of services. Many jurisdictions allow owners to appeal the suspension decision and to "earn back" police response after some time.

### **12. Publishing alarm companies' false alarm rates on websites or elsewhere.**

Police can calculate and publish the false alarm rates of individual alarm companies to help potential buyers make informed decisions.

### **13. Lowering the call priority of alarms.**

Some police agencies have lowered the call priority for alarms (other than holdup, duress, and panic alarms). Other jurisdictions issue a general alert, allowing officers on patrol to respond at their discretion. This does not reduce the number of false alarms, nor does it reduce the number of alarm calls coming into a police dispatch center.

### ***Exam Questions:***

**41. True or false? Accepting dispatch cancellations increases the number of incoming calls to dispatchers because cancellation calls must be fielded and dispatched as well.**

- a. True
- b. False

**42. True or false? Police are not allowed to publish false alarm rates.**

- a. True
- b. False

**43. True or false? Some jurisdictions allow officers to respond at their discretion to alarm calls.**

- a. True
- b. False

**Florida Statutes Governing Alarm System Agents. (489.518)**

1. A licensed electrical or alarm system contractor may not employ a person to perform the duties of a burglar alarm system agent unless the person:
  - Is at least 18 years of age or has evidence of a court-approved declaration of emancipation.
  - Has successfully completed a minimum of 14 hours of training, to include basic alarm system electronics in addition to related training including CCTV and access control training, with at least 2 hours of training in the prevention of false alarms. Such training shall be from a board-approved provider, and the employee or applicant for employment shall provide proof of successful completion to the licensed employer. Qualified employers may conduct training classes for their employees, with board approval.
  - Has not been convicted within the last 3 years of a crime that directly relates to the business for which employment is being sought. Although the employee is barred from operating as an alarm system agent for 3 years subsequent to his or her conviction, the employer shall be supplied the information regarding any convictions occurring prior to that time, and the employer may at his or her discretion consider an earlier conviction to be a bar to employment as an alarm system agent. To ensure that this requirement has been met, a licensed electrical or alarm contractor must obtain from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement a completed fingerprint and criminal background check for each applicant for employment as a burglar alarm system agent or for each individual currently employed on the effective date of this act as a burglar alarm system agent.

- Has not been committed for controlled substance abuse or been found guilty of a crime relating to controlled substances in any other state within the 3-year period immediately preceding the date of application for employment, or the effective date of this act for an individual employed as a burglar alarm system agent on that date, unless he or she establishes that he or she is not currently abusing any controlled substance and has successfully completed a rehabilitation course.

***Exam Questions:***

**44. What is the minimum age a burglar alarm system agent must have?**

- a. 16
- b. 20
- c. 18
- d. 24

**45. A burglar alarm system agent cannot have been convicted within the last \_\_\_\_\_ years of a crime that directly relates to the business.**

- a. ½ year
- b. 1 year
- c. 2 years
- d. 3 years

2. Persons who perform only monitoring are not required to complete the training required for burglar alarm system agents.
3. Persons who perform only monitoring at an out-of-state location are not required to comply with background check requirements.
4. Persons who perform proprietary burglar alarm system agent duties for only a single employer,

and who do not offer alarm system contracting services to the public, are not required to comply with background check requirements.

5. A state-certified electrical contractor, a state-certified alarm system contractor, a state-registered alarm system contractor, a journeyman electrician licensed by any local jurisdiction, or an alarm technician licensed by a local jurisdiction that requires an examination and experience or training as licensure qualifications, is not required to complete the training required for burglar alarm system agents. A state-registered electrical contractor is not required to complete the training required for burglar alarm system agents, so long as he or she is only doing electrical work up to the alarm panel.
6. A nonsupervising employee working as a helper or apprentice under the direct, onsite, continuous supervision of a state-certified electrical contractor, a state-registered electrical contractor, a state-certified alarm system contractor, a state-registered alarm system contractor, a journeyman electrician licensed by any local jurisdiction, an alarm technician licensed by a local jurisdiction that requires an examination and experience or training as licensure qualifications, or a qualified alarm system agent is not required to complete the training otherwise required and is not required to be 18 years of age or older.
7. An applicant for employment as an alarm system agent, or an individual employed as a burglar alarm system agent on the effective date of this act, may commence or continue employment pending the completion of the required training and the results of the background check required by this section for a period not to exceed 90 days after the date of application for employment, or 90 days after the effective date of this act for individuals currently employed as burglar alarm system agents. However, the person must work under the direction and control of a sponsoring licensed electrical or burglar alarm system contractor pending the completion of the training and the criminal background check. If an applicant or an individual employed on the effective date of this act does not complete the training or receive a satisfactory criminal background check within the 90-day period, the employment must be terminated immediately.

***Exam Questions:***

**46. True or false? Persons who perform only monitoring at an out-of-state location are required to comply with background check requirements.**

- a. True
- b. False

**47. How many days are allowed for the completion of a background check on an applicant for employment as an alarm system agent?**

- a. 45 days
- b. 60 days
- c. 90 days
- d. 120 days

8. A licensed electrical or alarm system contractor shall furnish each of its burglar alarm system agents with an identification card.

- The identification card shall be designed in a board-approved format. The card must include a picture of the agent, must specify at least the name of the holder of the card and the name and license number of the contractor, and must be signed by the contractor and by the holder of the card. Each identification card is valid for a period of 2 years after the date of issuance. The identification card must be in the possession of each burglar alarm system agent while engaged in burglar alarm system agent duties.
- Each person to whom an identification card has been issued shall be responsible for the safekeeping thereof and shall not loan, or allow any other person to use or display, the identification card.
- Each identification card must be renewed every 2 years and in a board-approved format to show compliance with the 6 hours of continuing education necessary to maintain certification as a burglar alarm system agent.

9. Each licensed electrical or alarm system contractor must obtain an updated criminal background check from the Department of Law Enforcement for each burglar alarm system agent who renews certification.
10. Each burglar alarm system agent must receive 6 hours of continuing education on burglar alarm system installation and repair and false alarm prevention every 2 years from a board-approved sponsor of training and through a board-approved training course.
11. Failure to comply with any of the provisions of this section shall be a disciplinable offense against the contractor.

***Exam Questions:***

**48. True or false? Alarm system agents are not required to have an identification card.**

- a. True
- b. False

**49. How many years are identification cards valid for?**

- a. 2 years
- b. 3 years
- c. 4 years
- d. 5 years



## **Florida Statute on the Requirement of Alarm Verification Calls (489.529)**

All residential or commercial intrusion/burglary alarms that have central monitoring must have a central monitoring verification call made to the premises generating the alarm signal, prior to alarm monitor personnel contacting a law enforcement agency for alarm dispatch. The central monitoring station must employ call-verification methods for the premises generating the alarm signal if the first call is not answered. However, if the intrusion/burglary alarms have properly operating visual or auditory sensors that enable the monitoring personnel to verify the alarm signal, verification calling is not required.

### ***Exam Questions:***

#### **50. When would verification calling not be required?**

- a. With the use of an intrusion alarm
- b. With the use of a burglary alarm
- c. If the intrusion/burglary alarms have properly operating visual or auditory sensors that enable the monitoring personnel to verify the alarm signal
- d. If the alarm monitor personnel have already contacted a law enforcement agency for alarm dispatch