

COLCHESTER POLICE DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: Response to Alarms

EFFECTIVE DATE: December 1, 2015

GENERAL ORDER # 32

REFERENCE:

REEVALUATION DATE: As needed

APPROVED:

Morrison #190

NO. PAGES: 3

POLICY: The Colchester Police Department will respond to alarms at banks, commercial properties and residences, in accordance with the following procedures. These procedures are designed to enhance arrest possibilities of suspects and enhance safety for responding officers, employees, residents or bystanders.

CONTENTS:

- I. Alarms Generally
- II. Bank Alarms or Panic/Hold Up Alarms
- III. Residential and Commercial Burglar Alarms
- IV. Alarm Registration & False Alarms

I. Alarms Generally

All alarms shall be monitored by a Central Station. CPD dispatch will not monitor bank, commercial or residential alarms directly.

II. Bank Alarms or Panic/Hold Up Alarms

- A. Upon receipt of a panic/hold up or financial institution alarm, a minimum of two patrol units shall be dispatched and the OIC notified.
- B. If the robbery notification is received by telephone, a complete description of the perpetrators shall be obtained from the caller with as much additional information as possible; particularly, whether the perpetrator is at the scene and, if not, the direction and mode of travel and a complete description of any vehicle involved.
- C. If the robbery notification is made by alarm, the dispatcher shall not attempt to contact the institution in order to determine the validity of the alarm until officers have given notice that they are in position at the establishment.
- D. If the dispatcher is subsequently notified that the alarm is false, s/he shall
 - a. advise the caller that police units are responding;
 - b. obtain the identity of and maintain contact with the caller;
 - c. verify the false alarm with a key employee of the establishment (e.g., key holder, manager or head teller) and advise that s/he will need to exit the facility to meet the responding officers; and

- d. obtain a physical description of the key employee and provide responding officers with the description and the fact that the employee will meet them outside as required.
- E. Upon receipt of a **panic or hold-up alarm** at any business, dispatch will detail two Officers to the location and notify the on-duty Officer in Charge (“OIC”) of the alarm. Use of a siren close to the site could result in the subjects involved hearing the siren and cause them to flee or take hostages. Therefore, it is important to note that the use of the siren will be kept to a minimum when responding to alarms.
- F. In the event that the alarm is activated during times when the business is open or otherwise occupied, the assigned officers will proceed to the location and take a holding position keeping the site under observation. When at least two units have arrived on scene and when directed to by the scene supervisor, a dispatcher will make a call into the business or financial institution. When the dispatcher is able to make contact with an employee inside, the dispatcher will advise the employee that the call is from the Colchester Police and advise the employee that an alarm has been received. The dispatcher will inquire the status of the alarm from the employee. If the alarm is reported by the employee to be a false alarm, the procedure in paragraph D above shall be followed.
- G. If the call placed by dispatch is not answered, or if a questionable response is given, officers at the scene shall be informed of this and shall assume that a robbery is in progress. The OIC shall determine the need for additional resources, perimeters, etc. Unless the situation becomes actively violent or if otherwise directed, officers shall wait until suspects have exited the building before attempting apprehension. This is designed to minimize the likelihood of a hostage situation.
- H. In the event that information is received that a robbery or other incident has occurred within the business or bank, the dispatcher will inquire if the suspect(s) have fled, direction of travel, description and known or implied weapons. The dispatcher will air all information to responding units and other resources will be dispatched at the OIC direction. When at least two officers arrive on scene, an employee will be asked to exit and meet with the officers.
- I. In all cases following activation of a panic or hold up alarm, officers should perform a protective sweep of the business interior prior to clearing from the call.

III. Residential and Commercial Burglar Alarms

- A. Upon receipt of an alarm, the dispatcher shall advise the alarm company to have the contact person for the establishment call headquarters prior to responding to the scene. Whenever resources allow, the dispatcher is to assign two units to respond.
- B. Responding units shall establish radio contact to ensure that both officers are at the scene prior to beginning the investigation. Under normal circumstances officers shall secure separate escape routes.

- C. If at any time during the response the alarm company calls back to advise that they have received a call from an authorized person on the premises with the proper pass code and they are satisfied the alarm is accidental, dispatch may cancel the responding units and note the details on the incident.
- D. If unusual circumstances are noted such as a possible point of entry, a third unit should be detailed and the OIC will be notified. The OIC may make arrangements for other units to respond, if necessary or will authorize the search of the building by officers already present. Normally, uniformed personnel will be assigned to respond to alarms and conduct building searches. However, the OIC may assign a plain-clothes officer to respond. **If the building is not secure it must be searched.**
- E. If the building is secure on arrival or upon the conclusion of the search, headquarters will be notified to call the emergency contact. The assigned officer will remain at the scene until the emergency contact has arrived to reset the alarm or until other arrangements are made. If no key holder is available and the building is secure, the officer(s) may clear the scene.

IV. Alarm Registration & False Alarms

- A. All commercial and residential alarms for buildings within the Town of Colchester must be registered with CPD annually. Colchester Town Ordinances 9-71 through 9-81 address the requirements for alarm registration, false alarms, penalties and more.
- B. A false alarm is the activation of an alarm system through mechanical failure, malfunction or improper installation that is not the result of unlawful entry to the premises. Also included in false alarms is the activation of an alarm system through the negligence of the owner, tenant, employee or agents that is unrelated to unlawful entry at the site of the alarm. Officers should clearly document the circumstances surrounding false alarm activations in their report.

#