



## **OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF**

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# **NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Incident: Verified Alarm Response Program

The Lincoln County Sheriff's Office is implementing the Verified Alarm Response Program effective February 1, 2011. This program will allow for an improved level of service to the citizens of Lincoln County. The Verified Alarm Response Program (VAR program) will eliminate the service time required for deputies to respond to false alarms and improve utilization of their time on other needed services. The VAR Program only applies to those alarm users who reside in Lincoln County outside of the city limits of Lincoln City, Newport, Toledo, and Siletz. Alarm users in those cities receive alarm response service from their respective police departments.

VAR has been successfully implemented in more than 600 communities in the United States and Canada for at least five years according to research. Like most law enforcement agencies across the United States, the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office has been responding to unverified alarms. This has resulted in deputy service time being depleted on false alarms. Sheriff's Office studies have shown that over 97.5% of Lincoln County Sheriff's Office alarm calls are false resulting in 141 hours of lost deputy service time per year. The alarms that were determined to be valid were not related to a criminal act or emergency. This number has held for many years and continues to this day.

According to Sheriff Dotson, this program already in use by other agencies around the nation and in Oregon, such as the Salem Police Department, Marion County Sheriff's Office, and the Eugene Police Department, represents a more responsible utilization of law enforcement resources.

Manually-activated silent panic, duress, and hold-up alarms will not require verification and will continue to receive the high priority response they have in the past. Other alarms, such as residential and business silent and audible burglary alarms will require verification that a crime has occurred or an emergency exists before a deputy will respond.

When an alarm activation occurs, the alarm company servicing the alarm activation contacts the persons or organizations listed on the contact list provided to the alarm company by the alarm user. One of the listed contacts is typically the Sheriff's Office so that deputies can respond to the alarm. Under the VAR Program Sheriff's Office dispatch will ask if the alarm has been verified. If the alarm has not yet been verified a screen will still be generated so that deputies

will be informed via silent dispatch of the alarm, but will likely not respond unless the verification process determines a crime occurred or an emergency exists. If the verification process determines the alarm is false the screen will be closed.

Alarm users can arrange to have a verification plan through their alarm company such as by remote audio/video surveillance confirmation by the alarm company, responding private security officer, confirmation from a witness or neighbor, or other confirmation independent of the alarm signal. The Lincoln County Sheriff's Office discourages response to alarms for verification by anyone not appropriately trained and equipped for the potential encounter with a burglar, and encourages alarm permit holders to work with their alarm company or a private security company to facilitate verification.

"We discourage citizens from investigating an alarm activation," stated Sheriff Dotson. Examples of citizen verification would include hearing an alarm, going to a window and observing evidence of a break-in, or driving past a business or residence and hearing an alarm and observing suspicious activity or other evidence of a break-in. In both instances a call to police would be appreciated and receive a police response.

Sheriff Dotson advises that his office obviously cannot dictate how a private business operates. However, Dotson offered that one possible business arrangement between the alarm customer and their alarm vendor would be for the vendor to contract with a private security business and negotiate a cost for an alarm response. The customer would be billed for the response by the alarm vendor. Dotson stated that with this particular arrangement, a residence with a defective alarm would be quickly identified and the owner would bear the cost of the responses rather than the taxpayers.

"While this may be viewed by some as a reduction in patrol services, it is more of an adjustment in the manner in which law enforcement services are provided. While the Sheriff's Office has lost three patrol deputy positions in the past two years due to county revenue reductions, this VAR program is viewed as a more effective use of deputy time and availability to respond to actual crimes and not false alarms," stated Dotson.

For more information on the Verified Alarm Response Program visit the Sheriff's website at [www.lincolncountysheriff.net](http://www.lincolncountysheriff.net)