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THE LAW ENFORCEMENT MAGAZINE



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LAW ENFORCEMENT Calls Security Industry to Duty



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Thanks to the implementation of best practices and advances in technology, recent years have seen reductions in false alarm dispatches that are helping bolster the relationship between law enforcement and the security industry. Yet there remains much to be done to further strengthen and grow the partnership. The 2011 Law Enforcement Security Industry Study serves as a report card for both sides.

By Scott Goldfine

Politics, budgets, profits and losses, and other private/public sector issues aside, law enforcement and the electronic security industry share a common mission: serving in the best interests of public safety. And both contingencies agree almost universally they can more effectively accomplish that objective by combining their efforts. The 2011 Law Enforcement Security Industry Study cuts through the noise to reveal the current state of this critical relationship.

This research updates the landmark studies *SECURITY SALES & INTEGRATION* and *Police* magazines first conducted in 2003 and again in 2006. As then, the results are aimed at truly understanding law enforcement's perceptions and expectations of the security industry, and how both sides can best work together in partnership to minimize false dis-

patches, deter crime and make more apprehensions. Although significant progress has been made in the five years since the last study, this relationship requires ongoing attention and nurturing to keep it strong.

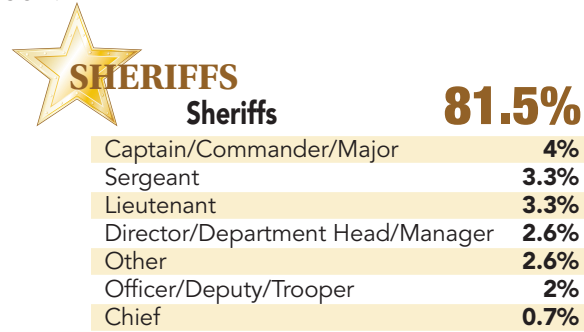
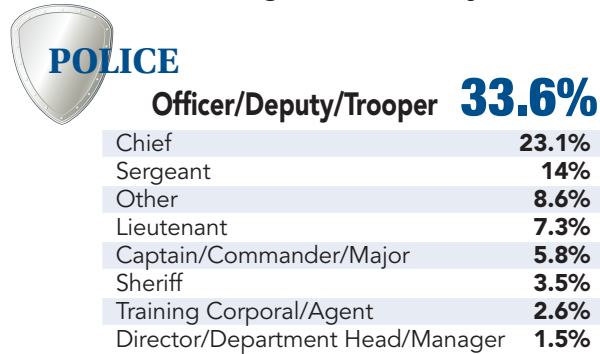
In an outgrowth of the previous research, new questions have been incorporated that focus on maximizing the positive aspects and capabilities of more reliable burglar alarms, video surveillance and access control systems to better support law enforcement. Nearly 1,200 police participated in the study, which for the first time also includes sheriffs (150 additional respondents) for a margin of error of approximately +2.9 percent. And in the interest of presenting an even more comprehensive vantage point, a further enhancement is the inclusion of questions posed to some 350 owners/operators of security systems installation and/or monitoring companies.

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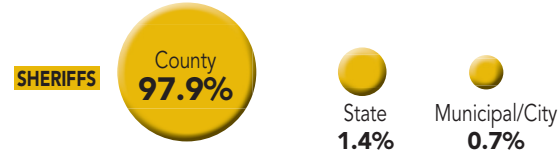
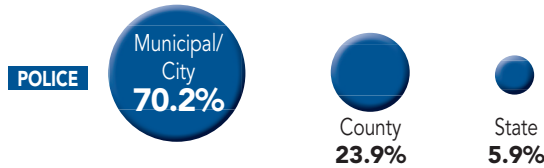
GENERAL QUESTIONS

Which of the following best describes your classification?



While the single largest group of respondents on the police side was frontline personnel, the majority were supervisory positions (including nearly a fourth being chiefs). More than four of five on the sheriff side were frontline posts.

Which of the following best describes your agency?



Just above seven in 10 police respondents serve cities or municipalities, with close to a quarter doing duty for counties and a handful being with state agencies. Overwhelmingly, sheriffs serve and collect their paychecks from counties.

What is your general perception of the electronic security/burglar alarm industry?

	POLICE	SHERIFFS
Provides useful crime deterrents, but making little headway on false alarms	48.3%	45.1%
Provides useful crime deterrents, making gains on the false alarm issue	31.1%	33.8%
A valued partner in deterring/preventing burglary	13.5%	17.6%
Of little or no value to law enforcement	7.1%	3.5%

While sheriff responses came out slightly more favorably than those of police, in excess of 90 percent of law enforcement believe the electronic security/alarm industry provides useful or valuable crime deterrence. However, the largest faction see little progress in false alarm reduction.

In your city, how do you view the relationship between law enforcement and electronic security companies?

	POLICE	SHERIFFS
Improving as security technology improves	49.4%	56.3%
Strained because of too many needless alarm dispatches	33.9%	31.7%
Strong cooperation between both sectors	9.6%	9.2%
Nonexistent; we do our best to ignore them	7.1%	2.8%

Approximately half of law enforcement are encouraged by technology's capacity to strengthen its relationship with security and alarm companies. Yet around a third says unnecessary dispatches strain relations. In the 2006 study, nearly a fourth selected "nonexistent," so that is major progress.

REDUCING FALSE DISPATCHES

Regarding an alarm ordinance ...

	POLICE	SHERIFFS
We do not have an alarm ordinance	34.8%	67.2%
We have an alarm ordinance that has been updated within the past five years	31.4%	14.9%
We have an alarm ordinance, but it has not been updated in five years or more	29.7%	13.3%
We are currently developing a new ordinance	2.5%	3.9%
We plan to update our ordinance in the near future	1.6%	1.6%

The results of this question came almost completely opposite. Reading through the lines a bit indicates more attention needs to be given to alarm ordinances as fewer than a third of police have one in place that is less than five years old. Likewise, two-thirds of sheriffs have no such ordinance in place.

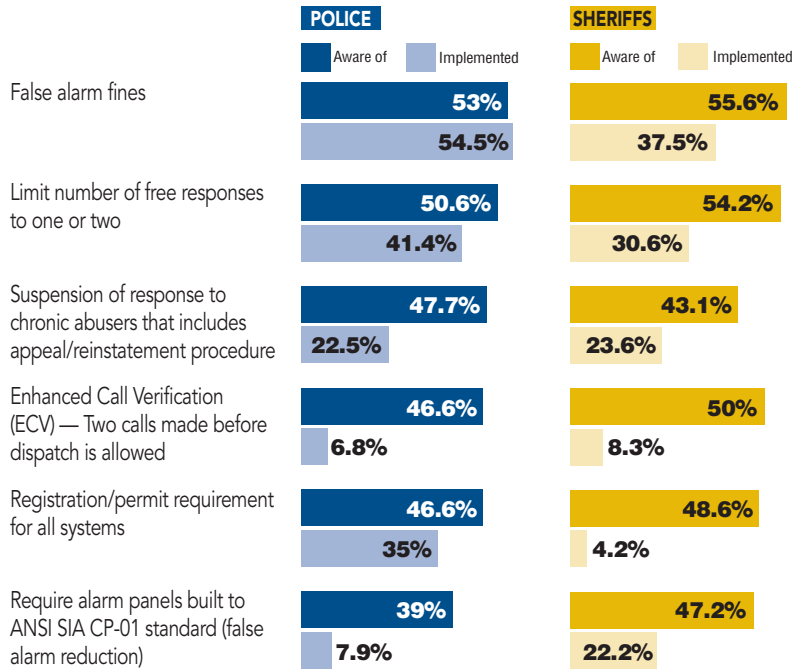
If you have a false alarm ordinance, how strictly do you believe that it is enforced?

	POLICE	SHERIFFS
Strict enforcement, very few or no exceptions allowed	37.8%	33.4%
Moderate enforcement, users selectively let off with no citation	31.6%	33.3%
Lax enforcement	30.6%	33.3%

Whether viewed up and down or sideways, this one came out very evenly for strict, moderate and lax enforcement of alarm ordinances. Even so, the hardline approach of making few to no exceptions for violators is the most common practice.

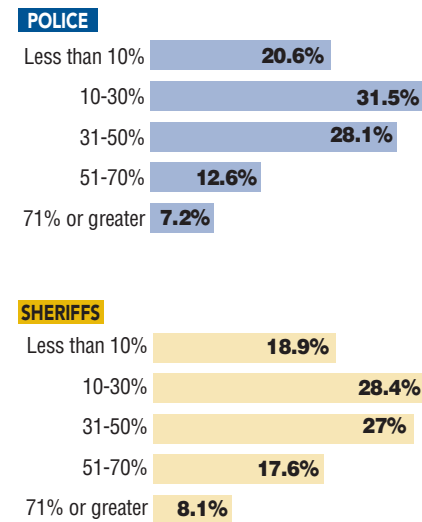
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The alarm industry in conjunction with law enforcement has developed a national model ordinance with several recommended best practices. Please indicate if you are aware of and/or have implemented each element in your jurisdiction:



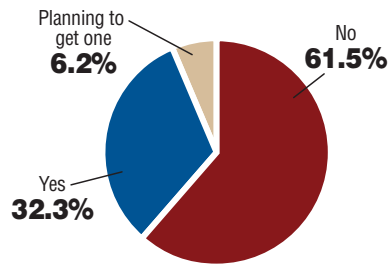
In general, the adoption rate of recommended best practices is substantially higher for police than sheriffs. However, in some cases the awareness level is actually higher among sheriffs. Approximately half of all respondents are at least aware of all six elements. Implementing false alarm fines rose 17 percentage points on the police side since the 2006 survey.

If you passed or amended an alarm ordinance, at what level of reduction in requests for dispatch to alarm calls would you consider it to be successful — assuming it has been in place and enforced for at least 12 months?

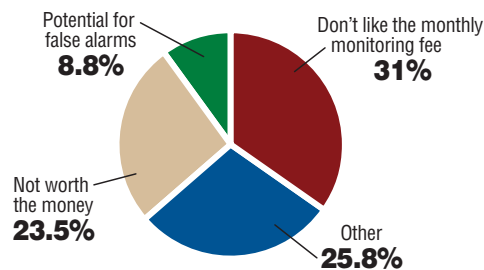


Interestingly while sheriffs are generally more pro-security industry than police, they have higher expectations for dispatch reductions as the result of an alarm ordinance (25.7 percent vs. 19.8 percent for 51 percent or greater).

Do you personally have an electronic security system in your home?



If you do NOT personally have an electronic security system, what is the main reason?



Almost one in four police have or intend to get an electronic security system installed in their home. Those saying they did not have one fell 12 percentage points from 2006. Money was a much bigger reason for not having a system than false alarms. This question was only asked of the police group.

Do you believe that electronic security systems prevent or reduce property loss?

	POLICE	SHERIFFS
Yes, I recommend them, but also suggest proper locking hardware and lighting for maximum effectiveness	72.9%	80.5%
No, I believe good physical security (locks, lighting) alone is quite sufficient	13%	7.3%
Yes, I strongly recommend burglar alarm systems to everyone in my community	7.3%	9.8%
No, I believe burglar alarms are a nuisance	3.6%	1.6%
Yes, I recommend them, but only when someone has been burglarized before	3.2%	0.8%

About 90 percent (up from 84 percent in 2006) of law enforcement believe electronic security systems prevent or reduce property loss. The majority of both police and sheriffs recommend a holistic approach that includes not only electronic devices but also deterrents such as locks and lighting.

Regarding false alarms and alarm industry dispatch reduction efforts ...

	POLICE	SHERIFFS
It does not seem to be getting better or worse	43.4%	47.5%
We're seeing the effort in alarm dispatch reduction, but more needs to be done	22.1%	20.3%
We see little to no improvement in reducing alarm dispatches	21.6%	18.6%
We're seeing alarm dispatches going down	12.9%	13.6%

While far from a landslide, the majority of law enforcement are seeing some positive traction in alarm dispatch reductions. The responses were remarkably similar for police and sheriffs. Clearly, there is much room for improvement and a need for further collaboration and cooperation.

VIDEO INTRUSION ALARMS

Do you believe that video alarm technology helps law enforcement?

	POLICE	SHERIFFS
Yes, video of the crime helps with identifying suspects after the fact	57.5%	63.3%
Definitely, we make more arrests if crimes are immediately observed/dispatched	32.5%	30%
Marginally, reviewing old video after the fact has not been very useful	8.2%	6.7%
Not really, video technology has not benefited law enforcement	1.8%	0%

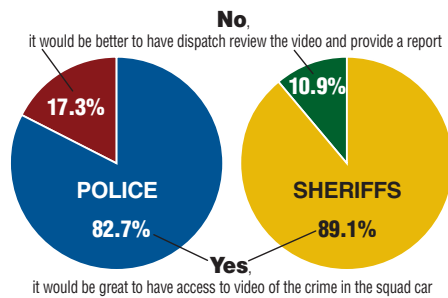
By a rather convincing tally, law enforcement are enamored with the use of video or CCTV as a crime-fighting tool. Police and sheriffs alike are particularly interested in the technology's ability to assist in identifying suspects and contributing to more apprehensions.

Would access to live video by 911 dispatch operators in a home/business (once an alarm event has occurred) strengthen the public/private sector partnership and help prevent crime?

	POLICE	SHERIFFS
Possibly, immediate access to the video of the crime could only help	49.9%	45%
Absolutely, this would enhance situational awareness and alarm response	41.8%	50%
Marginally, live video feeds are too cumbersome to be helpful in the field	6.6%	3.3%
Not really, video technology is overhyped and causes more problems than it solves	1.7%	1.7%

Almost without exception, police and sheriffs believe alarm event-triggered video surveillance fed to emergency response operators would be beneficial to their jurisdictions. These results indicate municipal surveillance systems and other use of video in law enforcement could see exponential growth.

Would it be useful if video of a crime in progress was actually pushed out to the squad car for immediate review by the responding officer?



The vast majority of law enforcement, especially sheriffs, desire the capability of viewing surveillance video in their patrol vehicles. The interest level, advancing technology and lower price points are helping make this a reality for select agencies.

Would you support a higher priority response to an alarm where video has confirmed a probable crime in progress than you would for a traditional alarm?

	Police	Sheriffs
Absolutely, we put more effort into response when we are confident there is a crime in progress	79.6%	79.9%
Possibly, depending upon the current workload	17.3%	18.5%
Possibly, depends upon whether the alarm was a residential or commercial property	2.5%	0.8%
Not really, burglaries are not high priority crimes	0.6%	0.8%

With nearly identical percentages, approximately four in five police and sheriffs say video verification of intrusion alarms would convince them to endorse placing a higher priority on response. Law enforcement answered "absolutely" just 67 percent to a similar question contained in the 2006 survey.

Do you believe more arrests could be made responding to video intrusion alarms that verify a crime in progress rather than traditional alarm systems?

	POLICE	SHERIFFS
Absolutely, we already make more arrests when responding to eyewitness calls	48.6%	47.5%
Probably, video has already proven useful in fighting crime	45.7%	48.3%
Possibly, but video has not really proven to be effective in my experience	4.5%	4.2%
Not really, all intrusion alarms are the same	1.2%	0%

Almost unanimously, law enforcement advocate using video surveillance to extend the power of security technology from a reactive deterrent to a proactive crime-fighting tool that enables more apprehensions. Nearly half the respondents say they are already making more arrests thanks to video.

Do you believe that new and improved types of electronic security systems, such as video surveillance and access control, offer benefits to law enforcement that can strengthen the public/private partnership for crime prevention?

	POLICE	SHERIFFS
Yes, but technology cannot substitute for manpower; we need both	49.5%	46%
Absolutely, they can help enhance manpower and maximize resources in crime prevention	32.3%	45.1%
Possibly, but they are overhyped by some companies that promise too much	16.3%	7.1%
It doesn't matter because there is no money to buy them	1.4%	1.8%
No, they will only create new problems and be a negative influence in crime prevention	0.5%	0%

As indicated elsewhere in the study, law enforcement are keen on the potential of innovative electronic security systems, such as video and access control, to help them do their jobs and curtail criminal activity. By more than a 2-1 margin compared to sheriffs, police say some products are overhyped.

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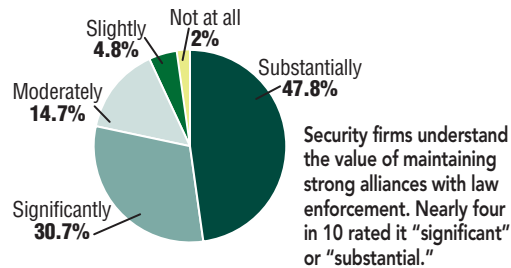
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Security Companies Weigh in on Building Relationships With Law Enforcement

To what extent do you believe that strong relationships with law enforcement increase the value of your company/services?



If you answered "Substantially," "Significantly" or "Moderately" to the preceding question, rank the following statements (1-4, 4 being highest)

Better relationships mean better response and greater value to our customers	3.2
Better relationships mean being more of an active participant in fighting crime	2.77
Better relationships mean more leads and support from law enforcement	2.41
Better relationships mean fewer restrictions on alarm businesses	2.08

By a handy margin, security companies cite the ability to deliver premium value to customers as the leading benefit of building strong relationships with responding law enforcement agencies. Actively assisting in the war on crime was the second most popular choice.

In general, relationships between security dealers/integrators and law enforcement are ...

Making progress	54.2%
Same issues and differences as always	27.5%
Stronger than ever before	7.2%
Becoming more strained than ever	6.8%
Practically nonexistent	4.4%

By more than a 2-1 margin, most security companies believe the industry's relationships with law enforcement are either making progress or stronger than ever before. However, about a third see little change and almost 7 percent report things are getting worse.

Regarding building a relationship with law enforcement, my company has ...

Focused on a single issue — false alarm reduction	30.8%
Already reduced false alarms and need a new positive message	26.3%
Working with law enforcement to make more arrests	23.1%
Supported industry groups to work with law enforcement, including the Security Industry Alarm Coalition (SIAC)	19.8%

These answers demonstrate several proactive ways security companies are taking steps to strengthen their partnerships with law enforcement. Almost half say they have conquered the false alarm issue and/or are seeking to work more closely with police and sheriffs to generate more apprehensions.

Rank the relative importance of the following activities to improve relations with law enforcement (1-7, 7 being highest)

Effectively minimizing false alarm dispatches	5.9
Reaching out to befriend police chiefs, alarm coordinators, etc.	4.82
Participating in educational efforts	4.72
Working with law enforcement to make more apprehensions	4.15
Participating in policing events/activities	3.88
Donating generously to police funds	2.96
Nothing	1.79

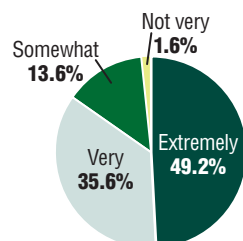
Minimizing false alarm dispatches was far and away the most essential measure selected by security company owners and operators to foster strong relations with law enforcement. Proactively reaching out to officials and helping educate them and citizens about security systems also registered high on security firms' lists.

Once false alarms have been reduced to reasonable levels, what do you believe is the next step needed to strengthen relationships with law enforcement?

Become more involved in community policing activities	48%
Working together to make more arrests	29.4%
Become more involved in local politics	10.9%
Generous donations to police funds	1.2%
Other	10.5%

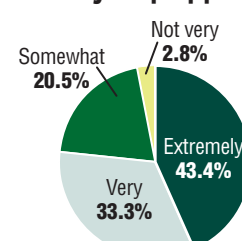
If not already doing so, security companies are standing by ready, willing and able to answer the call of duty. Nearly four in five respondents envision their businesses becoming more involved in community policing activities and/or contributing to more arrests.

How important to YOU is it that electronic security solutions actually help apprehend criminals?



Across the board, it is important to owners and operators of security firms that their company's systems help keep the public safer. About 85 percent answered "extremely" or "very."

How important do you believe it is to LAW ENFORCEMENT that electronic security solutions actually help apprehend criminals?



Security companies generally believe law enforcement places importance on their systems leading to more arrests. However, as the graph to the far left shows, respondents believe the intention is stronger among security providers themselves.