



## Resolution of the False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA) Regarding Duress/Hostage Codes

**Explanation:** The duress and hostage code ("Duress Code") is a service offered by many alarm companies allowing an alarm user to give the appearance of turning off an alarm system by entering a special code in the system's keypad or a remote control device. In fact, rather than turning off the system, a signal is sent to the alarm company monitoring center indicating that the alarm user is being held hostage by an intruder. The alarm company then reports to the law enforcement agency that they have received a silent alarm indicating a crime in progress and possibly a hostage situation.

While on the surface this service may appear to be a good benefit for the consumer, in reality its negative attributes seem to outweigh its positive attributes. At least one national company has determined that the duress feature results in false alarms at a rate many times that of audible alarms. Alarm system users can easily get their Duress Code confused with their regular code. When the Duress Code is entered, the user believes he has turned the system off, not aware that armed law enforcement personnel may be responding to the signal in an escalated emergency mode. This creates an undesirable, dangerous situation for both the alarm user and the law enforcement personnel.

The odds of the alarm user ever encountering a situation in which the Duress Code is necessary are very remote, particularly in a residential environment. In that rare situation in which a Duress Code would be of use, the alarm user will need to remember a three or four digit code that he probably had no reason to think about since his alarm system was installed, possibly years before. This, too, creates a potential greater danger to the alarm user. Law enforcement recommends using the 911 system in an emergency situation to obtain the fastest possible response.

**WHEREAS**, the FARA Board of Directors believes, for the reasons stated in the explanation above, that the negative attributes of the Duress Code outweigh its positive attributes; and

**WHEREAS**, one of the objectives of FARA is to reduce unnecessary false alarms;

**NOW THEREFORE**; be it resolved that the FARA Board of Directors encourages alarm companies to adopt policies which eliminate the offering of Duress Codes or which severely limit Duress Code offerings to alarm users who can demonstrate an extreme need for a Duress Code.

Passed by unanimous consent of the undersigned Board of Directors of FARA:

Norma C. Beaubien, President  
W. Patrick Kenny, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
W. Rex Bell, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
Shanna Werner, Secretary  
Richard L. Moore, Treasurer  
Denise Shaw, At-Large Director  
Amy Lobdell, At-Large Director  
Michele Johnson, At-Large Director  
Jennifer Gehring, Associate Director