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## **FARA TAKES POSITION ON DURESS/HOSTAGE ALARMS**

**Rockville, MD.** The Board of Directors of the False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA) recently signed a resolution that encourages alarm companies to adopt policies, which eliminate, or severely limit, the offering of duress codes, except in extreme situations.

The FARA Board and at least one national alarm company all agree that the duress feature results in false alarms at a rate many times that of audible alarms. The duress feature allows 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. Entering this special code causes a signal to be sent to the monitoring center indicating that the alarm user is being held hostage by an intruder. Because the activation is silent, the alarm user, who accidentally activates the feature, usually does not even know that it has been activated. Meanwhile, the monitoring center informs law enforcement that a silent alarm has been received indicating a crime in progress and possibly a hostage situation. This creates a dangerous situation for both the alarm user and law enforcement personnel.

The odds of an alarm user ever encountering a situation in which the duress code is necessary are very remote, particularly in a residential environment. In support of FARA's resolution, Brad Shipp, Executive Director of the National Burglar and Fire Alarm Association said, "Duress codes should not be offered as a standard feature on systems. In the rare cases where duress codes may be required for particular customers, all users should be thoroughly trained on the proper use and the impact of a false duress alarm before the feature is activated."

"Generally speaking, if a feature is offered in an alarm system, then consumers want it, whether or not it turns out to be beneficial. FARA is simply saying that it hopes alarm companies will voluntarily stop offering the duress feature, particularly to residential alarm users, based on the large number of false alarms generated by that feature." said FARA President Norma Beaubien. "The only national company that FARA is aware of that does not offer the duress feature is Brink's Home Security, Inc. FARA applauds Brink's for its proactive approach in dealing with a specific practice that is known to cause false alarms."

*The False Alarm Reduction Association, established in 1997, is an organization of public safety false alarm reduction professionals, whose main mission is to provide a forum for the exchange of information on successful false alarm reduction programs, to serve as a clearinghouse for agencies seeking to reduce false alarms and to foster an environment of cooperation among law enforcement, the alarm industry and the alarm user.*

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