

# Manhattan Beach

## Uses FALSE to Address Alarm Problem

**P**olice departments across the United States are facing the problem of false alarms. According to a 1998 study, there are approximately 38 million alarm activations annually nationwide, resulting in an estimated annual cost of \$1.5 billion. Of these activations, 94 to 98 percent are false alarms, according to a report published by the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing.

Like the rest of the country, the City of Manhattan Beach has struggled with this problem. In 2003, 99.9 percent (2,516) of all alarm responses were to false alarms. That amounts to almost seven responses a day to false alarms. The Police Department estimates more than 1,000 officer hours a year are spent responding to false alarms, costing the city approximately \$160,000.

Moreover, the increase in residential construction and remodeling taking place in Manhattan Beach is adding to the city's alarm system inventory. City staff feared an increasing number of false alarm responses as the number of alarms grew. This influx of new homes combined with a large turnover in owners caused the city's false alarm records to become outdated quickly. Therefore, staff was having dif-

ficulty tracking who was responsible for individual alarm systems. When alarm renewal notices were sent out every other year, only about 50 percent were returned.

False alarms were costing Manhattan Beach money as well as diverting important resources from other duties. The problem looked like it might get worse, so the city took action to reduce the number of false alarms.

### Increasing Security Efficiency

The False Alarm Reduction Program was presented to the city council and the public in 2004. The program proactively addresses the growing problem of false alarms by changing the alarm permit

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The City of Manhattan Beach won an Award for Excellence in the Public Safety category of the 2005 California Cities Helen Putnam Award for Excellence program. For more information, visit [www.cacities.org](http://www.cacities.org).

renewal process and implementing a false alarm fee schedule. A unique element of the program is False Alarms Lessen Security Efficiency (FALSE), an "alarm school" for repeat offenders.

### Alarm Permit Renewal Process

To keep better records on the alarms within Manhattan Beach, the city changed the alarm permit renewal requirement from a biannual to annual basis. Any individual or business with an alarm system in the city must have an alarm system permit. The permits are valid for one calendar year and must be renewed every Jan. 1 regardless of when the permit was first obtained.

### False Alarm Fee Schedule

The city introduced a false alarm fee schedule to encourage a reduction in false alarms and recoup the costs associated with false alarm responses. The schedule allows alarm system owners two false burglary alarms in a calendar year. This allows alarm owners time to fix any problems with their alarm system. However, the third false alarm results in a fine of \$190, and subsequent false alarms receive increasing fines of up to \$580. Ultimately, after six false alarms in a calendar year, police response is suspended.

### FALSE Alarm School

The City of Manhattan Beach implemented an alarm school to educate alarm users on how to prevent false alarms. Much like traffic school for speeders, the alarm school offers those people who have received a third false alarm citation the chance to take a course in lieu of paying the \$190 fee.

This innovative education program is a two-hour course offered on a bi-monthly basis and presented by a member of the Manhattan Beach Police Department and an alarm association representative. The course teaches the public about the negative effects of false alarms, such as costs to the city and the complacency and danger created by false alarms. This is followed by demonstrations of equipment maintenance and an explanation of common causes of false alarms. Finally, the course covers the Police Department response proce-

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## J O B O P P O R T U N I T I E S

### DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, Pico Rivera, CA



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### Finance Director, Pleasanton, CA

One of Northern California's premier residential and business communities, Pleasanton (population 65,000) is well regarded as an attractive and friendly city with a strong heritage, active and involved residents, a wide variety of services, well planned business areas, a historic downtown and well cared for homes in family oriented neighborhoods. The City Manager is seeking a seasoned financial management professional who will set the tone and direction of the Department for the next several years. The Finance Director will take the lead on the development of the City's budget. The new Director should see his/her role as supporting the overall efforts of the City Council and organization and subscribe to a service model. The operating departments in the City have come to rely upon the current Director for assistance dealing with internal financial issues as well as developing strategies to support their efforts in meeting City Council goals. A Bachelor's Degree in Finance, Accounting, Business or a related field is required. A Master's Degree is desired. Experience in a municipal setting is preferred. The City has a pay for performance system for all managers, and the control point for the position is \$11,498/month, reviewed annually. If you are interested in this outstanding opportunity we would prefer that you submit your resume to Bob Murray and Associates via e-mail. [apply@bobmurrayassoc.com](mailto:apply@bobmurrayassoc.com). If you would like to submit a hard copy of your resume you may send it to **Bob Murray, Bob Murray & Associates**, 1677 Eureka Road, Suite 202, Roseville, CA 95661 or fax to (916) 784-1985. Filing deadline: October 30, 2005. A detailed brochure is available.

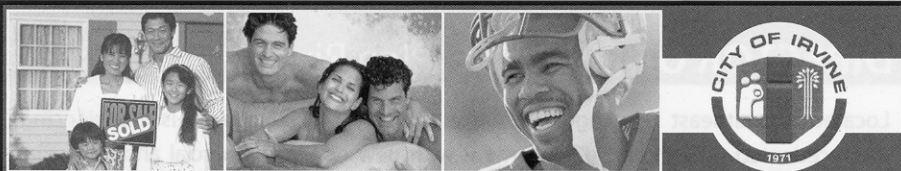


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The course teaches the public about the negative effects of false alarms, such as costs to the city and the complacency and danger created by false alarms.

dures and the new False Alarm Reduction Program. The question and answer dialogue allows the public to gain a better understanding of the program and reasons behind it. Upon completion of the course, participants receive a certificate of achievement and a \$190 voucher to pay for a false alarm fee.

J O B O P P O R T U N I T I E S



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**Reducing Alarms and Costs**

The False Alarm Reduction Program is a great success. The number of false alarms is decreasing, revenue is increasing and the public has responded favorably. False alarms have dropped 30 percent each month compared to previous years. The city estimates this decrease will save Manhattan Beach approximately \$48,000 annually. Moreover, the reduction means more time that safety officers are available to respond to other emergency calls.

FALSE began with a class of 11 participants. The feedback about the course was very positive; one member of class even rated the course as excellent.

It is the educational component of this program that makes it so effective and well received by the community. Rather than simply levying fines against businesses and residents, the city has taken proactive steps to educate them about the costs of false alarms and how to prevent them from occurring.

The Manhattan Beach False Alarm Reduction Program sets a standard for replication in other areas. By using this community-oriented program as a template, other cities can successfully reduce false alarms while increasing revenue and providing education to the community. Other departments can easily adapt a fee system and tailor the alarm school to their needs. Visit [www.mb.info](http://www.mb.info) for more information.

Contact: Neal Ogilby; crime prevention/community relations officer, Manhattan Beach Police Department; phone: (310) 345-1501; e-mail: <nogilby@citymb.info>. ■

**Director of Employment and Social Services**

Yolo County, California

Yolo County, with a population of over 180,000, is located in Northern California just west of the State Capitol, the City of Sacramento. The County is seeking a Director for its Department of Employment and Social Services which is responsible for all public assistance, adult and child welfare services, employment training and related programs. The Department has a budget of \$64 million, with 362 budgeted positions. The County is seeking a Director who is a proven leader and manager, and is knowledgeable about the functions of a social services, employment, and training agency in a California setting. Graduation from an accredited four-year college or university, and five years of experience in social services including three years at the management or supervisory level is required. An equivalent combination of education and experience is acceptable. The salary depends upon the candidate's qualifications and experience. There is an excellent benefits package. Apply on line at [www.ralphandersen.com](http://www.ralphandersen.com) by **October 7, 2005**. Confidential inquiries are welcomed. Please contact Marsha Noble at (310) 578-9100 or email at [marsha@ralphandersen.com](mailto:marsha@ralphandersen.com).



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