

**TAMPA POLICE DEPARTMENT
FALSE ALARMS
AUDIT 18-10
MAY 16, 2018**



CITY OF TAMPA

Bob Buckhorn, Mayor

Internal Audit Department

Christine Glover, Internal Audit Director

May 16, 2018

Honorable Bob Buckhorn
Mayor, City of Tampa
1 City Hall Plaza
Tampa, Florida

RE: TPD False Alarms, Audit 18-10

Dear Mayor Buckhorn:

Attached is the Internal Audit Department's report on TPD False Alarms.

We thank the management and staff of Tampa Police Department for their cooperation and assistance during this audit.

Sincerely,

/s/ Christine Glover

Christine Glover
Internal Audit Director

cc: Dennis Rogero, Chief of Staff
Sonya Little, Chief Financial Officer
Ernest Mueller, Chief Assistant City Attorney
Brian Dugan, Police Chief

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/s/ Stephen Mhere

Auditor

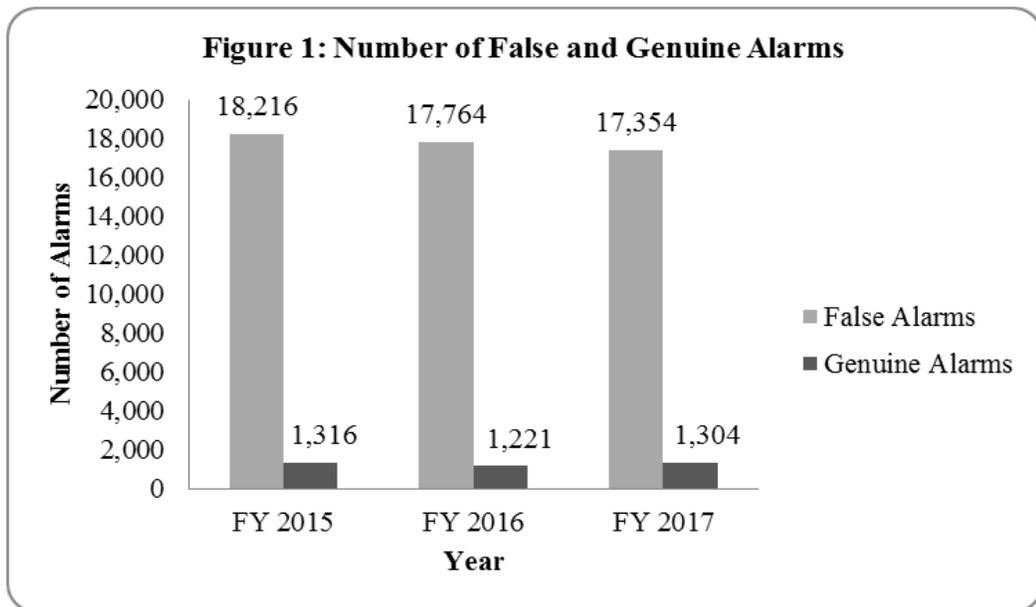
/s/ Christine Glover

Audit Director

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BACKGROUND

Tampa Police Department (TPD)'s Emergency Communications Center received an annual average of 19,000 intrusion and/or burglar alarms between fiscal years (FY) 2015 and 2017. Every time such an alarm came in, TPD responded by dispatching at least one officer to the incident location. Unfortunately, there were no real emergencies for a vast majority of these incidents – the alarms turned out to be false. For each of the three years we reviewed, approximately 93% of the intrusion/burglar alarms TPD responded to were false. Figure 1 below shows the relative numbers of false and genuine alarms that TPD responded to from FY 2015 through FY 2017.



Source: Auditor adaptation of CAD/RMS¹ system data provided by City of Tampa's Technology and Innovation Department.

Nationwide 95 to 98% of all intrusion/burglar alarms are false. These alarms are a major drawback to police efforts in the fight against crime. Expense-conscious police departments recognize that alarms have a cost. According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, false alarms:

“...consume officer time, waste fuel, increase the risk of accidents, cause wear and tear on equipment, reduce police service to areas with a greater need for officer presence, and over time erode officer caution.”

¹ TPD uses Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) and Records Management System (RMS) to capture and store intrusion/burglar alarm and crime records.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

This audit was conducted in accordance with the Internal Audit Department's FY 2018 Audit Agenda. The objective of the audit was to determine if internal controls related to false intrusion and burglar alarms are sufficient to provide reasonable assurance of compliance with the relevant city ordinance.

STATEMENT OF SCOPE

The audit covered the three-year period from FY 2015 through FY 2017. Our scope included TPD, Technology & Innovation (T&I), and Revenue and Finance (R&F) Department operations and processes related to false intrusion/burglar alarms.

STATEMENT OF METHODOLOGY

We reviewed internal controls relevant to false alarms including the false alarms ordinance and the relevant Council Resolution. We also reviewed TPD's standard operating procedures guiding the handling of, and response to, alarm calls. Further, we reviewed R&F's workflow processes for false alarm billing and emergency dispatch records, and evaluated information relating to systems TPD uses for capturing alarm data.

We surveyed false alarm ordinances from other cities and counties around the United States in order to identify best practices relating to the handling of false intrusion/burglar alarms. We compared those best practice standards with City of Tampa's own practices. The results of that comparison were provided to management in both TPD and R&F for their consideration.

We conducted interviews with, and/or surveyed, management and staff in TPD, its Emergency Communications Center, R&F, as well as T&I.

STATEMENT OF AUDITING STANDARDS

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

AUDIT CONCLUSION

Based upon the test work performed, we conclude that internal controls related to false intrusion and burglar alarms are sufficient to provide reasonable assurance of compliance with the relevant city ordinance.