

THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 1993

Security salesmen sound alarm

■ They may be alarming to some, but security systems are a necessary part of doing business today. Area security experts discuss their trade.

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER



The cost of protecting a business can be alarming if it's done on the cheap. Not protecting a business with an alarm system can do it in.

"Forty percent of companies suffering a major fire lose go out of business despite having insurance," said Mark McAlpine, a sales representative with Honeywell Alarm Systems, at a recent business crime watch seminar in Farmington Hills.

And that's just for losses from fire. Some companies need a monitor and alarm for temperature, to safeguard valuable computers or other equipment. Another big concern of most businesses is protection from theft.

Andy Ditzhazy, a former police officer who sells commercial alarm systems for Guardian Security Services in Southfield, said various kinds of protection can help to some degree. Simply putting up a sticker on the outside of a building will deter about 20 percent of potential burglars, he said.

"These are usually basically honest people who come under stress," Ditzhazy said.

Another 20 percent will lose interest in breaking into a business if they can see an alarm control panel through a window, which tells them that there is, in fact, a security system.

That leaves 60 percent of potential thieves, who are more professional about their task, he said.

That's where a security alarm system must deliver. But before a business goes out and invests in a good system, it should think about a large potential cost: false alarms.



SHARON ALLEN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

On guard: Sharon Allen, a Novi resident, is on the job at Guardian Alarm Company in Southfield.

Farmington Hills Police Sgt. Paul Caven said less than 1 percent of alarms involve actual criminal activity. The department responds to about 4,000 alarms a year as if they were the real thing. That accounts for 13 percent of police responses.

"That's a burden on us, and it's a burden on the taxpayers," Caven said.

Caven blamed "trunk-slammers," alarm system companies that sell systems that can be easily set off or don't work, for much of the problem. These companies will often subcontract part of their operation, such as a central alarm station, and won't follow up with service without a separate contract or arrangement.

Part of the cost of using an unreliable alarm system is one imposed by police. Farmington Hills Police issue a warning, but charge no fee on the first false alarm for a given year. The second costs \$20, the third costs \$40, and each false alarm thereafter costs \$100.

"It can get pretty expensive," Caven said.

There is another good reason to make sure an alarm system is functioning properly and police know who is in the building, Ditzhazy said. A corporate vice president, working late one night, was accidentally shot by police responding to an alarm.

Ditzhazy praised the Farmington Hills Police for their quick response, but added that a good alarm system is necessary for police to respond quickly and if not catch the criminal at the time, then to find the evidence needed to solve the case.

"There is a two-minute window for evidence," he said. "After that, the crime becomes much harder to solve."

A reputable alarm system should be approved by Underwriters Laboratories, which will also lower the insurance premium for a business with an alarm, he said.

Anyone who needs more information on alarm systems should call the Farmington Hills Police crime prevention unit at 473-3640.

FARMINGTON/FARMINGTON HILLS NEIGHBORHOODS

Uptown Board named

A board of directors and officers were elected by members of the Uptown Farmington Business Association. Ten members will serve.

Elected for two-year terms were Charles Duquet (Duquet's Jewelers), Barbara Flatt (First of America), Perry Hain (Results Advertising), Paul King (King's Garage) and Dr. John Richardson (Plaza Veterinary Hospital).

Continuing on for another year as directors are Ken Barthelette (Yankee Consignment), Dr. Brian Nocella (Nocella Chiropractic), Joan Nusly (Framery One), Mary Toets (Backyard Birds) and Richard Leacock (Iverson's Bakery).

The group elected Barthelette the new president, Toets vice president, and Flatt treasurer. The board meets monthly to plan activities, beautification and membership projects for the Uptown shopping area at Grand River and Orchard Lake Road. Guests and interested persons are invited to attend the meetings. Call Barthelette at 471-0320.

Working overtime

Basketball isn't the only activity that can go into overtime. So can a card game known as euchre.

In a recent euchre tournament sponsored by the Farmington Hills Recreation Division, the team of Roger Garrell and Tim Emmitt needed an overtime round to overcome Randy Schein and Nathan Schiff in the championship round.

Gift certificates donated by local merchants were awarded to the winners and runners-up. Registrations for the March 26 euchre tournament are being accepted. Call 473-9570 for more information.

One lucky youngster

Mark Simpson, a 6-year-old Farmington Hills youngster, was the lucky winner of a new bicycle at the recent Detroit Shrine Circus.

Mark, the son of Robert and Sharon Simpson, is a first-grader at Grandview Elementary School in the Clarenceville District. A bicycle was given away at each of the 37 circus performances.

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