

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
FINAL BILL ANALYSIS**

BILL #:	CS/HB 539	FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION:		
SUBJECT/SHORT TITLE	Alarm Confirmation	114	Y's 0	N's
SPONSOR(S):	Careers & Competition Subcommittee; and Cortes, B.	GOVERNOR'S ACTION:	Approved	
COMPANION BILLS:	CS/SB 876			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

CS/HB 539 passed the House on January 31, 2018, and subsequently passed in the Senate on March 7, 2018.

Florida requires alarm systems to be installed and monitored by licensed alarm system contractors, who are licensed by the Department of Business and Professional Regulation.

Monitored intrusion or burglar alarms trigger a signal alerting an alarm monitoring company of an emergency. Prior to contacting a law enforcement agency for dispatch, an alarm monitoring company must make verification calls to a telephone number associated with the premises to confirm that it is not a false alarm.

Currently, an alarm monitoring company is only permitted to communicate with the premises via telephone call to confirm the alarm.

The bill expands the modes of confirming an alarm signal to include:

- sending a text message, or
- communicating through other electronic means.

The bill requires that attempts by monitoring personnel to confirm an alarm signal be made to the owner, occupant, or an authorized designee, associated with the premises generating the signal, instead of to a telephone number associated with the premises.

The bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state or local government.

The bill was approved by the Governor on March 21, 2018, ch. 2018-51, L.O.F., and will become effective on July 1, 2018.

I. SUBSTANTIVE INFORMATION

A. EFFECT OF CHANGES:

Alarm Systems and Alarm System Contractors

An “alarm system” is defined as “any electrical device, signaling device, or combination of electrical devices used to signal or detect a burglary, fire, robbery, or medical emergency.”¹ It must be installed by a licensed alarm system contractor, subject to regulation and discipline by the Electrical Contractors’ Licensing Board under the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation.²

If an alarm system has central monitoring, the central monitoring station (CMS),³ or other type of alarm monitoring company, must be qualified by a licensed alarm system contractor.⁴

Alarm Verification

A “false alarm” is a false intrusion or burglar alarm signal stemming from causes not connected with an intrusion or burglary, such as user error (e.g. inputting incorrect alarm keypad codes), faulty equipment, poor installation, and bad weather. Between 94 and 98 percent of alarm calls are false. Each false alarm requires approximately 20 minutes of two police officers’ time.⁵

Florida, like most jurisdictions across the country, requires an alarm monitoring company to make a first verification call to the premises with an activated alarm system before contacting a law enforcement agency to ensure the alarm signal is not false, which reduces false alarm calls to law enforcement agencies by 75 percent.⁶ If the owner is not successfully contacted by the CMS during the initial call, Florida requires a second call by the CMS to another phone number associated with the premises, which further reduces false alarm calls to law enforcement agencies by 40 percent.⁷

Florida does not require verification calling if the alarm signal has been generated by an alarm system with audio or visual sensors, which allow independent verification, or if a federal firearms licensee uses the premises for storage of firearms or ammunition.

Effect of the Bill

The bill expands the modes of confirming an alarm signal to include the following forms of communication:

- sending a text message,
- communicating through other electronic means, or
- placing a telephone call (current law).

¹ s. 489.505(1), F.S.

² s. 489.505(2), F.S.

³ Generally, a CMS is a facility that receives signals from alarm systems and at which personnel are in constant attendance. Central Station Alarm Association, ALARM CONFIRMATION, VERIFICATION, AND NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES 4 (2016).

⁴ *Supra* note 2.

⁵ Rana Thompson, FALSE BURGLAR ALARMS 7, 9, 11 (2nd ed. 2011).

⁶ Security Industry Alarm Coalition, *Consumer Guide to ECV*, <http://siacinc.org/docs/Executive%20Overview.pdf> (last visited March 14, 2017).

⁷ It is estimated by the Florida Alarm Association (FAA) that Florida has seen a 40 percent reduction in false alarm calls since passing the second verification call requirement. Most alarm companies use automated dialing technology to make verification calls, which takes seconds to make. Caitlin Doornbos, *After break-in, gun shop owner seeks alarm law change*, Orlando Sentinel, August 26, 2016, available at <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/breaking-news/os-gun-shop-alarm-911-20160819-story.html>.

The bill requires that the attempts by monitoring personnel to confirm an alarm signal be made to the owner, occupant, or his or her authorized designee of the premises generating the signal instead of to a telephone number associated with the premises.

The bill also changes terminology for authenticating an alarm signal from “verification” to “confirmation,” and for who verifies an alarm from “central monitoring station” to “alarm monitoring company.”

The bill has an effective date of July 1, 2018.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.