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**IAFC MEMBER ALERT: FOR IMMEDIATE REVIEW**

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**Burglar Alarms Emitting Smoke  
Causing Concern for Fire Chiefs**

**Fairfax, Va., May 11, 2007...** The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) is concerned about a new burglar alarm system that deploys dense smoke to incapacitate an intruder. The systems are sold on the premise of protecting a property by having a blinding smoke screen quickly fill an area when a burglar alarm is activated. In turn, the blinding smoke may likely activate a smoke/fire alarm; this would precipitate a fire department response.

Chief Alan Perdue, chair of the IAFC Fire and Life Safety Section, brought the new alarms to the attention of the IAFC board of directors, saying that several national franchise businesses are reportedly installing this type of system.

"In essence, a complement of 15 to 20 firefighters is sent to a report of smoke in a building, but when they arrive, they have a burglary in progress with a perpetrator who may be armed at worst and disoriented and confused at best. The entire fire response lends itself to multiple situations where a firefighter or citizen can lose their lives, all because a burglar alarm was activated, generating a false fire alarm response," said IAFC President Chief Jim Harmes.

The International Fire Code specifically prohibits these types of systems, and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 101 Safety to Life standard has provisions that prohibit anything from impeding egress from a building. Dense smoke certainly impedes anyone from safely exiting a building. Fire departments may not be notified of installations of these alarm systems in their jurisdictions, because they are part of a burglar alarm system.

Companies that install these devices are willingly transmitting a false alarm to a fire department. These smoke barrier systems not only will unnecessarily tie up community resources, but more importantly may also put their fire and EMS personnel's lives at stake.

"To put it directly, this type of system jeopardizes the life of every firefighter who responds to an emergency when the system has been activated, and it has the potential to endanger every citizen who encounters a fire truck responding with red lights and sirens to a fire alarm where there is no fire." said Harmes.

The Central Station Alarm Association is not in favor of these types of systems. "The Central Station Alarm Association (CSAA) represents the nation's burglar and fire alarm monitoring and installing companies and completely supports the IAFC position on eliminating the use of smoke barriers. The smoke barriers present an inherent danger to firefighters and law enforcement, and the rationale for their use is fundamentally flawed," said CSAA President John Murphy.

The IAFC encourages fire department officials to be aware of these types of installations. The Fire and Life Safety Section board is meeting on this issue next week and as additional information is obtained, we will communicate it to members.

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