

Grace period for alarms almost over with cops

By KAREN SMITH

The Champion

People with security systems have one more week to register during the grace period of a new police false alarm policy.

The grace period in Halton Regional Police's cost recovery program — aimed at reducing the number of false alarms — ends November 1.

"The policy is essentially the same as it has been since May, 1993, but adds a cost recovery element," said Sgt. Rod Cliffe.

In the new policy, police began charging monitoring companies for false alarms on August 1. During the grace period, fees are at reduced rates.

The lesser charges will continue after the grace period if alarm owners voluntarily register with police through their monitoring companies. Those who don't will be charged regular fees when police respond to false alarms after November 1.

However, the reduced rates will still come into effect after the

deadline if registration is received, Sgt. Cliffe said.

Registration includes providing information in the interest of officer safety, such as whether any hazards exist in the building or if guard dogs are on the premises, Sgt. Cliffe said.

The system also helps police monitor the number of alarm users and their locations, he said.

One false alarm allowed

Registered alarm owners are allowed one false alarm before charges apply. The second and third false calls mean a \$30 fee for residences and \$60 for other premises. There's no fee for the fourth alarm, however a suspension will be issued and police will not respond to the location for a year. This measure can be appealed.

Unregistered alarm owners are charged \$50 for a residence or \$100 for other properties on every false alarm. After the fourth, a suspension is issued.

Whether registered or unregistered, a warning will be issued to the alarm monitoring company after the second alarm to try to prevent further problems, Sgt. Cliffe said.

The warning and suspension rules fall under the original policy that came into effect in May, 1993.

However, the rules are not carved in stone, Sgt. Cliffe said. Exceptions, left up to the officer's discretion, can be made under special circumstances.

As of October 3, police had issued invoices to monitoring companies for \$6,120 due to false alarms, he said. In total, about 96 per cent of alarms police respond to turn out to be false.

Improper alarm installation, lack of maintenance, pets and power interruptions top the list of causes, he said.

To date, about 2,600 people have registered with police among approximately 12,000 alarm users in Halton.

Police have set up an information line with a recorded message on the subject. It can be reached by calling 825-4755.

See the Argos play football

The Toronto Argonauts have extended a special playoff invitation to Milton block parents.

Members of the local program have been invited as a group to the Eastern Division finals at the SkyDome, Sunday, Nov. 9.

Parents and children can enjoy an all-you-can-eat hot dog lunch from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., with the kick-off set to follow at 1 p.m.

The cost of the event is \$7 per person, with a minimum 30 people required for the package.

Those interested can call Susan Robertson at 878-8568.

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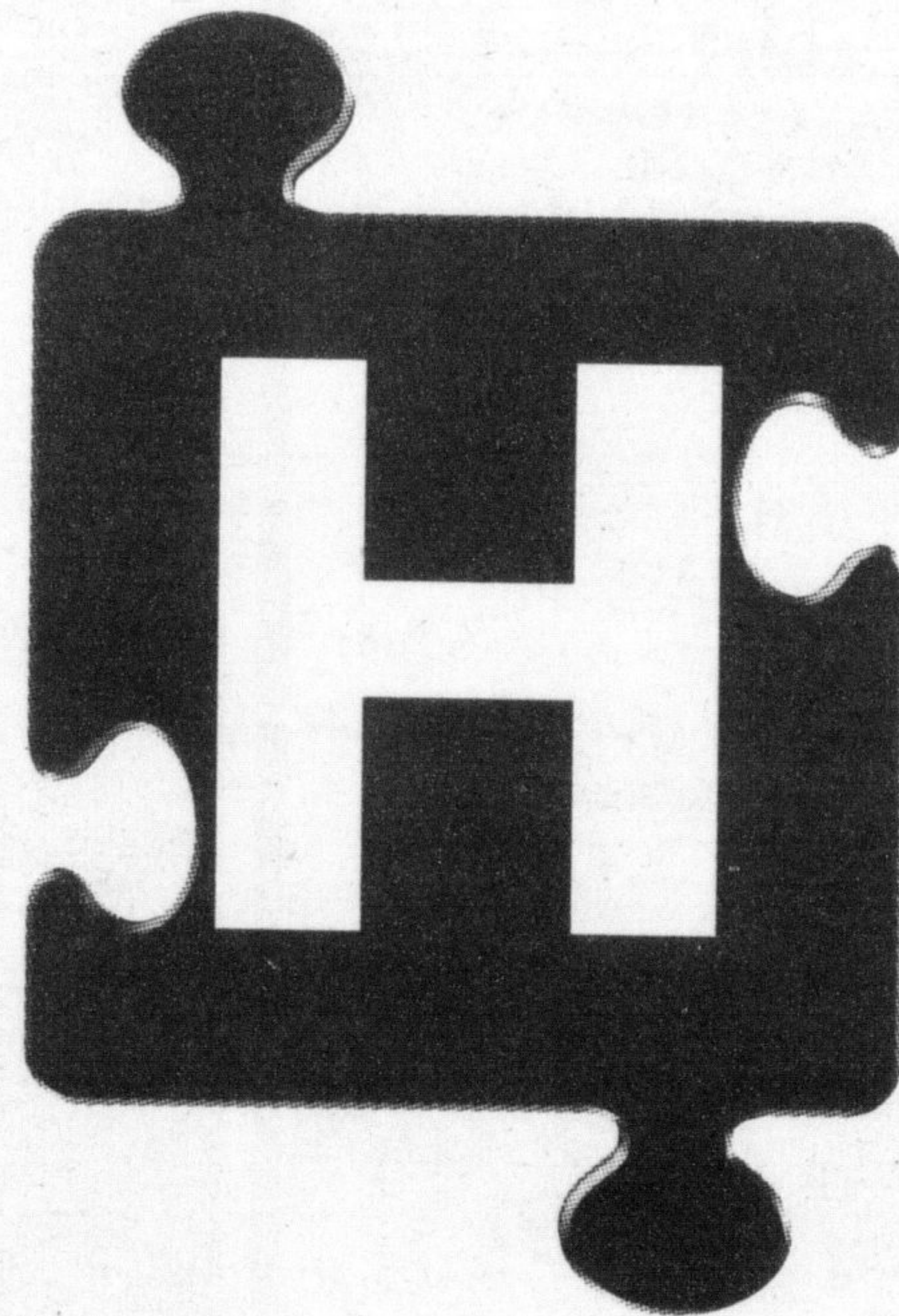
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