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# The Dispatch

## Is Bigger Really Better?

For anyone who reads the paper, watches the news or follows the stock market, it would be difficult to miss the number of acquisitions that have taken place over the last few years. Our industry is no different and often ponders questions about such cases.

**Can they provide personal service that clients have come to expect?** One's relationship with one's alarm company does not stop at the sale. In many cases larger chains utilize subcontractors rather than hire their own employees. It is unlikely you will develop a relationship with the particular technician and even more unlikely you will see them again. Furthermore, with national monitoring centers you are uncertain as to whom will be answering call from day to day or what employee turnover is like.

**Are they getting in over their head?** It's difficult for anyone to run a successful business these days. You must rely on a good sound business plan, good people, superior products and of course, your competition. Funny? Well competition keeps one on track and often helps with one's decision making process. Being a member of alarm associations is a fabulous way to network, see what competition is doing and come together as a team when needed.

**Can they control their subcontractors?** When service is needed coordination efforts are timely and often cause the client to become frustrated. Employees feel they have a stake in the success or failure of a business. Subcontractors are often looking for jobs to sustain themselves from day to day and follow the money.

**Can larger national companies keep up with the demand of the client?** Larger companies have deeper pockets and more buying power so they can certainly flex some muscle when parts are needed expeditiously. However, many pay their central stations based on signals received, so is it fair to say that information is limited in order to afford a higher profit margin?

**Can national companies provide the same level of service clients have become accustomed to?** Clients are more demanding now than ever. Customer loyalty is being replaced with dollar signs and coupons. Every dime is being watched and having faith and trust in one's alarm service provider has never been more important. It would be virtually impossible to provide "hometown service" from across the country. Can it be done, certainly, but at whose peril?

## Municipalities Enter Alarm Monitoring Business

National news within the alarm industry is being made everyday with the push for municipalities to find creative ways to improve cash flow.

Budget cuts and the economic crisis have forced several municipalities to reevaluate alarm responses. Luckily, those in Connecticut who have threatened to deny response have been fought with great gusto by the alarm association and won. In addition some 911 dispatch centers have proposed providing their own alarm monitoring for a fee. Sure this sounds efficient up front, but are municipalities prepared for the challenges of the central station? Name changes, divorces, special circumstances, vacation schedules, open/close schedules, test failures, trouble conditions, service questions, etc.?



It is highly unlikely that municipalities understand the private sector of alarm monitoring or the hours involved with ensuring the clients needs are met. The income would be negated by the additional staff required to perform such tasks as those mentioned, additional receiving/electronic equipment complete with backups, and increased premiums required to maintain errors & omissions insurance, never mind the fact that they would have to waive sovereign immunity as they are no longer acting in a purely governmental function.

Many national and state organizations are attempting to educate municipalities as to the ramifications of self-monitoring steering them away from entering the private sector.

## WARNING!



Your alarm system will not report to our central station if you change to AT&T U-Verse! Contact our service department for details and options available to you.

We understand cost savings is important in today's society, however, we feel your life safety is of greater importance!



## For Building Owners: Tips for a Safer Facility

Use the following tips (from Michelle Boykins, director of media relations and marketing at the Arlington, VA-based National Crime Prevention Council) to check the security of your facility:

- Be certain that all windows are secure.
- If doors only have a locking knob or lever, install a deadbolt for additional security.
- Lock steel bars or door barriers with high-security padlocks that have a hardened steel body and shackle to resist drills, hammers, blowtorches, and bolt cutters.
- Make sure all doors are solid. Look for sheet steel on both sides of rear and basement doors. Make sure doorframes and hinges are strong enough that they can't be pried open.
- Good locks are the first line of defense. Use high-security locks or electronic access-control units on all doors. Closets that contain private information or hazardous materials, outside doors, and basements are a few to consider.
- Verify that any electronic access-control unit has secure key bypass. An access-control unit is only as good as its mechanical override devices.
- Make sure restrooms are locked with high-security locks, and that only employees have keys.
- Are receptionist desks equipped with a panic button for emergencies, a camera with a monitor at another employee's desk, and a high-security lock on the front door that can be controlled?
- Install motion-sensitive and constant outside lights.
- Illuminate dark places around the building by trimming shrubs, adding lighting, etc.
- Leave some interior lights on, even when the business is closed.

~Source-Buildings April 2009

## Burglars Try to Circumvent Alarms by Cutting Phone Lines

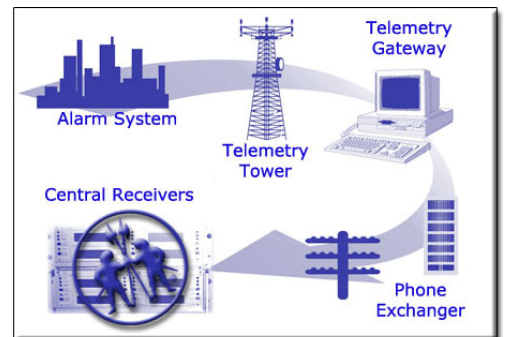
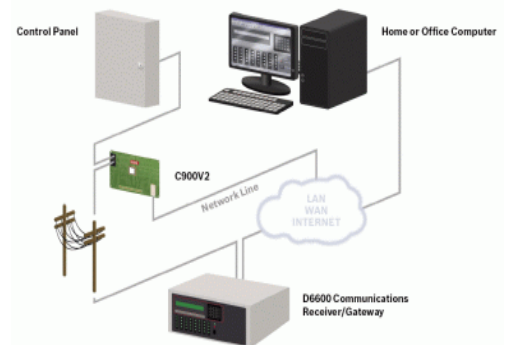
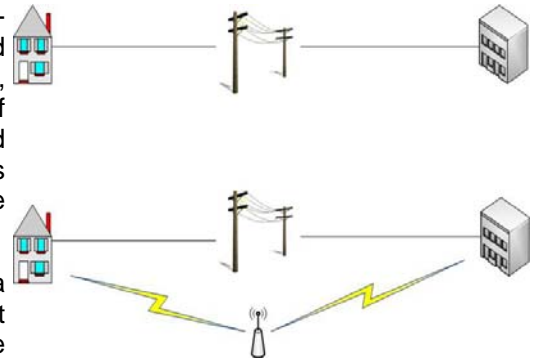
A rash of cut phone lines have been reported in Farmington, Avon, Guilford, and now North Madison, Connecticut. This, however, is not the first we have heard of this trend. Monitor Controls, Inc. reported this occurrence back in the early 1990's when backup forms of communication were limited and costly.

By cutting the phone line on the outside of a home or business burglars are hoping to cut the line of communication, literally, to the central station where alarms are monitored. If this line is cut the alarm will sound at the location but will not report to the central station. Your home/business is at the mercy of a concerned citizen to call the authorities.

However, if your alarm has a backup form of communication such as radio (RF), internet, or cellular the burglar will be caught off-guard when the alarm signal is transmitted using one of these other forms of communication.

It has become common place in today's society to have backups. We have them on our computers. We have them for power loss. We even have backup forms of transportation. But why is people compromise life safety by not having a back up form of communication? Back in the day the only form of secure phone lines were a dedicated or leased line that would report a trouble condition if the phone line was compromised for any reason including routine maintenance. With the cost of these lines escalating, clients demanding more and technology changing the alarm industry literally exploded with options for communication that would be cost effective and reliable. Still, in many cases, we rely on a third party service provider (internet or cellular). Our radio alarm network however, is unique. We utilize our own network of transceivers to communicate signals to our central station. The signals can be as generic as "trouble or alarm" to as detailed as point identification.

Backup monitoring is inexpensive to have installed and the monthly fee is nominal. Why wait. Contact us to discuss options available to you.





# My Fire System Works. Why Have an Inspection?



You bring your car in for an oil change every three thousand miles and that doesn't run 24/7. Yet your alarm does and often time it is neglected. All too often we take things for granted and with the state of the economy we have all been forced to tighten our belts. But there are some things that should not be compromised. Life safety is one of those things.

So why have an inspection on you fire alarm? Good question. Our service department is consistently asked this question. Here are several reasons:

◆ **Your system may be required to be inspected by any one of several Codes.**

- ◆ At the time of installation/service takeover, our technicians indicate the required testing frequency of your system based upon Code requirements that could include, but are not limited to:
  - ◆ Type of occupancy
  - ◆ Whether there are sprinklers at the location
  - ◆ Size of the facility
  - ◆ If you have CO (carbon monoxide) detection
  - ◆ Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) requirements

◆ **Your fire system is on 24 hours per day 7 days per week 365 days per year**

- ◆ The battery alone needs to be tested and perhaps replaced depending on manufacturer specifications
- ◆ The components need to be cleaned
  - ◆ Dirt and dust within device chambers are potential causes of false alarms
- ◆ CO (carbon monoxide) detection is required to be tested at least annually
- ◆ Individual points will be tested and confirmed with the central station

◆ **Updates To**

- ◆ Technology/software
- ◆ Zone nomenclature
- ◆ Key holder contact information
- ◆ Dispatch instructions
- ◆ NFPA form required by the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) on surprise inspections

◆ **Insurance Requirements**

- ◆ Your insurance company may be providing you with a discount on your premium based upon the fact that you have installed and are maintaining a working fire alarm system.
- ◆ If you are not receiving this discount, contact your insurance company immediately. Clients have seen discounts ranging from 12-20% for central station monitored accounts.



A ceiling-mount smoke detector covered with oil

**Which one of these detectors would you count on to alert you in the event of a fire?**



Sample of a clean ceiling-mount smoke detector.

# Happy Birthday

<b>Kate</b>	<b>06-03</b>
<b>Robin</b>	<b>06-04</b>
<b>Rene'</b>	<b>06-07</b>
<b>Christina</b>	<b>06-17</b>
<b>Gary</b>	<b>07-05</b>
<b>Jason</b>	<b>07-06</b>
<b>Peter</b>	<b>07-07</b>
<b>Tara</b>	<b>07-20</b>
<b>Mia</b>	<b>07-28</b>
<b>Allyson</b>	<b>08-12</b>
<b>Jose'</b>	<b>08-26</b>
<b>Debbie</b>	<b>08-28</b>



To the following team members celebrating anniversaries with Monitor Controls, Inc. this quarter are:

<b>John B.</b>	<b>27 years</b>
<b>Robin</b>	<b>19 years</b>
<b>Jose'</b>	<b>9 years</b>
<b>Kate</b>	<b>4 years</b>
<b>Tara</b>	<b>4 years</b>
<b>Rene'</b>	<b>2 years</b>
<b>Jonathan</b>	<b>1 year</b>
<b>Shalene</b>	<b>1 year</b>



## New England Fire Marshals Get an Education

Members of the New England Association of Fire Marshals met recently in Auburn, Massachusetts for an 8 hour training class on the changing world of inspections. The class was taught by John W. Yusza, Jr., president of Monitor Controls, Inc., and Jason Sokol, operations manager. Both gentlemen are NTS Instructors for the national Electronic Security Association.

The class objective was to introduce the association to the changing technology within the field of fire detection. "With the introduction of new communications methods and providers, it is imperative to keep the authorities having jurisdiction abreast of the impact on fire detection systems and code changes that they otherwise may not be immediately privy to", states Sokol who also serves as president of the Connecticut Alarm and Systems Integrators Association.

"It was a real pleasure working with this group of professionals. The feedback was excellent and I think everyone walked out of the class feeling better prepared to serve their community." adds Yusza.

## Monitor Controls Receives PCI Compliance Approval 6 Months Before Required

In accordance with standards set forth by the credit card industry, all merchants accepting Visa, MasterCard, Discover or American Express are required to become PCI compliant by July 1, 2010 or be subject to monthly fines. PCI (Payment Card Industry) Compliance involved a 42 page application attesting to security measures taken by our personnel, software and network to ensure protection of client credit card information.

We are pleased to report that Monitor Controls, Inc. has achieved PCI Compliance effective January 5, 2010. To confirm our status please visit our website and click on the Trustwave icon.



## Hanging Up POTS Lines

"It's not time to panic, but it is time to plan" according to "security industry insiders".



The FCC recently released a 300 page plan to eliminate POTS (Plain Old Telephone Service) lines due to maintenance being "inefficient and costly". While the FCC has not determined a deadline, it is unavoidable.

So what can you do as a client to prepare for the long term inevitable? You can add internet, radio or cellular alarm transmission to your existing account or replace your current digital transmission method with any one of these provided by our firm.

We have seen the writing on the walls for years and have been actively thinking outside the box offering our clients alternate options for their primary means of communication such as those listed above.

POTS lines have always been a staple within the alarm industry. However, for those who have not been as proactive as Monitor Controls, Inc., the time has come to think outside the box and alter the manner in which we, as an industry in general, choose to educate the consumer and determine the best means of communication based on the individual client. Those who are not up to the task of embracing technology will surely fade into obscurity.

~Source Security Systems News May 2010