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Representing electronic security, fire and integrated systems professionals

NESA Position Paper on Enhanced Call Verification

Summary: NESA encourages alarm dealers and users to implement enhanced call verification and supports the adoption of a requirement for enhanced call verification for all burglar alarm systems unless the alarm user opts out by providing public safety with compelling evidence that an exception should be made.

Background: False alarms waste resources and can be effectively reduced by implementing proven procedures and best practices including enhanced call verification. Most alarm companies call the alarm site before they contact law enforcement. This prevents a false alarm if the alarm user remains on the site. But in the cases just described, the alarm user is often not on site. Calling a second number, such as a cell phone or a home phone for a business owner, can often avoid a false alarm. The alarm user knows if they just left the alarm site, and they know if they have workers at their home or business. Because they know this, they can give the alarm company permission to cancel the call.

The Problem:

- Increased demand on public safety agencies for homeland security and other duties, difficulty in filling all the budgeted positions, and sizeable numbers of staff who have been called to serve in the military reserves, can easily cause dissatisfaction with an increased or even a stable amount of false alarms.
- Alarm users purchase an alarm to be safe and most feel that as taxpayers they deserve public safety response to alarms.
- While many alarm dealers are proactive in efforts to reduce false alarms, others are not.

Benefits:

- **Alarm User:** An alarm user will receive a second call following alarm activations, preferably to a designated cell phone. For homeowners, many inadvertent activations happen when leaving the home, and the call to the cell number will allow them to return to the property and reset the alarm. For business owners, many activations occur as employees leave the property or are caused by after-hours cleaning and service personnel. The call to the cell phone gives the business owner an opportunity to cancel the activation and eliminate the request for police response and avoid a fine.
- **Law Enforcement:** Enhanced Call Verification is a tool to reduce calls for service from alarm activations without reducing the crime deterrent and crime prevention benefits that alarm systems provide the community. A statewide requirement eliminates the need for each local jurisdiction to amend its own ordinance.
- **Alarm Company:** Enhanced Call Verification reduces the costs to the alarm monitoring center since it is less expensive to process a second or third call than it is to request a police dispatch for the alarm user. A statewide requirement simplifies the procedures for alarm monitoring companies with a consistent statewide requirement. A law exempts the alarm company from liability to the alarm user when implementing enhanced call verification.

Recommendation:

NESA encourages alarm dealers and users to implement enhanced call verification and supports the adoption of a requirement for enhanced call verification for all burglar alarm systems unless the alarm user opts out by providing public safety with compelling evidence that an exception should be made.