



National Electronic Security Alliance

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NESA Position Paper on Verified Response

Summary: NESA opposes the adoption of verified response to alarm systems because it deprives alarm users of desired public response and creates danger to public safety.

Background: False alarms waste resources and can be effectively reduced by implementing proven procedures and best practices yet some agencies have decided to eliminate public safety response to alarm systems. Verified Response is a term commonly used to describe a change in city ordinance that eliminates public safety response to criminal detection of electronic burglar alarm systems. Verified Response requires eyewitness verification from the public/private citizen that a criminal act is occurring or has occurred prior to public safety response.

The Problem:

- o 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.
- o Alarm users purchase an alarm to be safe and most feel that as taxpayers they deserve public safety response to alarms.
- o While many alarm dealers are proactive in efforts to reduce false alarms, others are not.

Conclusions:

- o NESA strongly opposes verified response. Since public safety will not respond to the alarm but only to an eyewitness confirmation, verified is better defined as public safety not responding to alarms or "No Response".
- o The International Association of Chiefs of Police has concluded that "A private responder requires a significant amount of initial training and a commitment to consistent ongoing training to maintain skills, as well as account for changes in service needs, new laws, and response procedures."
- o Few states specifically regulate private responders to ensure that they have background checks or training appropriate for the role they play.
- o Some states regulate private responders as armed or unarmed guards but do not require any training specific to alarm response.
- o The cost of private responders may unduly impact the elderly on fixed incomes and others who are economically disadvantaged.
- o Unlike local law enforcement, private companies and responders have no obligation to service all areas of the community. High-risk areas with high crime rates may have to pay a higher rate or possibly not receive the service at all.

Recommendations:

- o NESA recommends that all other strategies that have proven effective in other communities be implemented before a verified response policy is considered. These strategies include:
 - Charging a fee for a permit registration and service fee or fine for chronic abusers. A full cost recovery can be achieved by the public safety agency, recapturing all expenditures.
 - Outsourcing the administration of a false alarm reduction program, resulting in minimal personnel costs for the law enforcement agencies.
 - Implementing and enforcing an ordinance (see NESA position on Alarm Ordinances for more information).
 - Allowing citizens the choice of having sworn public safety personnel respond to their alarm activations for a fee or contracting with a private security firm to provide this response.