

Police Response “Priority” Can Contribute To Deception

Proposals to change a municipal ordinance or police policy to practice “Verified Response” for monitored alarms can be a hard sell to city administrators and the general public.

There are two basic templates of VR and each has local variations. “Formal VR” is public disclosure to all participants that private alarm signals no longer qualify for emergency police response when requested by alarm companies, unless a 911 type emergency is witnessed. “Default VR” is a police policy (no ordinance) that can produce similar results, but without public disclosure. It quietly lowers the police response “priority” to a non-emergency status, which can produce very slow, or unreliable, or no response to calls from alarm monitoring firms, unless the monitoring firm reports a witnessed/verified emergency.

Communities are already practicing Default VR if they have already lowered the priority for alarm response below 911 type emergency status, and average more than 20 minutes for alarm response. In addition, many cities issue fines and fees for the false alarm, even if the response is slow and ineffective. Default VR unknowingly contributes to public deception.

Quite often alarm companies do not tell their customers about the void of emergency response, which can be considered deceptive business practices. Even many cities are reluctant to provide these details when asked by alarm users or other interested parties, which is the deception. Customer expectations do not match services rendered. The incentive for Formal VR, like templates in Las Vegas, Salt Lake City, Milwaukee, Fremont is full disclosure that prevents deception by a municipality.

Hundreds of cities still practice some form of Default VR, including most major cities and their suburbs. We estimate that over 5 million monitored alarm systems are within a jurisdiction of Default Verified Response. While both types do a good job of minimizing unnecessary police response, the trend is toward Formal VR to avoid the deception and legacy liability.

Why now, after 50 years? Police response to monitored systems started many decades ago as a courtesy, then slowly evolved into a basic police service, which then evolved into a serious waste of police resources. Now, nearly all *monitored* alarm systems are obsolete or flawed, because they do not have the ability to recognize true emergencies from non-emergencies. Monitoring firms simply receive an unknown signal that suggests something is disrupted at the alarm site, which then requires a site inspection (alarm response) to determine the cause. This explains why nearly all are false alarms. The abuse of police courtesy response was quickly multiplied with the rapid growth of the flawed alarm systems into the average household and small business.

Alarm systems have two parts. Part 1= the onsite installed sensors and deterrent signs, decals, lights, noisemakers. Part 2= the optional connection to a remote monitoring source. The most effective part of the system is Part 1, detection and deterrent which remains unchanged with VR. The optional remote monitoring does not contribute to public safety, which suggests that alarm response is no longer an appropriate police service.... even considered to be “Gifting Of Public Funds” to the private security industry.

Proposals to change a municipal ordinance or a police policy, to practice “Verified Response”, can be an easier sell to city administrators and the general public when presented with the facts that VR (Default) is already quietly practiced in your city. (For more support see paper titled, “Talking Points About Zero Tolerance”) A formal VR ordinance or police policy is simply updating the existing Default VR status with disclosure that unknown alarm signals do not qualify for emergency police response. Formal VR provides a reliable infrastructure for reliable private security, which also plugs the big hole in Homeland Security.

Formal disclosure removes the unintentional deception by the city, while improving police services and overall public safety, without new revenues.