



CALL TO HAVE VERIFIED BETTER CLARIFIED

Many terms that seem obvious to alarm industry professionals are nebulous to outsiders, including law enforcement. ‘Verification’ as it pertains to intrusion alerts is a prime example. That perception along with advancing technology is hastening the necessity for change.
By Stan Martin

THE ALARM INDUSTRY’S friends and partners in law enforcement are requesting the industry redefine and clarify how the word “verification” is applied when communicating and/or requesting a law enforcement dispatch. Our industry’s terminology, which seemed simple and clear to us for many decades, has long been confusing to many of their members and their leadership.

Stepping back objectively with fresh eyes makes law enforcement’s perspective on this topic entirely reasonable, to the point that it may be time to for the industry to make a change.

The English language is full of words that sound the same when spoken but have completely different meanings when used, making some communica-

tions tricky. There are also words that are spelled the same but the meaning changes based upon usage. A third potential issue arises when the meaning of a common word, whether spoken or written, is interpreted differently by two or more individuals or professional organizations. It is this last issue we need to dissect and discuss to understand it.

Discussing Definitions

The word *verification* has a tortuous past in the arena of alarm management, false alarms and unnecessary dispatches to alarm systems. The most widely used definitions are:

- 1) The original single call to the location of an alarm activation (referred to by the industry as “call verification”) — *an*

attempt by the monitoring company, or its representative, to contact the alarm site and/or alarm user by telephone and/or other electronic means, whether or not actual contact with a person is made, to attempt to determine whether an alarm signal is valid before requesting law enforcement dispatch.

2) Enhanced Call Verification (ECV and also referred to as two-call verification) — *as a minimum a second call is made to a different number if the first attempt fails to reach an alarm user who can properly identify themselves to attempt to determine whether an alarm signal is valid before requesting law enforcement dispatch.*

These terms we created and defined are well established and as an industry we've been satisfied with their use as intended. However, some in law enforcement had a problem with our definition and our ability to screen out unnecessary dispatches. This resulted in a new procedure and term called Verified Response, requiring "confirmation" or "verification" that an actual crime had been committed or was "in progress" before a dispatch would be processed. How that was accomplished was and still is subject to debate and not the focus of this article. However, the use of the term "verify" or "verification" is significant to this discussion.

Our differences with the definition and application of the word "verification" was exacerbated in recent months as our industry (through the Partnership for Priority Verified Alarm Response, or PPVAR) worked on guidelines and standards for determining the protocols to implement "priority dispatch" recommendations.

As a result of that productive and cooperative effort, a recommendation that originated with law enforcement was placed on the table for consideration. The revised standard would clearly define the use of "verified" or "verification" when used in communications to 911 centers to mean a "highly probable crime in progress" or "actual crime in progress." This would mean ending the traditional use of the terms ECV and two-call verification.

Why Cops Are Confused

Let's take a moment and look how the dictionary defines "verification": evidence that establishes or confirms the accuracy or truth of something; a formal assertion of the truth of something; the process of research, examination, etc., required to prove or establish authenticity or validity.

In reality, ECV or two-call verification was an *attempt* to ascertain or screen out invalid alarm dispatches by calling the customer to see if there was a reason or situation that created the alarm

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condition other than actual criminal activity. Rarely do we confirm or verify a crime in progress. Statistically, we know the high probability (80% or more) that the customer is aware they have done something to cause that alarm, that's really what we're trying to determine so we don't needlessly dispatch law enforcement.

If there wasn't enough confusion already, the industry found yet another use for this word when we began promoting remotely monitored video signals. Now we were throwing yet one more definition of verify by calling these alarms "video verification." And let's not forget "audio" or "listen-in" verification.

Think about it, law enforcement doesn't care about our terminology or methodology as it applies to screening alarm signals, as long as we do the job well. But they very much care about terminology when we call them for a dispatch, especially when determining the priority for that call. There can be no confusion; the communication must be crystal clear. This simply means if we use the term "verified" or "verification" for a

dispatch request, it must mean a crime in progress or the high probability of a crime in progress, which should typically result in the call being assigned a higher priority, subject to individual department guidelines.

Time to Play Rename Game

You may be thinking, "OK, if ECV or two-call verification terminology is out, what will we call it?" The Security Industry Alarm Coalition (SIAC) and its associates are moving toward substituting "verification" with the word "confirmation," or

maybe the term with "two-call predispatch confirmation." Those with ideas are urged to contact SIAC directly or by E-mailing stan@siacinc.org.

During the past two decades, our relationship with law enforcement leadership has vastly improved. With this improved relationship we are able to have open and honest conversations, and as part of this they want us to come to an agreement on what verification is. We have an obligation to our customers and our partners in public safety to support this change they have requested. It makes sense and it is long overdue.

By embracing the change enthusiastically, the industry will hopefully see law enforcement adjust priority dispatch decisions, which will result in quicker response to customer alarms that result in more apprehensions. That's a win-win-win for all parties; that is all except the bad guys! SSI

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