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Industry stakeholders form Partnership for Priority Video Alarm Response

By Joel Griffin

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Partnership to focus on establishing best practices, standards

In an effort to establish best practices for video alarm prioritization polices, members of the law enforcement community, as well the insurance and alarm industries have joined together to form the Partnership for Priority Video Alarm Response (PPVAR).

As more jurisdictions across the nation have started implementing prioritized, or in some cases verified video alarm response policies, Keith Jentoft, president of RSI Video Technologies and coordinator for PPVAR, said that the industry has begun to see the need to work with its partners in developing standards in how the technology should be utilized and how these policies should be crafted.

"What we've tried to do with this partnership is bring together all of the stakeholders in property crime - the insurers... law enforcement and the industry - to come and work towards some best practices so we can replicate the successes and actually encourage both the policy holders of the insurers and the citizens that the police are protecting to upgrade their systems to video," he said. "I would say our industry has a history of writing our own specifications in our own little rooms and trying to impose them on everybody else and this is fundamentally a different approach where we're actually proving it in real life and as we get something that works, we'll throw it over the fence to a standards writing body like the CSAA (Central Station Alarm Association) and they can work with it and make it official."

Though the partnership will be working with industry associations in creating standards, Jentoft said that are an independent organization.

"What's different about our partnership is that we're reaching outside of the associations and bringing in law enforcement, both the sheriffs and the police and the insurers to work together on something that matters to all of us," he said. "We're not just trying to be an association partnership... we're a partnership of the stakeholders."

Among the industry stakeholders that have already joined the PPVAR's board of directors includes:

- Woodway, Texas Chief of Police Yost Zakhary. Zakhary is member of the governing body of the International Association of Chiefs of Police and is a former president of the Texas Police Chief's Association.
- Story County Iowa Sheriff Paul Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald is the current president of the National Sheriff's Association and will join the board when his term is completed in June.
- Fred Lohmann, director of the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NCIB), which is supported by more than 1,100 property/casualty insurance companies.
- Donald Young, CIO of Protection 1.

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In addition to reducing the number of false alarms that police respond to every year, another reason that the law enforcement community is a big proponent of video verification is increased arrest rates.

According to a study conducted in 2007 by researchers at California State University on police response to burglar alarms in San Bernardino County, police only made an arrest in 0.08 percent of traditional burglar alarm activations they responded to.

"We're seeing arrest rates with video alarms from 20 to 90 percent," Jentoft said. "Even if you just take 20 percent, it's not even one percent on traditional alarms and you're looking at several hundreds times better results. Law enforcement is happy because they're catching people and insurers are happy because they are paying out fewer claims."

One of the goals of the PPVAR is gather some hard data and statistics related to video alarms to share with the rest of the industry. The partnership, however, already has several ideas regarding best practices that could be implemented, such as giving video alarms a new code in the 911 dispatch center and pushing video clips out to the cell phones of officers in the field.

Though some in the industry would argue that having a traditional alarm in and of itself is a deterrent to thieves, Jentoft said that insurers aren't buying into that philosophy anymore and are really only offering discounts to those that install a video component with their system.

"The insurers care and they are actually stepping up and offering discounts to people who put (video alarms) in," Jentoft explained. "It's there because video alarms provide more arrests and it's a very effective way of combating crime. Law enforcement is onboard, the insurers are onboard and so is the industry."

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An advertisement for VideoEdge. The top half shows a man in a dark suit with his arms crossed, looking towards the camera. The text 'Simple management of IP and analog?' is overlaid on the image. The bottom half shows a VideoEdge DVR device with a monitor displaying a grid of camera feeds. The word 'think' is written in a bold, yellow font at the bottom left.



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