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Sound the Alarm

Executive Director's Message
Winter 2014

Robert Stevenson
Retired Chief

As administrators we are always looking for ways to improve the efficiency of our agency. One of the most consistently wasteful activities is responding to false alarm runs. We all can probably recall the business in our section whose alarm went off time after time and was always false. Yet we always responded, sometimes driving too fast to get there, becoming complacent in our tactics, and wasting valuable patrol time.

This scenario plays out in cities of all sizes in our state and is a problem across the United States. However, it doesn't have to be this way. The IACP has been addressing this issue for over 20 years and I am excited to announce two MACP initiatives that we believe will reduce false alarm responses.

The first is the formation of the Security Industry Alarm Coalition Committee. This committee will partner with members of the security industry to bring the best practices of alarm management to Michigan. The Security Industry Alarm Coalition (SIAC) was formed in December of 2002 and is a nationwide organization dedicated to false alarm dispatch reduction and alarm management. Their efforts in other states have been impressive with reductions in false alarm responses of up to 90%. MACP President Chief Pussehl has appointed Chief Cliff Block of Midland to chair this new committee. The other members are:

- Director Stephen Poloni, Grosse Pointe City DPS
- Chief Steven Harper, Wayland PD
- Dep. Chief Gordy Schick, Pittsfield Township PD
- Asst. Chief Jerrod Hart, Novi PD
- Lt. Russ Harden, Troy PD

Our second initiative is that the MACP has joined the Partnership for Priority Video Alarm Response (PPVAR) Video Verification Committee. This committee is comprised of police agencies from across the country along with members of the private sector and is dedicated to creating standards for video verified alarms that will maximize the benefits to law enforcement. The MACP representative to this committee will be Sgt. David Schnurstein of Grand Rapids Police Department.

Both SIAC and PPVAR have joined the MACP as supporting members. Please take a few moments to familiarize yourself with SIAC and PPVAR by visiting their websites at siacinc.org and ppvar.org and reading their articles in this magazine.

I would like to thank all of the aforementioned members of the MACP who have volunteered to assist in these important initiatives. Their efforts will greatly benefit all of our agencies. In addition, I would like to thank Guardian Alarm of Detroit for sponsoring our membership application to PPVAR and the associated dues.



PPVAR is a New Supporting Member of the MACP

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The Partnership for Priority Video Alarm Response (PPVAR) new public/private partnership whose board of directors includes law enforcement, insurers, and alarm companies – all the stakeholders in the battle against property crime. The PPVAR is working with the MACP and other police and sheriffs to drive new standards and best practices to combat property crime. Video verified alarm systems are becoming a significant tool that pushes the power of video into the local homes and businesses to maximize the effectiveness of limited law enforcement resources. Agencies across the country have joined the PPVAR **Video Verification Committee** to create new standards for video verified alarms that address concerns and maximize the benefit to Law Enforcement. In addition to the MACP, committee members include the Texas Police Chiefs Association, and many of the larger departments including Los Angeles Sheriff's Dept., Phoenix PD, Houston PD, and Chicago PD.

Video Verified Alarms – a local force multiplier making arrests and fighting crime

Many believe that video has impacted law enforcement's ability to fight crime more than any other innovation in the past generation; the ultimate "force multiplier." CCTV cameras are now crucial in protecting public property with thousands of cameras watching over traffic intersections, stadiums, critical infrastructure, and public buildings. This same video revolution is changing the burglar alarms as affordable video alarm systems move the "force multiplier" concept beyond public infrastructure and out into local homes and businesses; giving eyes to the millions of wireless sensors already monitored by the alarm companies. New technology and falling prices pushed video to the edge of law enforcement with cameras becoming standard equipment on patrol car dashboards or even portable body cameras worn by responding officers. This same video technology revolution has pushed its way into burglar alarms and is beginning to provide dramatic benefits to law enforcement fighting property crime. Monitored video alarm systems are now affordable for commercial and even residential applications.

From an historical perspective, law enforcement is aware that over 90% of traditional burglar alarms end up being false alarms. Much is being done to reduce false alarms and the alarm industry has worked hard over the past decade to develop tools such as ECV, where the central station makes at least two calls to the property owner to confirm the alarm is an actual event before dispatching police. The focus of the PPVAR

is to work with law enforcement to use video verification to make more arrests and reduce property crime with the ultimate deterrent – apprehensions. Shrinking law enforcement budgets and fewer officers available mean a force multiplier is needed to address the increasing trend of property crime. Moving video to alarm systems is now an affordable option.

Video alarms are improving and becoming less expensive as video cameras have made their way into cell phones, laptops, and even car bumpers. There are two main technology options for burglar alarm systems. One solution is CCTV cameras using "analytics". The analytics option has a computer that processes the actual video image to detect intruders. While camera prices have come down, what is almost more important is that analytics are becoming better at detecting intruders, even in complex environments. A second approach uses wireless alarm detectors called motion viewers that combine color cameras and PIR motion sensors into a single device - and they are battery powered. The concept is much like the portable body cameras worn by officers except the tiny cameras are triggered by the motion sensor and send a video clip of what caused the alarm over wireless to a live operator at a monitoring center for immediate review. The monitoring center uses video to filter false alarms and central station operators act as a remote eyewitness to actual crimes. Residential and commercial video alarms have become a "force multiplier" at a granular level in individual homes and businesses to maximize the effectiveness of law enforcement. While they certainly reduce false alarms, the main advantage is arrests. Several case studies on video verified alarms show arrest rates of over 50%. One study in Police Chief Magazine in March 2012 described how video burglar alarms installed in Detroit public school buildings resulted in a 70% closure rate by the Detroit Public Schools Police. In the Detroit study, the alarm company was actually sending the video clips of the intrusion via email to the smartphone of the responding officers. The monitoring company filtered the false alarms and only the actual events were sent to police. The responding officers were able to review the clips and decide if they needed backup before they arrived. In addition, the officers were able to arrest several suspects on the street after they had left the premises based upon the video viewed on their phone.

Alarm companies are embracing the new potential of video and are actively working with law enforcement at both a local and national level to maximize the value of video verified alarms to make arrests and reduce false alarms. The concept is simple, if the property owners in the community install or upgrade to video verified alarms, there will be more arrests and fewer false alarms; all at no cost to law enforcement.

The PPVAR is proud to be the newest Supporting Member of the MACP. We want to thank the Grand Rapids Police Dept. for taking the lead for the MACP to work with the PPVAR Video Verification Committee. For more information on the program and to view actual videos please visit www.ppvar.org