

The Magazine of the  
FBI National Academy  
Associates

# NATIONAL ACADEMY



ASSOCIATE

May/June 2014  
Vol. 16, No. 3

## Video Verified Alarms

*A Local Force Multiplier  
Making Arrests and  
Fighting Crime*

**PLUS** | Law Enforcement Training Benefits  
Officers, Organizations, and the Public



# VIDEO VERIFIED ALARMS

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arrests and fighting crime*

Keith Jentoft



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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 now cost as little as \$34/month, a small premium over a traditional blind alarm and affordable for residential applications.

From a historical perspective, law enforcement is acutely aware that over 90% of traditional burglar alarms end up being false alarms. Actual arrests on an alarm run are a rarity. In fact, the average arrest rate for a typical intrusion alarm is only 0.08% according to a major study jointly conducted by the San Bernardino Police and Sheriff in 2007. Statistics from other cities are even worse. In different alarm studies done by San Jose, CA and Las Cruces, NM, each city posted arrest rates of only 0.02%. While they may be a deterrent, traditional alarm systems do little to make arrests. This kind of deterrence only pushes the criminals down the block to a different building. The community and the insurers still end up paying the bill. 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.


Technology is improving and becoming less expensive. A new generation of wireless passive infrared motion detectors called "MotionViewers" now includes integrated color cameras with invisible illuminators for night vision – 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 acts 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 used installed in Detroit resulted in a 70% closure rate. 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. Several police chiefs have held press conferences announcing **Priority Response** to video verified alarms as a way to encourage adoption by their communities. 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. **Grand Prairie PD** is a good example of a new partnership and this URL has a video of a successful press conference [www.gptx.org/index.aspx?page=1583](http://www.gptx.org/index.aspx?page=1583). The Grand Prairie website also features a formal policy paper that states that Grand Prairie police will continue to respond to all alarm calls but will now give priority response to video verified alarms. While continuing to respond to traditional alarms, Chief Steve Dye developed this policy as an incentive, a way to encourage his property owners to improve their alarm infrastructure and partner with him to reduce crime in his community. Lt. **Barbara Dixon**, FBI National Academy Associates member states, "Grand Prairie has embraced video verified alarms to help us fight property crime. We are especially working to encourage commercial property owners to upgrade their alarm systems to video for priority response." It is making a difference. Last year a video verified alarm in Grand Prairie received a response in less than 2 minutes and contributed to a record decrease in property crime.

## NEW PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

The concept is gaining traction. The Partnership for **Priority Video Alarm Response (PPVAR)** is a 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 police and sheriffs to drive new standards and best practices. Law enforcement across the country has joined the PPVAR Video Verification Committee to help move this project forward. Committee members include the Los Angeles Sheriff's Dept., Phoenix PD, Houston PD, Chicago PD, as well as the Texas Police Chiefs Assn. 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. For more information on the program and to view actual videos please visit [www.ppvvar.org](http://www.ppvvar.org) 

*About the Author:* Keith Jentoft has spent more than 20 years introducing various European technologies to U.S. markets: growing a printer company from \$3 to \$250 million in eight years, selling acoustic authentication to DOD and banking, and introducing advanced petroleum refinery services. Jentoft holds over a dozen patents in diverse technologies. As President of RSI Video Technologies, Jentoft is responsible for Videofied wireless alarms. He founded the nonprofit association PPVAR (Partnership for Priority Video Alarm Response) to link the alarm industry with the other stakeholders in property crime, especially the insurance industry. Jentoft is active in the National Sheriffs Assn. and the International Assn. of Chiefs of Police.