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Verified alarm? Definitions vary



Does ECV or cross-zoning qualify as a verified alarm? CSAA, PPARV work toward new comprehensive verification standard
by: [Leif Kothe](#) - Wednesday, March 5, 2014

HENDERSON, Nev. and VIENNA, Va.—It’s likely that a new comprehensive verification standard will surface sometime in 2014. The Central Station Alarm Association is in the process of developing such a standard for all manner of verified alarms, and the Partnership for Priority Video Alarm Response, since its inception, has been gathering best practices toward that end.

What’s less clear at this point is what the finished standard will look like.

While those involved in producing a comprehensive written standard tend to agree about what issues it should address and which stakeholder groups need to have input, there’s not a pure consensus about what specific methods and technologies need to be included.

The pivotal question is: What qualifies as a verified alarm?

“At this time, I believe the only technologies acceptable to law enforcement are audio and video verification,” said Don Young, chief information officer at Protection 1, and president of PPARV, which has been gathering best practices for verified response. “Those are the only ones I’m aware of that allow you to say you’re witnessing a crime in progress.”

But the conversation around what qualifies as a verified alarm often extends beyond the boundaries of video and audio verification. Some believe that enhanced call verification and cross-zoning should also be included in a comprehensive standard.

Young isn’t one of them. While he’s a “huge fan” of cross-zoning and ECV as tools for reducing false alarms and driving down total alarm volume, he does not believe they merit inclusion under the definition of verification.

“There’s no realistic opportunity to tell a 911 dispatcher or a responding officer that I’m witnessing a crime in progress because multiple zones were tripped during an alarm event,” Young said.

The concerted emphasis on collaborating with law enforcement may be the most defining element of the latest push for a comprehensive standard. This is important when it comes to written standards, which, according to Young, are critically dependent upon law enforcement buy-in.

“Given the dependency alarm verification has on law enforcement’s interpretation of what is or isn’t a priority event, I can’t imagine developing a verification standard without significant representation and feedback from them in the process,” Young said, adding that PPARV has made a point of enlisting a number of law enforcement leaders to provide input into the development of best practices.

Law enforcement, he added, is “done with hearing our industry talk about how we’re going to stop having their officers respond through the use of ECV or cross-zoning.”

There are few involved in the process who doubt ECV’s value to subscribers and law enforcement. Where there’s disagreement is whether ECV should be included in the forthcoming written standards.

“One of the issues is centered around ECV,” Lou Fiore, chairman of the standards committee at CSAA and president at L.T. Fiore, a consulting firm for the security industry. “It’s still a very effective strategy for legacy systems.”

Fiore added there are “millions” of legacy panels out there and that the industry “can’t do anything techwise to make them become false alarm-resistant.”

“I still think [ECV] needs to be there for legacy issues,” Fiore said. “If you have a residential panel or a commercial panel that doesn’t have video technologies involved, you can’t just disenfranchise it. You have to accommodate them somehow.”

Fiore said the comprehensive standard aims to combine some of the measures delineated in two previously written verification standards, one focusing on verification writ large (CS-V-01-2004) and



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another on audio verification (CS-AUD-01-2012), approved by ANSI in 2004 and 2012, respectively.

The new comprehensive standard will be called CS-V-01-2014, Fiore noted. As things stand now, that standard could be prepared for the ANSI approval process sometime in June, following reviews of a second round of public comments. The CSAA's initial round of public comments closed in December, Fiore said, adding that, during that window, the organization received substantial feedback from PPVAR members.

"We're comfortably within that [June] timeline," said Fiore, who is committed to having the standard completed before the end of 2014.

As Fiore sees it, the mission of a comprehensive verification standard is multifaceted. "The ultimate goal is to reduce the number of false dispatches to its irreducible minimum," he noted. "There are going to be unpredictable situations where customers do things that you can't predict. There's always going to be some baseline false dispatch rate."

He added: "Every time we come up with a new technology we can layer them," which can serve—using Fiore's analogy—to continue "squeezing the sponge."

As the standard moves into its final stages, Fiore said cooperation between the organizations and stakeholders involved will be paramount to project's completion "We're very much working with the PPVAR folks, and another round of public comments will ensure that it's done to everyone's liking."

The final comprehensive standard, he added, should be shaped by feedback from influential law enforcement organizations such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the National Sheriffs' Association. The final product should also be "cost effective and doable," Fiore said.

TAGS: CSAA, PPVAR, LOU FIORE, DON YOUNG, PROTECTION 1, L.T. FIORE, PHYSICAL SECURITY, SSN

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