Understanding the AVS-01

Alarm Verification Standard & its Impact on Physical Security

This paper will explore how The Monitoring Association's AVS-01 alarm verification scoring standard offers physical security teams a framework for alarm system design and incident response.

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Introduction

The vast majority of intrusion alarms reported to police in the United States are false. In fact, an Urban Institute report found that between 90 and 99 percent of alarm calls to police end up being faulty, due to an accidental sensor trip or outdated and failing equipment. Coupled with unprecedented labor shortages, it's no surprise that many police departments are being more judicious with their limited resources.

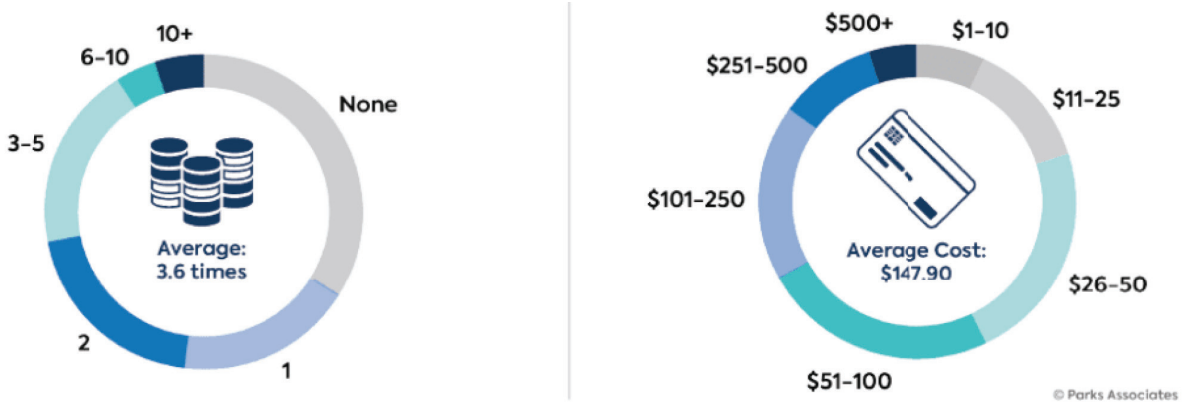

Figure 1. Courtesy of Parks Associates

The Cost of False Alarms

In Salt Lake City, Utah, for example, city officials began requiring the registration of alarm companies and users. In Las Vegas, Nevada, police have resorted to sending private security guards to respond to any alarms that security companies could not themselves verify. Most recently, the Seattle Police Department (SPD) announced that they will only dispatch officers to professionally monitored intrusion alarms if there is verified evidence of a crime, such as video, audio, panic alarms or eyewitness reports indicating an unlawful entry or attempted break-in at a residence or commercial property.

In short, local law enforcement agencies are fed up. Considering the estimated cost of false alarms is approximately $1.8 billion per year in the U.S., this should come as no surprise. That number doesn't only account for fines and equipment maintenance, either, but also the time wasted by unnecessary police response, according to a report by the National Institute of Justice.

The Cost of False Alarms continued

Fines for false alarms vary by state and local jurisdictions, but many areas have implemented a tiered system to discourage repeated false alarms.

Here are a few examples:

Los Angeles, CA

- First: Warning
- Second: $216 fine
- Third: $316 fine
- Fourth and subsequent: $516

New York City, NY

- First: No charge
- Second: $50 fine
- Third: $100 fine
- Fourth and subsequent: $200

Dallas, TX

- First three: No charge
- Fourth to sixth: $50
- Seventh and subsequent: $75

FALSE ALARM FEE SCHEDULE		
NUMBER OF FALSE ALARMS	REGISTERED ALARM SYSTEM	UNREGISTERED ALARM SYSTEM
1st	NO CHARGE	$ 25.00
2nd	NO CHARGE	$ 50.00
3rd	$ 25.00	$ 75.00
4th	$ 50.00	$ 100.00
5th	$ 75.00	$ 150.00
6th	$ 100.00	$ 200.00
7th	$ 150.00	$ 250.00
8th	$ 200.00	$ 300.00 (and all subsequent)
9th	$ 250.00	
10th	$ 300.00 (and all subsequent)	

Figure 2. Courtesy of the City of Bartow, Florida.

In some places, persistent offenders may also face the suspension of police response, requiring them to verify alarms on their own or through private services before law enforcement responds again. For homeowners and commercial businesses to get the most out of their investment in physical security technology, something must change

What is AVS-01?

To address this issue, The Monitoring Association (TMA) recently released TMA AVS-01, an alarm verification scoring standard that provides consistent criteria to help emergency services prioritize incidents. As a framework for alarm monitoring companies to "score" alarm events, AVS-01 was created by stakeholders from across the public safety community to equip dispatchers and police officers with the information they need to respond to verified alarms with the appropriate resources and prioritization.

When a monitoring center receives a signal that an alarm system has been tripped, a monitoring agent will review the available information and assign that alarm a level according to the standards outlined by AVS-01. As more details become available, the same agent can escalate or deescalate that alarm level, keeping officers informed in real time.

Breakdown of the AVS-01 Levels

Before AVS-01, there was no standard procedure for differentiating between alarms. However, in the case that an alert is categorized as an Alarm Levels 2-4 where video, audio, eyewitness or other data sources can corroborate the legitimacy of a threat—an agent will dispatch emergency services with the appropriate prioritization to the verified threat.

While implementing AVS-01 in most cities remains voluntary, most central monitoring stations across the U.S. have already put it into use. Not to mention, the International Chief of Police Association (IACP) and National Sheriffs Association (NSA) recently passed resolutions supporting the AVS-01 standard, highlighting the ways AVS-01 is quickly heading toward universal adoption.

The Monitoring Association®

To better understand what AVS-01 means for your organization's security and how different types of alarm verification could affect police response times, find a breakdown of the advantages of implementing AVS-01 alarm verification standards below:

Reduced False Alarms

One of the primary benefits of AVS-01 is its ability to minimize false alarms by requiring multi-factor verification before alerting emergency services. By classifying alarms based on the predetermined verification standards, prioritizing confirmed threats over potential threats, AVS-01 assists law enforcement and emergency response teams with resource allocation, helping businesses and homeowners avoid fines.

Improved Response Times

Part of verifying alarms for law enforcement involves providing several sources of authenticated information, whether from an integrated surveillance camera, an audio monitoring device or another system datapoints. In this way, AVS-01 not only prioritizes verified alarms, ensuring that true emergencies receive faster attention from police and other first responders, but it also helps inform police response and maximize resource allocation.

Enhanced Accountability

By providing a standardized framework for alarm verification, AVS-01 creates accountability across the security industry, helping build trust between security providers, customers and law enforcement. Regardless of the application, keeping detailed records of who did what and when makes it easier for security directors to generate long-term incident reporting, offering valuable insight into securitypatterns, system performance and user behavior that can better inform to real time incident response.

Cost Savings for Businesses Continuity

In short, reduced false alarms mean lower costs for security companies, as they avoid fines and unnecessary callouts, ultimately passing on savings to their customers. However, over the long term, more efficient intrusion detection and risk mitigation helps facilities avoid the costs of burglary, theft, vandalism, unauthorized access and other crimes. For homeowners, effective security systems offer peace of mind. For businesses, more efficient alarm systems keep doors open and customers happy.

Figure 3. Courtesy of KOMO News.

Compliance with Law Enforcement Protocols

Many police departments are now requiring verified alarms before responding. By adhering to AVS-01, alarm companies can not only meet with these requirements but take steps toward building systems that streamlines the collection, storage and retrieval of system data required by law enforcement, ensuring that records are organized, easily accessible and align with law enforcement requirements, facilitating smoother communication and compliance.

How Alarm Installers are Adopting AVS-01

At the heart of the AVS-01 alarm verification standard is the industry-wide adoption of Remote Video Verification (RVV). By leveraging advanced technologies like multi-sensor systems and intelligent video analytics, as well as subscription-based video monitoring services, many organizations have placed alarm verification at the center of their physical safety and security protocols.

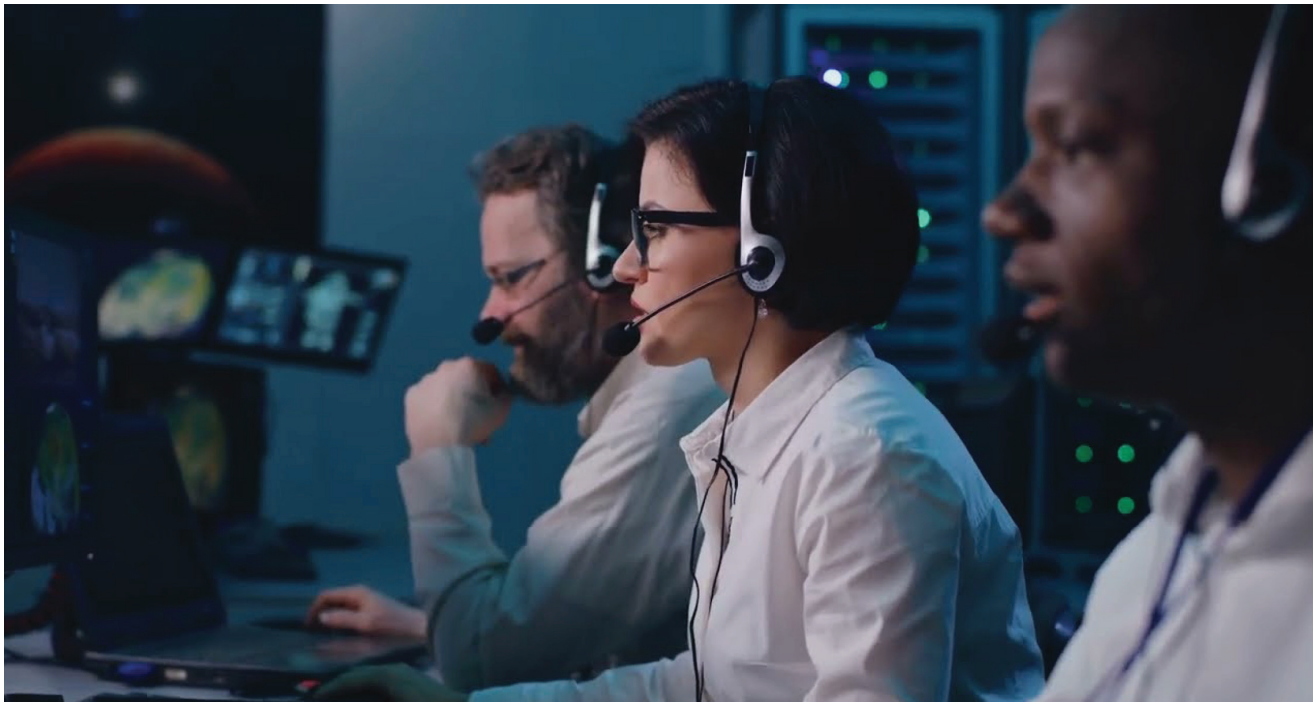

Figure 4. Courtesy of the Partnership for Priority Verified Alarm Response

With RVV, security professionals utilize both historical and real-time data to remotely verify the authenticity of alarms and classify threats based on AVS-01. Whether deployed for motion detection, object detection, facial recognition, number plate recognition or target tracking, integrating advanced RVV solutions expands the capabilities of physical security systems, offering security teams real-time alerts related to ongoing threats.

Unlike traditional CCTV systems that are limited to on-prem infrastructure, RVV taps into the scalability and flexibility of cloud resources for new levels of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, allowing personnel to oversee diverse environments remotely, ensuring continuous vigilance against potential security threats. This ability to access live video feeds and analytics from a cloud-based interface enhances situational awareness and facilitates prompt response to incidents.

Meet Speco Technologies®

Since 1960, Speco Technologies® has been a pioneer in the security industry, delivering high-quality surveillance, access control and audio solutions and continually raising the bar for innovation and customer service. As a family-owned and operated business, Speco's mission is to equip security professionals to build a safer and more secure world for generations to come.

CHeKT Professional Visual Security

At the core of Speco's portfolio of RVV solutions is Speco Cloud, designed to offer organizations a powerful tool for secure video storage and 24/7 access. By integrating with CHeKT, end users can activate their cloud-enabled IP cameras with remote video monitoring services from CHeKT to deliver top-tier visual security services and enhance alarm monitoring by offering real-time remote video surveillance. By verifying alarms for law enforcement using AVS-01, this combined solution ensures true emergencies receive faster attention from police and other first responders.

immix

By integrating with Immix®, Speco customers can also access live video playback, pre- and post-alarm recording and more through Immix®' Central Station Monitoring services and Guard Force platform, which presents a single view of the most critical events and automates workflows for both access control and RVV platforms. Using AVS-01 alarm verification standards, customers can slash false alarms rates, while they compile detailed records of who did what and when for long-term incident reporting and system insights.

Looking Forward

For organizations struggling with the cost of false alarms, the TMA AVS-01 alarm verification standard offers security teams a framework for alarm system design and incident response. By prioritizing alarm verification, security teams can benefit from improved police response times, enhanced accountability, cost savings and system compliance.

As the demand for comprehensive security solutions continues to grow, AVS-01 will be the bedrock on which all security solutions are built for organizations aiming to stay resilient and adaptive in the face of evolving security threats. To explore Speco's full line of integrated and intelligent solutions, visit www.specotech.com. To contact Speco's team of customer service representatives, call 1.800.645.5516 (toll free) or email sales@specotech.com.

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