



Toronto Police Service

To Serve and Protect

Communications Services

Alarm Unit

Alarm Verification – Notice of Pending Amendment – Verified Response

Effective: January 1, 2016

The Toronto Police Service has examined service-delivery models looking for opportunities to improve upon service delivery and efficiencies. A review of response to alarm events has been completed. It has been found that alarm activation is not necessarily an indicator of criminal activity. On average, the Toronto Police Service has responded to over 23,000 alarm events per year and the review has shown that 98% of these calls for service are identified as false – meaning a police response was not required.

In an effort to reduce the impact of false alarm events on police resources and to improve efficiencies and effectiveness, a “verified response” requirement will be implemented, commencing 2016, and applied to all **burglar alarm activations** as part of the Alarm Response Policy.

Verified response is defined as follows:

The requirement of validation that criminal activity is occurring/has taken place OR there is imminent threat to personal safety PRIOR to requesting a police response.

This verification requirement will apply to burglar alarm activations (including, but not limited to, alarm distinctions described as burglar, motion, door, window, glass break etcetera).

A burglar alarm may be verified using one or more of the following methods:

- Audio device;
- Video device;
- Multiple zone activations; or
- An eyewitness (i.e. private security or person at scene).

Please note that panic alarm activations are NOT included and will not require verification. Panic alarm activation includes, but is not limited to; alarm distinctions described as panic, hold-up, duress, emergency button, etcetera.

All alarm activations will be treated as a high priority call for service and police response will continue to be determined by the nature, demand, priorities and resources available at the time of the request for service.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the TPS changing the way in which they respond to alarm activations?

The change is intended to reduce police response to false alarms and result in the ability to redirect police resources in a more efficient manner to provide an improved response to other calls for service. Year after year, the majority of alarm activations reported to the TPS have been identified as false (98%). This means, police officers are responding to calls for service where there is no requirement for a police response.

The TPS is striving to provide the best possible service to all members of the community. Other agencies that have implemented verified response have seen a reduction in the number of calls for service related to alarm events. By reducing response to false alarm events, the call takers, dispatchers and police officers will be more available to provide response to other calls for service and core police duties and responsibilities.

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What is verified response?

A verified response means there is some form of verification that there has been an unwanted intrusion. The TPS has defined verified response as: The requirement of validation that criminal activity is occurring/has taken place OR there is imminent threat to personal safety PRIOR to requesting a police response.

The verification requirement will apply to burglar alarm activations. It will NOT apply to panic alarm activations.

Has verified response been implemented in other jurisdictions?

Many other law enforcement agencies have successfully implemented a verified response protocol and have experienced a reduction in the number of false alarm events responded to.

When will the requirement for verified response be implemented?

The implementation date is scheduled for January 1, 2016. Confirmation will be communicated to all registered monitoring stations and posted on the TPS website.

Will the TPS continue to respond to alarm activations?

Yes, the TPS will provide a response to alarm activations; however, a burglar alarm must be verified to confirm an unwanted intrusion prior to requesting a police response. Once the burglar alarm activation has been verified, the TPS will provide a response.

The TPS will provide a response to panic alarm activations and a verification process will not be required.

How is a burglar alarm activation to be verified?

A burglar alarm may be verified using one or more of the following methods:

- Audio device;
- Video device;
- Multiple zone activations; or
- An eye witness (i.e. private security or person at scene).

What is considered to be a burglar alarm?

A burglar alarm activation includes, but is not limited to, alarm distinctions described as burglar, motion, door, window, glass break, etcetera.

What is considered to be a panic alarm?

A panic alarm activation includes, but is not limited to; alarm distinctions described as panic, hold-up, duress, emergency button, etcetera.

Why doesn't the TPS increase the false alarm fee?

An increase in the false alarm fee has not seen a significant reduction in the number of alarms reported and identified to be false. In 2010, the false alarm fee was increased to \$130 from \$83.50. The number of alarm events reported to the TPS have remained over 23,000 and 98% have been identified as false.

As an alarm client, what should I do?

Owning and operating an alarm system involves a private contract with a private and for-profit business that is providing a

private service. The TPS recommends that alarm clients contact the alarm dealer and/or monitoring station to discuss current alarm system set-up, alarm settings and response options.