DIRECT TO ECC ALARM NOTIFICATIONS

December 30, 2025

Direct to ECC Alarm Notifications Pose a Significant Risk to Public Safety

Emergency Communication Centers (ECCs), also known as 911 centers and Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), are essential lifelines for public safety. ECCs serve as the central hub for receiving, processing, analyzing, and coordinating emergency calls, enabling rapid and effective deployment of police, fire, and EMS personnel. However, ECCs nationwide are contending with escalating workloads and critical staffing deficits. The growing availability of consumer products and services that send calls for service directly to ECCs, without proper vetting by a qualified intermediary, will further strain public safety resources.

Direct to ECC (D2ECC) products and services integrated into the public safety ecosystem must be managed to avoid negatively affecting ECC call volume, emergency dispatch prioritization, and first responder workload. There is a growing concern by the public safety community that with constantly changing technology, many providers of D2ECC services and applications fail to understand that any services they provide that introduce alarm notifications must be properly vetted before transmission to ECCs. Unverified D2ECC applications will place an undue burden on public safety telecommunicators, forcing them to triage every incoming event, regardless of its validity or urgency. It is critical that any services that introduce alarm notifications be properly vetted before transmission to ECCs.

As an example, video manufactures are marketing “Do-It-Yourself” (DIY) camera systems that claim they will send alerts directly to public safety without any intermediary. This will result in public safety telecommunicators being burdened with needing to triage every video clip received. Emerging cell phone D2ECC Automatic Crash Notification applications also highlight the importance of intermediary vetting before a call for service is created.

Automated calls for public safety assistance place an undue strain on 9-1-1, taking valuable resources away from those who truly have an urgent need for emergency assistance. Public safety agencies previously prohibited automatic voice dialers that called emergency numbers and played pre-recorded messages requesting assistance. Widespread dissatisfaction with these devices led to legislative bans. Absent professional third-party verification, history is poised to repeat itself. Today’s D2ECC applications represent a modern parallel to these automated voice dialers – and the operational challenges they pose to emergency communications will far exceed those of the earlier voice dialer era.

Why professional alarm monitoring and vetting is important

When burglar alarm systems first became widespread, alarm monitoring centers operated under a default response model where virtually every burglar alarm signal resulted in a call to public safety for service. Today, as a direct result of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) deployed by professional monitoring centers, nearly 90% of residential alarm signals do not result in a call for service.

The chart below shows the significant impact monitoring center SOPs have on reducing calls for service for other monitored alarm services:

Service	Notes	Calls for service eliminated by monitoring center processes
Residential Burglar		~90%
Commercial Burglar		~75%
Residential Fire	Regulatory driven	~70%
Personal Emergency Response		~50%
Commercial Fire	Regulatory driven	~10%
Residential CO	Regulatory driven	~10%

These call reduction statistics are the result of decades of refinement to alarm monitoring center SOPs, to include the implementation of American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accredited standards as well as continued technological innovation.

Empirical data clearly demonstrates the risk of deploying D2ECC applications that do not adhere to proven calls for service and false alarm reduction SOPs. If D2ECC applications are exempt from regulatory compliance and are not verified by a third party, 1,000 alarm signals generated by D2ECC applications will likely result in 1,000 additional calls for service. This increase in volume will overwhelm already strained ECC resources, degrade response times, and divert attention away from true emergencies.

Recommendations

Historically, the negative impact of older generation D2ECC applications on public safety is undisputable. That newer D2ECC applications will have an even larger negative impact on public safety is equally undisputable. Only through a unified position of the public safety community and the cooperation of the alarm notification industry can these risks be effectively mitigated.

Standards and best practices for verifying alarm notifications can significantly reduce the burden on public safety telecommunicators and ensure that only true emergencies reach ECCs as calls for service. The following standards and best practices are documented as significantly reducing calls for service and false alarms. Their mandated use for D2ECC applications by local policy or ordinance should be considered:

Permits and False Alarm Fines – Alarm permits required by ordinance ensure compliance with public safety protocols and enable effective enforcement of false alarm reduction measures, to include false alarm fines. Fining alarm users for false alarms is a proven method to reduce unneeded calls for service.

Enhanced Call Confirmation - Requires an alarm monitoring company to make two attempts to contact the alarm site and/or the alarm user prior to creating a call for service.

Alarm Confirmation, Verification and Notification Procedures – CS-V-01 is an ANSI Standard that defines alarm confirmation, verification and notifications procedures, thus reducing calls for service and is supported by major public safety organizations including the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA).

Alarm Validation Scoring - TMA-AVS-01 is a recent ANSI standard that provides a standardized method of creating an alarm score metric for unauthorized verified human activity detected by alarm systems, and, providing the alarm score to the ECC when a call for service is created. Proper use of AVS is enforced by Underwriters Laboratories audits.

Support TMA and AICC - APCO, IAFC, IACP, and NSA, have long worked with The Monitoring Association (TMA) and the Alarm Industry Communications Committee (AICC) to promote best practices that reduce the transmission of false alarms to ECCs. We recommend that all providers of calls for service to ECCs work with the public safety community and TMA and AICC to adopt practices that properly vet alarm notifications before transmission to ECCs.