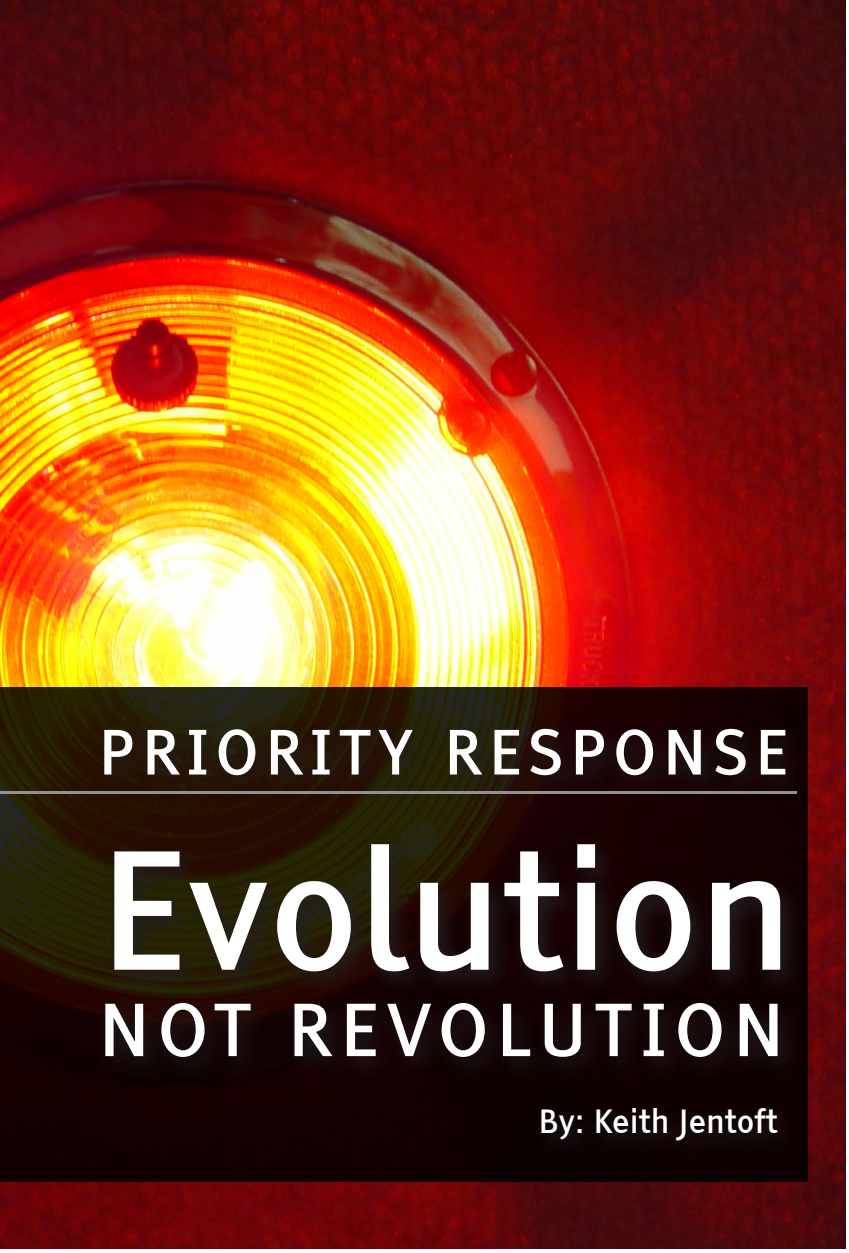


PRIORITY RESPONSE

Evolution NOT REVOLUTION

By: Keith Jentoft

Pursuing priority response for new video alarm systems is an evolution, not a revolution; another step as the industry embraces new affordable detection technologies, improvements in notification and changing law enforcement concerns. The security industry was built upon a simple model of detection/notification/response but the model and the technologies behind it have not been static. Evolutions driven by improved performance, falling costs and increasing market demand created the multi-billion dollar industry that keeps us employed. Priority police response is just one more step, improving security and creating greater value for the industry.

DETECTION

A simple list of today's detectors demonstrates the journey towards greater value for less money. Moving from a simple switch or window foil used on early alarms, detection is now an entire range of sophisticated electronic sensors targeting: audio, motion, pressure, temperature, smoke, carbon monoxide, humidity and more. Broader detection options add value for the consumer and greater flexibility and revenue for the dealer. Just as critical, detection has also become more affordable; tremendous progress from the first generation trigger-prone PIRs costing over $400 each.

NOTIFICATION

Notification has also evolved as communication networks changed and improved. From initial hardwired systems using the McCulloh circuit, notification moved to tape dialers on telephones. With the electronics revolution in the 60s, alarm system hardware became both more affordable and more reliable, begging new improvements in notification. Courier Smith introduced digital dialers in 1972 and POTS notification evolved into the mainstream. Later, moving beyond telephone, effective radio notification emerged, evolving to satellite and mesh networks. Most recently, cell networks and affordable data plans spawned another generation of alarm systems transmitting signals over GSM and GPRS. As the networks evolved, central station notification also changed, adopting new technologies and processes. What had been just a person with a telephone now involves specialized operators using an automated computerized platform combined with a direct link to the alarm system and even the police. Evolution continues as networks move to capitalize on the benefits of IP's promise of convergence.

RESPONSE

Inexpensive hardware, the digital phone network and centralized monitoring created a business model that could scale and enabled alarm systems to be sold to the masses. This success in turn forced evolutions in response. The sheer number of these new alarm systems meant that the workload of law enforcement being dispatched grew exponentially as both law enforcement and the security industry explored avenues for evolution in product and processes to address the problem of alarm response.

For their part, law enforcement began to entertain changes in response that threatened the detect/notify/respond security model by curtailing or eliminating alarm response altogether. The most extreme approach, "non-response," declared police would no longer respond to intrusion alarms at all. Other less extreme proposals included verified response or broadcast-and-file. In verified response, police require additional audio or video alarm verification before they respond, effectively declaring that vast majority of systems already installed are obsolete and don't merit response. Broadcast-and-file is a downgraded response policy that gives police the option of responding. When the central station reports an alarm, police simply broadcast it over their radios and if there is an officer in the area with nothing more important on hand, they may choose to respond. Each of these options, non-response, verified response and broadcast-and-file, downgrade response, minimize the value of detect/notify and the life safety of the community.

The industry expended enormous effort to reduce alarm dispatches and worked hard pursuing improvements in the detect/notify part of the model. Some of the initial industry solutions focused on alarm hardware, including improvements in detector reliability eliminating false trips. Another big step was the creation of the CP-01 standard for alarm systems to address most of the needless alarm dispatches caused by the users themselves. These efforts have generally moved in the same direction – greater confirmation means greater response. The most successful solution delivering proven results is ECV, Enhanced Call Verification, where the monitoring station makes 2 phone calls to confirm an alarm before dispatching police. ECV has dramatically reduced alarm response and helped maintain the integrity of the detect/notify/respond paradigm. These programs have worked so well that alarm dispatches are actually declining even while the total number of intrusion alarms continues to grow. But the situation is not static. Declining budgets and greater pressure on law enforcement resources in today's economy underscore the fact that the industry cannot afford to stand still. Fewer law enforcement officers mean diminished response and certainly longer response times. New solutions are needed to maximize response and optimize the detect/notify value of alarm systems with central stations.

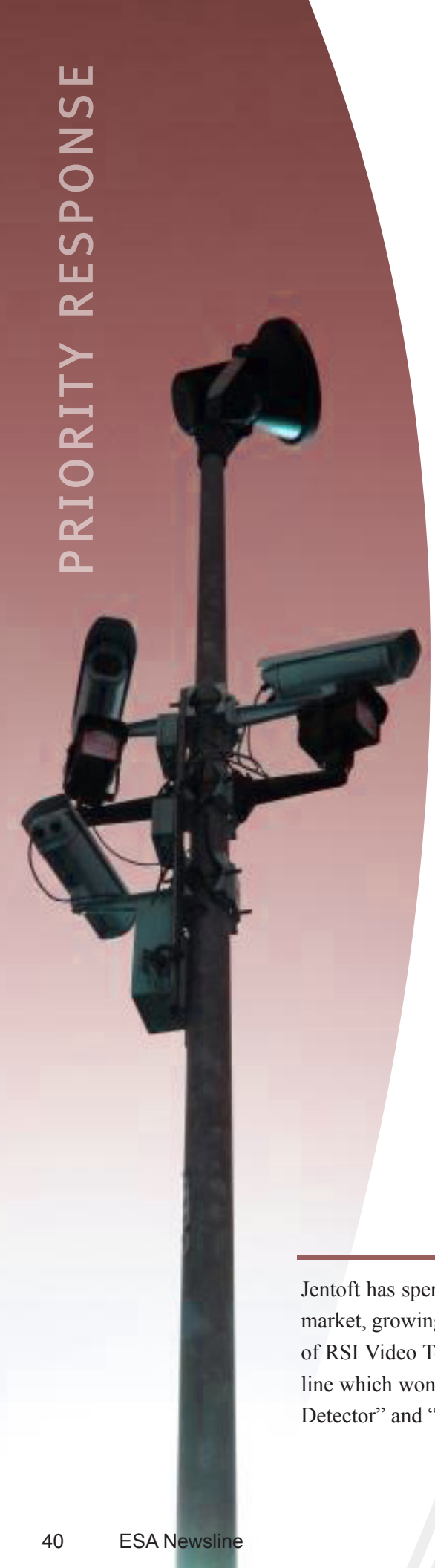
PRIORITY RESPONSE TO ENHANCED VIDEO ALARMS

One evolution gaining acceptance and creating value for both the industry and law enforcement is priority response to enhanced video alarms. This approach continues current law enforcement response policy for existing alarm systems and does not obsolete the installed base – an important fact. Instead, priority response builds on the current prioritization processes in 911 dispatch centers where events are prioritized for response according to importance, "man-down" typically receiving highest priority. Priority response advocates improved response for greater confirmation of an alarm, consistent with the industry's historical position. More than a nebulous concept, priority response to enhanced video alarms is to work with the law enforcement dispatch/911 centers to achieve three goals:

1. Create a new dispatch code for enhanced video alarms with a higher priority response designation.

2. Create an email address in the dispatch center where participating central stations can send video clips of the alarms.

3. Provide the security industry with an official announcement of the policy that industry sales people can use to help sell enhanced video alarm systems to residential and commercial consumers.



While there were initial concerns in the industry that allowing this approach was leading law enforcement down a path where they would curtail or drop response to standard alarm systems altogether, case after case is proving this fear unfounded. Police see creating a new response category as a reasonable policy when declining budgets are forcing them to stack 911 calls for action by a dwindling force of officers. Priority response is a positive message that delivers arrests and efficiency that can help counterbalance the negativity of needless dispatches. From their side, law enforcement are willing to help the industry move enhanced video alarms into the mainstream for residential and commercial applications with formal announcements of their policy changes for use by salespeople. One example of such an announcement is from the sheriff of Calhoun County:

"While Calhoun County sheriff's deputies will continue our current policy of responding immediately to all intrusion alarms, we believe that enhanced video alarms offer enhanced protection to you and help us in our efforts to keep Calhoun County citizens safe and protect their property. We believe that the delivery of a video of the specific event that triggered the alarm is a tremendous improvement in alarm technology that will lead to a reduction in false alarms saving valuable budget dollars. While we are not endorsing a specific provider or brand of product, we support the efforts of the security industry to provide their customers with the best protection possible and we look forward to being able to use enhanced video alarms to improve the life safety of our county."

As alarm companies pursue building greater partnerships with law enforcement with a positive message of priority response, the results have been encouraging. This approach has been successful in the Greater Boston area where local alarm companies American Alarm, Wayne Alarm and ASG have all worked with their local police departments to implement priority response for enhanced video alarms. Beginning with Boston and then working with the larger suburbs, department after department embraced the concept. Similar success has been made in Pennsylvania, Iowa and Illinois. Duluth, Minnesota is embracing the concept as a way to continue to provide the best alarm response in a difficult economy. Colorado police already embrace a multi-tier response policy for intrusion alarms and present the industry with opportunities to grow. Priority Response is a positive message the security industry can offer police, giving them hope as we move towards improving alarm technology with greater verification.

Jentoft has spent over 20 years introducing European technology to the US market, growing companies from $3 to $200 million in 8 years. As President of RSI Video Technologies, Jentoft is responsible for the Videofied product line which won the ISC West "Best of Show" as well as the "Best Intrusion Detector" and "Best Wireless Alarm System" at the 2009 ESX show.