



Testimony of Douglas M. Curtiss

President and Founder of Sonitrol New England

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AN ACT REQUIRING VERIFICATION TO REDUCE FALSE ALARMS

Chairman Larson, Chairman Dargan & Members of the Committee,

Good Morning, my name is Doug Curtiss. I am the President and founder of Sonitrol New England, headquartered in Rocky Hill, Connecticut. I appreciate this opportunity to speak with you today about the issue of false alarms, the impact they have on the community and public safety.

By way of background, I started Sonitrol in 1972, right here in downtown Hartford. Since then we have grown to be the largest vertically integrated security provider in the state of Connecticut, serving over 15,000 residential, commercial and municipal customers throughout the State. We operate our own on-site, fully integrated central monitoring center in Rocky Hill, which has enabled us to assist Connecticut law enforcement in over 9,800 apprehensions over the past 43 years.

First, I would like to express my support of this proposed legislation.

National studies have documented that false alarm rates for burglar alarms are between 92 – 98%. Let me repeat that for emphasis. When the Connecticut State or local police receive an alarm call, more than 9 out of 10 of these calls are false. Typically, one or two cruisers are routinely dispatched to a business or residence, and are tied up for 30 minutes to an hour until the owner arrives on-site and the alarm is cleared. This is a terrible waste of police resources as they face budget restraint.

The provisions outlined in Section B, Subsection 1 of the bill referring to a fine structure for repeat false alarm offenders is a step forward. Further, mandating alarm companies call the premises and contact list to reduce false alarms is also positive. New technology is on the way.



The legislation notes that when audio or video is used, the alarm operator is watching or listening to a crime in progress. Phone calls to the premises only delay the response and potentially warn the intruder. A police response to a crime in progress leads to apprehensions.

So how is technology helping here? I served as a founding member of an organization called 'Partnership for Priority Verified Alarm Response' (PPVAR). PPVAR is a public/private partnership, comprised of members from Law Enforcement, the Insurance Industry and the Electronic Security Industry, established to educate electronic security stakeholders on the value of audio and video alarm verification during the dispatch process to provide the most reliable and cost effective alarm response and ultimately to help reduce false alarms and increase apprehension rates.

Priority Response is a policy that gives verified alarms higher priority than a traditional burglar alarm. In an era of shrinking police budgets, verification as a solution saves time and money for police departments, increases officer and public safety by leading to higher apprehension rates. Verified alarms, where the central station operator is a witness to a crime in progress, have increased apprehensions with documented arrest rates¹ over 10%. Priority Response to actual crimes means responding officers are often able to arrest the criminals in the act. Audio and video verification are the future of the alarm industry. These technologies promise more arrests during crimes in progress, fewer false alarms, and greater safety for officers and citizens.

I would like to thank the Committee for your time today and your consideration on this important issue. I would be happy to provide any additional information or answer any questions that you may have.

Douglas M. Curtiss

President & Founder
Sonitrol New England

¹ *Police Chief Magazine* March 2012 and *SDM Magazine* June 2012