IMPORTANT NOTIFICATION RE PSTN/GSM RELIABILITY

1st August 2017

Dear Installer,

As you may be aware, there has been serious reliability issues with analogue PSTN & GSM communication paths of late between your Intruder alarm panels and any ARC (Alarm Receiving Centre) to which they are connected. We are writing to you with the latest information we have at hand following a meeting of the NMCF (National Monitoring Centre Forum) today. The NCMF among other Security Industry bodies that we know of have written on two occasions to COMREG for clarification on this issue and to date there has been no response whatsoever from them. Also to date, we are unaware of any attempt by Eir (formerly Eircom) or COMREG to alert the public of the issue and how it may affect any of their houses or properties currently relying on an Intruder Alarm connection to an ARC, or indeed any communication device using the same technology or communication path. As a result, we have taken the decision to inform you what we know to be happening right now. We would strongly advise you to alert your own customers that they may not currently be protected by any ARC in the event of an alarm activation.

THE ISSUE
To the best of our knowledge, Eir (formerly Eircom) have begun a nationwide upgrade on their existing Network Exchanges. This upgrade involves the digitalisation of the current analogue system. Analogue signals are now being converted and processed digitally within the Eir Exchange, then reconverted back to analogue, and then being routed/despatched by the Eir Exchange. The issue is that the data transmitted by the Intruder Panel is being corrupted in the analogue/digital/analogue process. The result is that signals coming through to the ARC's are unrecognisable. This means that ARC's have no idea where the signal is from or what is says, and if presented at all it will be as an invalid alarm from an unknown source.

WHAT IT AFFECTS?
At this time, it seems that this issue primarily affects any signal transmitted via SIA or SIA III (extended SIA) protocols. In some cases Contact ID is still working fine, however we have seen cases whereby the information is corrupted with different Digi Numbers, Alarm Codes, & Zone Information even on Contact ID. This is possibly due to longer runs between Eir Exchanges in certain parts of the country. In some instances we have seen that although there are signals coming through on Contact ID, the data has not been consistent (even from the same panel) showing some signs of corruption on intermittent transmissions. There is no guarantee that an activation will come through in an intelligible form every time. Please be aware that this affects any analogue PSTN or GSM connection to any ARC. Once the panel is required to dial a phone number to transmit the data, the information may be corrupted as both analogue PSTN & GSM signals must go through an Exchange. This problem will only increase as the upgrade continues around the various Eir Exchanges around the country.

HOW WILL YOU KNOW?

The only way you will know if any of your customers have been effected so far is if (a) the intruder panel is appearing on a 'Fail to Test Report' or (b) the customer fails to get a response from an ARC following any activation or signal from the panel. The latter is obviously a huge concern as it is obviously too late, but there is no getting away from the fact that there are currently thousands of Intruder Panels right now in Ireland that cannot get through to any ARC.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

We would strongly advise you that you should make your customers aware of the issue with PSTN/GSM communication paths. In some cases, switching the protocol to Contact ID is fixing the immediate problem. However, this does not fix the issue completely and certainly will not guarantee a consistent (or any) signal in the future. It is also prudent to consider that as Eir progresses with their migration to digital processing, there is a possibility that any existing analogue protocols may not be effective in the future over analogue GSM or PSTN.

The only way to eliminate the issue is to switch to a digital means of communication. Smart Monitoring offer the full range of CSL products to allow connection from **ANY** new or legacy panel to the ARC via IP signalling. CSL MiniAir with APP Control, DigiAir, DigiFire, & GradeShift Grade 3 & 4 products are completely **FREE of CHARGE** to you the Installer enabling you to make the switch with ease and without any additional hardware cost to your customers. Each CSL product features a Roaming World Sim Card for the safe transmission of Digital IP Signalling on the CSL Gemini VPN Network which currently protects over 500,000 premises in the Ireland & the UK.

In addition, most Intruder manufacturers now offer an IP Communication Path directly from the Intruder Panel to Smart Monitoring via a Digital IP Sim Card, LAN Connection, or Wi-Fi Connection. Smart Monitoring are offering this solution from Irelands leading manufacturers and providers such as HKC, GSD, Risco, Pyronix, Vanderbilt (Siemens), UTC (GE/Aritech), and Texecom.

Without any doubt any of the above options are the only way to provide a safe, reliable, consistent, and future-proofed communication path from your customers Intruder Panels to the ARC. We will endeavour to keep you updated on this critically important issue. Please feel free to contact me to discuss any of the above, or how we can help you make the change.

Best regards,

Garrett Wall
General Manager