



# How efficient are your alarm monitoring operators?

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Having an automated alarm solution is an integral part of your operations. However, without alarm monitoring best practices, warning notifications can cause confusion and disruption. Arming the operators at your alarm monitoring center with the knowledge to respond quickly and efficiently to alerts can minimize distractions and reduce stress. Unfortunately, operator efficiency can be difficult to achieve long term with an aging workforce and staff turnover.

Inefficient or inadequate operator performance can cost companies in both financial and productivity losses. So, what are some of the obstacles that prevent them from responding quickly and with a reasonable level of expertise? Additionally, what are the costs of not providing your alarm monitoring center with the tools they need to do their jobs well?

## Obstacles to Alarm Monitoring Operator Efficiency

Your business relies on a centralized alarm monitoring software to interpret vast amounts of signals and alerts from multiple sources to prevent intrusion, maintain public or employee safety, safeguard data, and monitor the performance of various systems. Without the proper training, tools, and situational awareness, operators can be easily overwhelmed at precisely the time they need to be the most focused.

Many factors contribute to the stress and confusion that can happen in a monitoring environment:

- Nuisance alarms that don't require a response
- Lack of training/situational awareness
- Disparate systems
- Searching for information

Nuisance alarms, representing approximately 75% of alerts, are frequently called noise because they can distract operators if they don't have the tools or experience to react appropriately. False alarms happen when monitoring

equipment picks up movement from animals, insects, birds, trees, or even shadows. False positives occur when authorized access is registered as an intrusion. Implementing the appropriate onboarding processes, security protocols, and alarm monitoring best practices can help prevent distraction from false positives, while false alarms can be minimized by implementing the right technology.

Training and situational awareness not only can reduce stress and alarm fatigue but can empower your operators, allowing them to respond confidently to alarms without unnecessary intervention. Onboarding should cover the type of equipment used for monitoring, what the different signals and alerts mean, the type of business and how it operates, how to verify the situation before dispatching emergency personnel, and where to find the documentation they need when responding. A study from the Center for Operator Performance showed that training should be ongoing and that occasional one-hour pre-shift training can improve operator efficiency.

Even if your monitoring personnel are well-versed and



experienced in steady-state monitoring response, what happens when unplanned outages occur? Do they have to operate multiple interfaces on separate systems for response procedures? Are the procedures well documented and easy to reference quickly? Alarm monitoring can be optimized by designing it with users in mind, meaning that the process of accessing protocols and procedures should be intuitive for even new operators.

## **The Impacts of Inefficient Operator Practices**

### **Lost Productivity**

Abnormal situations still occur as part of normal operations. Understanding how to recognize the alerts that are triggered can prevent expensive loss from productivity impacts, damages, and delays. Implementing an automated alarm solution along with robust response practices can allow operators to discern the critical alerts and respond quickly and appropriately.

### **Fines**

Based on the jurisdiction, companies can receive a fine for having emergency personnel respond to false alarms. According to the ASU Center for Problem-Oriented Policing, false alarms cost police an estimated \$1.8 billion. That money exceeds the budget for most municipalities and it also diverts first responders from assisting residents in distress. Communities must pass on those costs to the individuals or businesses that requested the dispatch.

### **Damage**

Failure of an operator to clearly understand the warnings or alerts particular to the monitored business could mean mistaking an out-of-bounds signal as a maintenance alert. The resulting damage to products, equipment, or even whole facilities could be catastrophic.

### **Injury or Death**

While an automated alarm solution can alert operators to a number of situations, it is the handling of the response that can make the difference. Without appropriate onboarding and refresher training on response protocols and alarm

monitoring best practices, an operator error could prevent emergency personnel from being dispatched in life-threatening situations.

### **Alarm Fatigue**

Alarms are meant to alert others to the presence of danger, whether it is from intrusion, human distress, or equipment failure. When alarms are not handled appropriately and allowed to become so frequent an occurrence that they become commonplace, it creates alarm fatigue, where neighbors, employees, and others simply assume it is merely another false alarm. The risks of alarm fatigue can range from apathy to loss of life.

## **The Keys to Robust Response and Effective Operator Performance**

The first step in achieving operator efficiency is to implement an alarm monitoring system that not only allows operators to access the information they need instantly but also intelligently distinguishes between noise and a legitimate warning to reduce response fatigue. The best solution should be fully customizable to fit each business and industry, allowing operators to learn the types of alerts and responses for each specific business monitored. Finally, it should allow for custom software integrations when necessary.

Once the appropriate automated alarm solution is in place, implementing robust response protocols is what minimizes the impacts of human fallibility. As alarm frequency increases, so does the possibility of errors caused by stress or inexperience. When the operators are trained on alarm monitoring best practices often, operator efficiency increases.

## **The Solutions You Need for Effective Alarm Monitoring**

When you need trusted business solutions for the security industry, SIS is the answer. We offer a streamlined solution for alarm monitoring to help meet your needs. To find out more about our solutions and services or to schedule a free demo, contact us today.