VoIP And Home Security Monitoring

VOIP is an acronym for Voice Over Internet Protocol. It simply uses your broadband internet connection to place voice calls digitally over IP based networks. Generally, a consumer will pay a flat monthly fee for local and long distance calls, often for considerably less than a regular analog land line. Companies that offer this service include Vonage, MagicJack, AT&T CallVantage, and Ooma.

Using VOIP And Alarm Systems Can Pose Problems Because:

1. An alarm system is designed to send its signals over an analog phone line. To transmit emergency signals properly using VOIP, the signal must be converted to digital, then converted again to analog. It is during this conversion that problems develop. Usually the signals arrive at the central monitoring station with errors, or not at all.

2. Your alarm panel comes equipped with a back up power supply in the event of a power failure. Because traditional phone lines will still work even if your power is out, your monitoring station will still receive the proper signals. With VOIP, your phone service (specifically your IP router and/or modem) will not operate during a power failure, preventing any kind of signal transmission from your alarm to the monitoring station. You can prevent this with the purchase of a UPS (Un-interruptible Power Supply) for your PC.

3. VOIP services tend to be more prone to “mysterious” technical issues and dropped calls. Your alarm panel may be communicating vital data to your monitoring station, and a dropped call will obviously interfere with this. Or, your alarm’s signal may go through without a problem on one attempt, but will fail on another for no apparent reason. Some possible explanations? You may be using a caller ID blocking service that masks your alarm's identity to your monitoring station. Or you may have adjusted your VOIP signal's quality settings too low, to reduce bandwidth requirements.

4. Similar to a land line, your VOIP line (specifically your cable connection) can be cut or disabled by a potential intruder, severing your link to the monitoring station. Because of the issues noted above, many customers end up paying extra to use cellular or radio as a back up to their VOIP monitoring account.

So What Is Being Done To Make VOIP And Alarm Systems More Compatible?

The VOIP and alarm systems manufacturers are still working with alarm companies on permanent solutions to these transmission problems. For now, you can use cellular or radio monitoring as the primary method of transmitting your alarm signals (at additional cost, of course). These methods were originally designed as a back up to your regular phone line in the event it is disabled, and may not be available in all areas (especially radio monitoring).