

# SECURITY SYSTEMS - POST INSTALLATION FOLLOW UP

When following technicians disrupt your good work!



When your existing alarm clients subsequently need an additional piece of customer equipment installed and connection arranged to the carrier side cabling to the network, it is usually either for a broadband installation or pay TV. Any registered cabler can perform this function.

It is no longer necessary, nor preferable, for the consumer to request their telecommunications carrier to carry out customer cabling installations of this nature.

The carriers, since the deregulation of the telecommunications market, have reduced their workforce repeatedly and now in many cases use subcontractors to provide residential cabling services (customer cabling work, on the customer side of the network boundary), as this work is extraneous to their core operations.

## **Problem scenario: the additional installation**

When a monitored security system exists in a home and a subsequent connection to the network, such as for broadband or pay TV, needs to be added to the premises, problems can arise if the client's carrier is requested to undertake the subsequent customer-side wiring. The carrier's technician or contractor may not be familiar with monitored electronic security systems, and may be unaware of the problems that subsequent installations can cause for them.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has issued media statements warning consumers to alert following technicians to the presence of an alarm system in a premises. It has advised that ADSL, for example, can disable an installed alarm unless appropriate filters are

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installed. It has even warned of the potential for a new ADSL installation in one home to interfere with an alarm system already operating in the house next door.

Since deregulation, ACMA has worked with industry, via the Cabling Provider Rules 2000, to help provide a competitive landscape in the customer cabling market for registered private-sector cabling providers. A landscape which, though not quite the elusive level playing field, exists totally apart from the carriers, notwithstanding any pre-deregulation services they may still offer in the customer cabling area.

### **Problem scenario: the phone fault rectification**

Another potential problem for consumers can involve the pre-existence of a monitored alarm in a premises where a fault subsequently develops with the phone facility. In this scenario, in case the fault is on its side of the network boundary, the carrier is contacted and it will send out either a staff or contractor cabler to identify and locate it, then rectify it and restore a working phone line.

This may mean that a faulty piece of equipment will need to be isolated or removed in order to restore dial tone. The carrier's technician will often blame the failure of the phone system on the presence of the alarm, although industry experience has revealed such allegations to rarely be substantiable, being often the product of carrier cablers' inexperience with electronic security systems.

However, in the urgency of meeting their statutory obligation to restore phone service to the consumer as soon as practicable, and as a result of their frustration with dealing with customer cabling and technology they do not necessarily understand, carrier technicians have been known to disconnect and bypass the Mode 3 socket, or otherwise interrupt its operation, thus disabling the security system, or in some other way cause the alarm to malfunction (due to ADSL interference from its installation without filtration, for example).

As one ASIAL members advised *Security Insider*, "It's usually more than a simple case of the carrier's cabler leaving devices unplugged, and so the client cannot legally touch the work to remedy the problem even if they understand it. It will cost them a further service call, to the carrier or, more sensibly, to their alarm company."

In both of the above scenarios, notwithstanding the origins of the *problem*, the *solution* lies more with the customer and their security provider than with the carriers and their technicians. On the one hand, if the client is adding further network connections to the premises, whether for data, extra phones or additional security equipment, ideally they should ask their ASIAL Member, who installed the original system, to undertake this following

work. They will know the system is there and will be aware of all of its technical characteristics. If filtration needs to be incorporated to protect it from interference from the following installation, they will know what, how and where.

On the other hand, when there is no alternative to seeking the carrier's assistance because the problem is a phone malfunction, and the fault may lie on the carrier side of the network boundary, the minimum the client should ensure is that the carrier's technician (or contractor) is made fully aware there is a monitored security system *in situ*.

In truth, most alarm technicians will point out, the carrier's cabler should be capable of identifying the presence of an alarm and knowing what action to take with it after they complete their following work. They should at least always ask the client about pre-existing cabling (the customer copy of the mandatory TCA form, completed by the security technician and given to the client by the Member at the time of the original installation, should clearly identify the alarm system and how it has been wired to the network boundary, whether via Mode 3 socket or other means, and whether any filters are already incorporated into the circuit. If the customer shows this form to the carrier's technician, there should be no excuse for misunderstanding).

According to one ASIAL Member, with more than 20 years experience in untangling clients from such problems, "The client is normally the initiator of these types of subsequent jobs, whether it's to add another customer-cabled installation or to rectify a phone fault." "That's why I believe that alarm installing Members should make a point of contacting their clients and making them aware it's their responsibility to manage any subsequent work that may need to be done by carrier technicians or contractors. They should also ensure their clients know to test the alarm after the installation has been completed, just in case."

Many residential and small commercial customers are probably unaware that the ASIAL Member who installed and who maintains their electronic security system is also their ideal choice for most, if not all, subsequent installation projects in their home or small office.

This can mean most communications cabling jobs, from the straightforward installation of additional dedicated phone points to the hard-wiring of an entire "smart" home system.

Depending upon what other services the Member advertises besides electronic security, they can be an added-value one-stop shop for the aware consumer. The key is in them using their communication skills to make the consumer aware.

*Above information prepared with the assistance of ASIAL Members, Neville Kiely (NSW) and Kim Walcott (QLD).*