



NEWS RELEASE 2006

Halfords stores exploit cost gains from 'future-proof' alarms-over-IP

IP communications specialist Chiron Technology has supplied its Iris alarm transmission and monitoring system to contract management and monitoring provider SSS Management Services, which is now using it to help protect Halfords' High Street stores around the country.

In a phased programme, Halfords first began upgrading its 400 UK sites from traditional dial-up alarm communications systems to IP in January 2005. The company decided to take advantage of enhancements to its telephony system, which now uses a broadband connection, meaning that alarm communications from any new or refurbished branches are being switched to an IP path linked to SSS' alarm receiving centre [ARC].

SSS' NSI-approved ARC, which is accredited to BS5979 and BSEN ISO 9002, was built in 2002 using state-of-the-art receiving technology. This includes secure digital-based TCP/IP communications for monitoring of intruder alarms, CCTV, access control and other management systems. SSS boasts an impressive portfolio of leading retail clients and has some 7000 connections – an increasing number of which employ broadband ADSL connectivity.

As Philip George, the company's Sales & Marketing Director explains, this 'future-proof' transmission technology offers a number of advantages, including significantly lower operating costs and the ability to add value to the signalling path. He quotes potential cost savings of up to 50% compared with a traditional dial-up alarm system. Yet the capital cost of installation is no more than eg a RedCare connection, while IP offers the unique opportunity for greater network utilisation by using it for other services.

Halfords' Security & Loss Prevention Teams Leader, Ray Stroud, explains that the retailer is able to extract more efficiency from its IP link by using it to remotely communicate with a third party finance house to speedily open new customer credit card accounts. But Mr Stroud points out that before this added value connection was established, Halfords wanted to firstly satisfy itself that the IP medium itself would be reliable, resilient and secure.



Accordingly, SSS met Halfords' IT team to run through issues of concern and satisfied the retailer's questions about aspects such as bandwidth requirements of intruder alarm signals on the IP network and the integrity of built-in firewall protection against network intrusion attempts. A trial site was subsequently organised, which further assured Halfords' staff during two months of successful tests. A process of procedural management, involving SSS, Chiron Technology and the installation company involved (Secom), ensured that while a number of teething troubles had to be rectified no serious problems arose.

Halfords gave the go-ahead for this site to go live in spring 2005 and a further 20 sites have also now benefited from IP links. This number will increase as new branches open in the future and existing ones are upgraded as part of Halfords' ongoing refurbishment programme.

Vikram Datar, Chiron's Corporate Account Manager, notes that its Iris IP system allows the use of both primary and secondary (ie dual path) signalling, which Halfords did not previously benefit from. This improves security by ensuring that in the event of any interruption to the IP network alarm signals are alternately routed across traditional ISDN/analogue paths. They can also be sent by optional GSM/GPRS routing.

The Iris system – which is independently certified by two leading European test houses to the highest grade 4 (ATS6) risk category under the European systems standards BS EN50130, 50131 and 50136 – can be easily, quickly and inexpensively installed. This is because its alarm dialler will interface with existing and legacy alarm panels, including those using a standard PSTN dialler.

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