



## NEWS RELEASE

**What benefits does alarms-over-IP technology offer end users, installers, insurers, monitoring centres and alarm panel manufacturers, and who is actually using these systems in the Republic of Ireland? Chiron Security Communications Group MD Ian Tredinnick provides the answers.**

The advantages of alarms-over-IP technology are multi-fold and the attractive combination of significant cost savings, value-added services, proven levels of security and quicker transmission rates means an increasing volume and variety of users are opting to 'future-proof' their security systems with it.

The rapid growth of corporate IP (Internet Protocol) networks and broadband ADSL has prompted many security managers to actively investigate how this technology can provide them with increased services while actually reducing their alarm monitoring costs. In the business sector, IP networks are not confined to the higher-end of the market either – SMEs (small to medium enterprises) can take advantage too. Meanwhile in the residential sector those receiving home alarm alerts can protect themselves against the possibility of being asleep, on a plane or out of the country when the call comes by backing this up with the safety net of a monitoring centre's involvement in order to react to any intrusion attempt.

### **End users speak...**

IP alarm systems can benefit everyone, whether it is a private house, a small business such as a jewellers, larger organisations in the public sector such as a hospital or a local authority, or indeed a blue-chip commercial operation like a bank. In the Republic of Ireland, for example, the operational benefits of this technology include the opportunity for carrying out remote alarm panel management and diagnostics, mitigating the need to physically travel to a more remote out-of-town location. Thus, significant time and cost savings are linked to the safety of engineers.

But to explain how alarms-over-IP technology provides 21st century alarm transmission and monitoring solutions in tangible, practical terms, where better to turn than those already reaping the rewards from actually using it. Let's take three examples of installed systems, starting with the major High St travel agency and tour operator Thomas Cook. This company has switched intruder and personal attack alarm monitoring at its network of over 600 stores in Ireland and the UK to Chiron Security Communications' Iris system, enabling it to replace its dedicated signalling system and associated telephone costs.



Thomas Cook's Group Security Manager, Steve Nelson, says this service had been costing his company around £150,000 (approx E220,000) annually and after recouping the modest investment associated with equipment installation, he anticipates substantial monitoring cost savings of some 70% per year.

By using the company's existing Wide Area Network, it's adding value to its original investment in this infrastructure, while enabling further services to be used over it. These include the ability to add building management services telemetry for activities such as reporting on heating levels, water usage metering and freezer temperatures.

Besides the intruder alarm element of the system, Thomas Cook is also examining the potential value of an Iris system software module that allows visual verification of an alarm alert. Pictures from existing site cameras can be sent direct to a monitoring centre operator's screen simultaneously with the alarm activation, allowing the operator to scan pre- and post-event images to help verify the cause of an alert. Mr Nelson notes that this 'future-proofing' technology would also allow the company's regional sales managers to remotely dial-in to stores to observe customer flows and other management-related issues, further adding value to the equipment.

Meanwhile, a prominent building materials retailer is reporting that its own experience of a similar system installation has included equivalent cost savings to those achieved by Thomas Cook. But it's also had an unexpected benefit – namely the way that the installation itself has brought the security and IT departments within the same company much closer together. "The IT Director can now see that Iris is making financial savings to his budget and this is one of the reasons that a greater degree of internal trust and cooperation has developed. This now means that we can resolve other issues much more quickly than happened before," says the organisation's Head of Security and Loss Prevention.

A third retailer using Iris is the High St chain Halfords, which has been able to extract more efficiency from its IP link by using it to remotely communicate with a third party finance house to speedily open customer credit card accounts. In a phased programme, Halfords first began upgrading its 400 UK sites from traditional dial-up alarm communications systems to IP back 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 an external alarm receiving centre.



In addition to these retailers, Chiron has also provided similar Iris alarms-over-IP systems to two major banks operating in Ireland, working in conjunction with installation specialist ADT Security Systems.

### **European adoption**

Besides end users, IP alarm transmission and monitoring is an attraction to installers, monitoring centres and alarm panel manufacturers who can see the benefits too. Iris, for example, is now supported by over 60 monitoring centres across Europe and many alarm panel manufacturers are now offering the technology embedded within their panels. These manufacturers are looking to enhance their product ranges and this type of equipment helps to differentiate their service against that of their competitors.

For installers, the attractions include the ability of a system like Iris to work with both new and old 'legacy' alarm panels. The system is also simple to install – no specialist IP knowledge is required.

For both installers and insurers, another reason for the high growth in IP alarms within regions such as Europe is the nature of commercial packages offered with inclusive equipment and monitoring in a single market-ready offering. The technological advantages of IP can be used to differentiate different signal types, such as voice, IT, access control, CCTV and intruder alarms, using the same transmission path. In practical, operational terms, this offers residential and SME customers cost-effective commercial packages comprising eg alarm monitoring, visual verification, CCTV surveillance and vehicle tracking as 'added value' services, instead of the relatively simple task of supplying an alarm monitoring device with related signalling that used to be all that was provided.

### **From high security to residential**

IP is an obvious choice for monitoring at the higher end of the market, with the reduced costs and opportunities for multiple routing of monitoring and alerts. However, IP is also an ideal opportunity to provide higher levels of services to the SME and residential markets. IP via ADSL is proving reliable and cost effective and we are now seeing commercial offerings involving low cost monitoring to these sectors across both ADSL and more importantly GPRS. GPRS is the IP data service of the mobile network system and is proving cost effective for security. GPRS-equipped alarm panels are now appearing on the market and have a number of benefits. Firstly, such GPRS systems can be pre-configured before delivery to the user; installation costs are thus reduced and the system is independent of the user's own communications system. The second major advantage is that GPRS can be used for alerting, monitoring and remote management of the alarm panel.



To sum up, in parallel with the integrated service benefits and cost efficiency gains available to alarms-over-IP users, this technology is now opening up fresh markets. It's also providing a realistic

opportunity for lower-risk businesses and residential customers to take advantage of a holistic approach towards improved premises protection. The cream on top is the range of added-value security and management services that can also be exploited. This 21st century solution is here to stay.

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