



The NBFAA Industry Affairs committee recently asked our membership to tell us what issues they've been having with VoIP phone service and their alarm panels. Not surprisingly, we discovered that many have experienced similar problems and have come up with similar solutions.

Some common problems learned from this survey:

1. Customers are changing phone providers more frequently today without notifying their alarm provider.
2. VoIP telephone installers inadvertently disconnect the phone line from the alarm panel.
3. Inadequate or non-existent battery back-up for the modem and router.
4. Telco and cable company installers not properly trained on alarm panel line seizure.
5. Unreliable uploading and downloading to and from the alarm panel.

Some common solutions to some of these problems that many have found include installing a back-up power supply to the customer's modem and router or switching them to radio or cellular as the primary method of communication. Some have even found that getting the telephone and cable technicians to return to the property with the alarm technician has been very successful. The telephone and cable technicians have seemed receptive to learning the proper methods of line seizure from the alarm technicians.

While these solutions aren't universal the problems certainly seem to be. The most common problem experienced is the customers' lack of understanding of how their alarms communicate with the monitoring facility and the complications caused by switching phone services. This problem provides dealers with a unique opportunity to reconnect with their customers. A simple phone call or email regarding the issue allows you to establish an ongoing relationship with your customers by keeping them informed and allowing them the opportunity to upgrade if they've switched without telling you. This simple solution of educating your customers, before and after an install, will help them make better choices for their safety and security and help you reduce VoIP trouble calls.

The common myth consumers seem to have is that by switching to a VoIP phone service they'll save money every month. This is often not the case, especially when their alarm system quits working properly and they must spend hundreds of dollars in service calls and cellular and radio communication upgrades plus additional monthly subscription fees.

Another common myth learned from this survey is the dealer's belief that installing a copper line or supporting copper lines as the only means of signal transmission is the ultimate fix. As telephone service evolves, true end-to-end copper lines will continue to be phased out in some areas and even now, at some point during the signal transmission, a switch to IP may occur.

The NBFAA Industry Affairs committee is continuing to work with alarm panel manufacturers, the Alarm Industry Communications Committee and VoIP providers to develop a definitive resource for dealers and consumers on the evolving communications landscape.