



VoIP and home security monitoring. (Updated May/09):

It is ironic that many consumers switch their telephone service from a traditional land line to VOIP service to save money, then discover after the fact that their alarm system is not compatible with VOIP. This requires them to keep their regular phone line, or use cellular and/or radio for alarm transmissions. This, of course, can offset or eliminate any savings that they may have enjoyed using VOIP in the first place.

So what is VoIP, And How Can It Interfere With My Alarm System's Monitoring Capabilities?

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.

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-interruptable 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.

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.