

Use this Planner for Conversion of AMPS Cellular Alarm Communicators

It has been officially confirmed that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is not budging on the Feb. 18, 2008, deadline for allowing the shut-down of the analog mobile phone services (AMPS) used for cellular-based alarm communications.

Now that all appeals have been exhausted, security companies and their subscribers who rely on AMPS analog cellular services must find an alternative communication method before Feb. 18, 2008.

The Sunset Clause date is fast approaching. Alarm dealers who still have not made plans or begun to replace their AMPS units may be left without service. Those who still rely on AMPS services and have not yet found a suitable replacement need to plan now. Options are available, but switching out all remaining AMPS units will take time. All viable options have benefits and drawbacks and will take time, but first the options must be weighed and a decision made soon.

The alarm communication alternatives to AMPS include:

- telephone lines,
- the Internet,
- digital cellular telephone service, and
- wireless mesh alarm communications.

To examine these choices and determine which makes most sense, the criteria most commonly used would include costs, system capacity, signaling speed, reliability, means of system compromise, types of alarm data sent and maintenance considerations.

Using these criteria, the accompanying table shows a representative comparison of available alarm communication alternatives to AMPS. The data contained in this table may be useful to determine which of these alternatives makes the most sense for a particular dealer and his or her customer base.

Regardless of which technology alternative is chosen, each dealer needs

Alarm Communication Alternatives				
Criteria	Wireless RF/IP Alarm	Telephone Line	Tower-Based Radio	Cellular/Digital
Capital Investment	Low Cost Transceivers	Low - Uses Public Infrastructure	High Cost Repeaters and Radios	Low Cost
Set-Up Costs	Low	Low	High Material and Installation Costs	Low
Monthly Costs	None	High Monthly Line Fees	High Tower Leasing Fees	Fee Based on Frequency of Use
Total Cost of Ownership	Higher Subscriber Cost Lower Installation Cost No Ongoing Costs	Lower Subscriber Cost Higher Installation Cost Higher Monthly Fees	Lower Subscriber Cost Higher Installation Cost Higher Monthly Fees	Lower Subscriber Cost Higher Installation Cost Higher Monthly Fees
System Expansion	Unlimited, Low Cost	Good	High - Requires Additional Towers	Low Cost
Speed	4-6 Seconds	45 Seconds	4-6 seconds	45 Seconds
Signal Acknowledged	Full	None	Limited	None
Multiple Paths	Up to Six Routes	Poor - Single Route	Poor - Single Point of Failure	Poor - Single Point of Failure
Remote System Control & Command	Full Control from Central Station	No Control	Requires Expensive 2-way Expansion Option	No Control
Disarming	Low - Private Frequency, Fully Supervised	High - Line Cuts	Low - Private Frequency	High - Frequency Jamming
Full Alarm Data	Available for Fire and Burglary	Via Optional Dialer	Full Data Not Available	Via Optional Dialer
Maintenance	Low	Low	High - Requires Radio Expertise	Low
Additional Revenue Opportunities	Home Arrest Monitoring Vehicle Tracking Vending Management Energy Management	None	None	None

to plan effectively and allot the time needed to convert all AMPS sites. To get a sense of the amount of resources required for this process, alarm dealers need to ask themselves the following questions and perform the calculation that follows:

A = How many existing installed AMPS sites do we have?

B = How many installers do we have available?

C = How many AMPS units can be installed per installer per day?

D = What are the number of work days between today and Feb. 18, 2008?

$A \div B \div C =$ the number of business days needed to complete. This number should be compared to D to determine if you have enough time and/or installers to complete the AMPS conversion. — Contributed by Deanne Guardino-Frazier, marketing communications manager, AES Corp., Peabody, Mass.

Alarm Communication Quiz

1. According to the AMPS Alarm Communications Alternatives table, which technology would you say is the most reliable for alarm signaling?
2. According to the AMPS Alarm Communications Alternatives table, which technology would you say is most cost-effective over the life of the typical monitored customer?
3. Which item mentioned under criteria is most important to you?
4. Based on your use of the calculations above, will you need to hire new installers in order to replace your AMPS units before the deadline?
5. What will you risk if you do not replace your AMPS units by Feb. 18, 2008?