

Improving success rates in Alarm Signal transfers requesting Police Response.

Today 13 police forces with over 300,000 alarm installations between them are supported by ECHO. More are expected to follow next year. Police estimates that ECHO reduces police response times on average between 1 and 4 minutes for the c70,000 alarm signals a year sent via ECHO. – real benefit for alarm system owners.

Yet, overall, about 10% of all alarm signals transmitted via ECHO are currently rejected by the police **due to data mismatches** between ARC and police records. Whilst much is being done to address this and improvements are being seen, efforts to prevent such mismatches is essential support to police and alarm system users.

***This bulletin sets out how you can help ensure your own installed systems are secure
from risk of alarm signal rejection by ECHO-connected Police Forces.***

To help prevent mismatches and ensure successful acceptance of alarm signals, ECHO circulated its 'Precision Matters' guide to ARCs earlier in 2024. It's attached to this bulletin for your information.

How can mismatches occur?

The multiple handovers of initial URN data - typically from the installer to the police, from the police to the installer, and then from the installer to the ARC - involve three parties in the creation of the ARCs URN record! Human error happens, and when it does, can lie unseen and hidden, until an alarm signal rejection occurs.

How can I be sure my ARC URN records are error free?

The short answer is to cross check your URN records **exactly** as received from the police with ARC records.

What should the cross-check reveal?

The 3 main reasons for alarm signal transfer rejection by the police are:

1. **Invalid/Unknown URN** (ie not recognised by the police)
2. **Invalid URN Type** (ie not matching police records)
3. **Withdrawn police response** (in police parlance 'banned alarms')

To be accepted by the police, alarm signals transferred digitally via-ECHO require **alarm data and be complete and in exactly the correct police format:** eg the ARC record of the URN number must be **exactly** as issued by the police (without omissions or added spaces/characters, and the recorded URN type must be **exactly** as advised to the police. Any variation in either or both of these is likely to cause an alarm signal to be rejected.

Why is this only happening now?

Prior to ECHO alarm signals were transferred manually between call handlers. Although a slower process, police call handlers often filtered out, over-ruled or ignored data inconsistencies.

ECHO-connected police forces save time by-passing call handling so prioritising ECHO received alarm signals but require 100% accuracy for the digital signal to be processed.

What are the recommended remedial actions?

Identifying mismatched records and taking preventive action is key to improving police alarm acceptance rates: a review of your URN records should be considered. The quick reference sheet below points installers to typical data mismatches which are likely to cause rejections.

The attached Guide goes into greater regarding reasons for rejection and details specific approach that can be followed.

To improve your alarm transfer success rate it is strongly recommended the following approaches are adopted as part of routine and good practice data 'housekeeping'.

Recommended actions: reducing alarm transfer rejections

by ECHO-connected police forces

Recommended Actions:

- *Installers can*
 - *check to identify any obvious 'suspect' URNs numbers they hold digitally. Ie to check the URN as held/shared with the ARC is the exact same format as issued in the police letter*
 - *liaise with their ARC(s) to verify URN data held matches exactly with data shared with or issued by the police (including any updates during the life of the alarm system)*
 - *notify ARCs at the time police alarm response is withdrawn (or recovered)*
- *Where mismatches are identified these need to be corrected by the party/ies concerned including the updating of ARC records.*

1. Invalid/Unknown URN (ie a mismatch: not recognised by the police)

-where a digitized alarm URN transmitted by the ARC does not 'match exactly' the URN record as issued by the police force to the installer. Errors include:

- Numerals 0, 1 incorrectly recorded/reported as alpha characters (letters) O, I or vice versa
- Addition of pre/suffixes, special characters, to the URN e.g. INT, URN, /I, and full stops (by the Installer/ARC)
- URN not present or recorded/reported as TBA, NO URN or NOT SET
- digits or characters omitted/missing from the URN
- Addition of digits or characters not recognisable to the police (by the installer/ARC)
- Addition of 'space' characters not recognisable to the police (by the installer/ARC)
- Lower case characters where Police Systems recognise Upper case characters
- The alarm signal transfer is sent to the wrong police force e.g a Met issued URN is logged as a Kent issued URN.

2. Invalid URN Type (ie mismatch with police records)

- *where the alarm event transmitted is with a URN type that does not match the police record:*
- A URN alarm transfer described as a HUA by the ARC is rejected by the police when it does not match with a police record which lists the URN as an Intruder Alarm, or vice versa.
- A URN alarm transfer by the ARC indicates a 'confirmed alarm' event is rejected by the police as the police record lists the URN as an 'unconfirmed alarm' or vice versa.

3. Police Response Withdrawn (Reported by some police systems as 'Banned Alarm')

- *Where police response to a security system has been withdrawn, the NPCC Police Operational Advice and Security Industry Requirements for Response to Security Systems states that an ARC should not pass activations to the police.*