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Without a call, Victoria police won't come to alarm

Other police forces consider new policy

By **Stuart Hunter**
Staff Reporter

In what could be a precedent-setting move, police in Victoria have quietly announced they'll no longer attend home or commercial security alarms which aren't verified.

And other forces across B.C. are considering similar moves to stop countless hours wasted attending alarms which often come up false in upwards of 90 per cent of instances.

The move could send shockwaves through the home security industry and shudders down

the spines of customers left wondering just how secure are their home, business or loved ones.

Victoria police are slated to implement a verified-alarm policy in April. Officers would only attend an alarm call on a priority basis when it is verified as legitimate by the property owner or security company or by video monitoring.

The move was made, according to police memos, to reduce manpower wasted attending false alarms.

The RCMP, which police a large proportion of the province, allow individual detachments to set alarm policy.

Surrey RCMP spokesman Cpl. Tim Shields said his detachment isn't imminently considering fol-



Security companies will need to confirm alarms with police in Victoria. — AP

lowing their counterparts in Victoria, but added the new policy has not been ruled out.

About nine per cent of the 142,000 calls Surrey RCMP attended in 2001 were for false alarms

— a figure Shields called "staggering." Surrey currently tickets false alarm offenders \$75 for each instance.

Vancouver has a similar false-alarm bylaw which helped reduce

the number of false alarms from a whopping 40,000 a few years ago to around 17,000 last year.

For security companies such as Chubb and ADT, the move by the Victoria force means a change in the way they do their business. They currently verify alarms by phoning the residence after an alarm is activated.

Steve Millen of ADT, Canada's largest security company which has 80,000 customers in B.C., was disappointed by the move but added he understands false alarms are a tremendous problem for police departments.

"What it has meant is a dramatic increase in the use of private responders to attend to alarms such as private guard companies," said Millen.

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