

The Reality of the POTS Sunset for the Alarm Industry

The IPtelX Solution: Millions of Panels Already Connected for over 10 Years

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1. INTRODUCTION: CURRENT STATUS

POTS is Plain Old Telephone Service that has been around for the over a century. The messaging in the industry is that there is a sunset when it comes to copper POTS lines and the sky is falling. The term comes from a fable about a chicken who believes the sky is falling when an acorn falls on its head. But before we run around like the chicken, we need to examine the reality of the situation and only then to make the necessary arrangements or preparations.

Let's keep in mind that not understanding the options not only affects businesses but also the public safety.

What Local Exchange Carriers (LEC's) have already done

LEC's, as the local exchange telephone carriers that have provided traditional POTS, have recently confirmed the majority of their legacy copper POTS lines have already been converted to newer digital equivalents such as fiber-optics or broadband services.

"Enhanced POTS" is where a digital POTS line is supplied at the subscriber site. An IP-based service (VoIP) is used from the subscriber site to the exchange network and next-generation VoIP alarm receivers, virtualized and UL listed, provide a superior enhancement to the digital POTS.

Analog Telephone Adaptors (ATA)

This is how it works. Alarm signals are sent to an alarm receiver through an Analog Telephone Adaptor, a device that bridges traditional telephones and PBXs to an IP-based telecom network. Calls travel over the internet instead of directly over copper lines.

There are several distinct kinds of ATA's. Some perform analog-to-digital conversion and connect directly to an IP-based telecom switch. Others use software rather than hardware to perform the same tasks.

2. THE CHALLENGES TO THE INDUSTRY

The problem is that alarm panel manufacturers are selling new hardware, alarm companies are rolling trucks, and people are rushing to upgrade hardware that isn't necessarily required.

Alarm Receiver Manufacturers

Most manufacturers have cards that go into their new receiver models that can still handle POTS lines.

There are still compelling solutions for the foreseeable future and that includes next-generation VoIP alarm receivers that are virtualized, and UL listed. These virtual alarm receivers resemble an IP alarm panel. Of course, an IP alarm panel is faster than a dialer.

3. THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION

Although the industry believes that POTS is sunsetting, that is not the reality. The truth is that many LEC's and other carriers will continue providing POTS into the future, using the newer digital POTS equivalents that already support most POTS lines transitioned from copper to digital, over the last several years.

The media, or actual audio of a phone call with digital POTS can be delivered directly between endpoints, being the ATA at the subscriber site and VoIP alarm receivers, built to better handle digital POTS, or IP-based channel banks supplying to legacy alarm receivers. This can prove to be equivalent or even more reliable than the traditional POTS communication. This process is often accomplished through SIP (Session Initiated Protocol), which can route the signal of the call and the media of the call differently and more efficiently.

What is SIP?

The Session Initiated Protocol (SIP) is a signaling protocol that enables VoIP by defining the instructions, or signaling, sent between endpoints, and managing the actual elements of a call. SIP supports voice calls, video conferencing, instant messaging, and media distribution.

This is an enhancement to traditional POTS. It not only can work better but will work well into the future. There are many SIP based devices being deployed in the alarm industry, by the thousands, like camera audio, doorbells, and other audio IoT devices. In other words, if LEC's replace a copper POTS line with an ATA, the legacy alarm panel continues to receive a traditional POTS line from the ATA and now works on SIP.

4. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

If problems arise with communication through an ATA, IPtelX, DICE's sister company, has specifically configured SIP networks to communicate directly to the alarm receiver. Rather than rushing the replacement of legacy alarm systems at every subscriber site, the alternative is for the central station to use the services of a telecom service provider that supports direct call media, has specifically configured a national SIP network for the same, and has implemented trunk groups with many other carrier networks around the country that can directly peer calls to and from their endpoints.

IPtelX, as the industry's only dedicated alarm signal network and a licensed telecom carrier in the US & Canada, specializes in SIP signal routing to central stations that supports direct call media. This will eliminate the need to roll out service trucks and upgrade potentially thousands of legacy alarm systems. This scenario is often not more expensive and can even be more efficient in cost than trying to hold onto the traditional telecom services or replacing equipment.

5. ADDITIONAL BENEFITS – MILLIONS OF PANELS ALREADY CONNECTED FOR OVER 10 YEARS

Fixes Lost & Broken Alarm Signal Errors

IPtelX identifies, resolves, and eliminates communication signal errors that others cannot. Compatible with any central station and any automation software.

No Need to Change Equipment

With IPtelX providing a digital network and enhancing Copper POTS lines, equipment at the end user site will now work for many years.

No Tech Visits to the Site

No need to send out trucks to change legacy alarm panels. Everything can be done remotely, saving both time and money.

Money Saving Telecom Costs

Moving to IPtelX provides better cost effective and reliable telecom service compared to other carriers.

6. THE BOTTOM LINE

A sunset of old technology is always inevitable but will not necessarily happen tomorrow as in the case of POTS and the legacy alarm, fire, and PERS systems. Forcing change faster than it needs to happen can have the consequence of creating unnecessary attrition in the industry.

The goal is to be fairly and fully informed and understand that telecom carriers will continue enhanced POTS with digital equivalents. Millions of legacy alarm systems can continue to be supported with minimal effort for the foreseeable future by using these solutions. Central stations and alarm dealers now have a choice.

The reality is that with the right technology and the right enhancements, legacy devices can be supported well into the future without the need to purchase new equipment, roll trucks, and waste time and effort. Perhaps it's not a sunset at all, but rather an opportunity to explore new options.