

# know risk

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## Security alarm transmission systems

There are important changes happening with back-to-base alarm monitoring.

Commonly, back-to-base alarms are monitored via a digital dialler that uses a PSTN (public switched telephone network) phone line. Although effective, the alarm can be easily disabled by cutting the phone line or disabling the main alarm panel. Monitoring companies are unaware of a breach and the perpetrators can then complete their mission of theft and damage undetected.

To combat such a scenario, over the last twenty years Telstra's Securitel system was the choice for high security alarm monitoring because the telephone line was 'pinged' at 23 second intervals to ensure the system was still operating. A break in the transmission would thus indicate a breach.

Many organisations have been using the Securitel system over a long period but Telstra has now formally announced that they are withdrawing from the Securitel service from December 2009 and have provided the following information:

- There will be no new connections to Securitel from February 1st 2008.
- There will be no changes or modifications for existing Securitel customers from January 1st 2009.
- Customers will no longer be able to use or access the Securitel service from December 31st 2009.

What this means is that Securitel customers must find an alternative system for back-to-base alarm monitoring and for those needing to make a change, Ansvar Insurance provides the following advice.

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## Future options

New technology has been developed to replace Securitel and some of the new transmission systems include:

- Direct Wireless
- Emizon Global 21
- Permaconn
- Fratech Multipath IP
- Surepoll

These systems all offer varying degrees of protection and it is important to investigate which system will be best suited to your individual needs. The new Australian Standards Code 'AS/NZ 2201.5-2008 Intruder Alarm Systems – Part 5 Alarm Transmission Systems' will be a good place to start.

For detailed information, the Standard sets out procedures for testing and results required for transmission delay, transmission supervision, system availability, signal security and results required for an Alarm Transmission System to be classified Class 1 to Class 5.

You should make sure your new monitoring system complies with the Standard.

Some of the various Alarm Transmission Systems currently available are:

### Class 1:

- Alarm system monitored via digital dialler which is test polled once a week.

### Class 2:

- Digital dialler system test polled once a night by the monitoring centre.
- Dual-path digital dialler test polled once a night with a GSM back-up.
- GPRS system which is test polled every hour with PSTN back-up.

**Class 3:**

- “Direct Wireless” or “Permaconn” system with multiple pathways GPRS 1, GPRS 2, GSM, PSTN with primary pathway polled every 90 seconds.
- “Emizon” or “Fratech Multipath IP” with Ethernet, GPRS 1, GPRS 2 and PSTN with primary path polled every 90 seconds.
- Securitel with single pathway polled every 23 seconds.

**Class 4:**

- “Telstra Secure”, “Emizon” or “Fratech Multipath IP” with Ethernet, GPRS1, GPRS2, dial-up internet and PSTN with primary path polled every 45 seconds.

Ansvar Insurance recommends that any new alarm transmission system selected should:

- Comply with at least Class 3 of Australian Standard AS 2201.5 – 2008 for its primary communication pathway.
- Have multiple communication pathways, including GPRS and be status polled at maximum intervals of 120 seconds.
- A Monitoring Centre that is a Grade A1, A2, B1 or B2 monitoring facility under AS 2201.2 – 2004.
- Have certification provided by the supplier that the monitoring system has been tested and certified by a competent, independent third party to comply with the requirements of Class 3 of AS 2201.5 – 2008.
- Have certification provided by the alarm system installer of the method and classification under AS 2201.5 – 2008 of the actual alarm transmission system installed at the premises, stating classification (e.g. C3/R2), communication pathways and polling frequency.

Another consideration will be the costs associated with alarm monitoring. The level of protection required can impact the installation and monitoring costs and professional advice should be sought to determine how much and what type of protection will best suit your facility.

A new protection system will not necessarily mean higher costs. In fact, in many cases the new systems available on the market are more economical. To convert a digital dialler or Securitel system to a new system involves plugging in a module inside the existing alarm panel, minor reprogramming work and, if necessary, connection to existing ADSL broadband.

Contact your security provider with any installation or replacement questions and for a quote to convert.

This material is for information purposes only. It is not intended to give specific legal or risk management advice nor are any suggestions, checklists or action plans intended to include or address all possible risk management exposures or solutions.