



2022

TMA Monitoring Center Excellence Awards



Engineered Protection Systems, Inc

1/1/2022



This document is the full submission by Engineered Protection Systems, Inc. for the 2022 The Monitoring Association Monitoring Center Excellence Awards. EPS is committed to TMA's effort to improve and contribute the alarm industry in a meaningful way. By recognizing the high standards of quality and service of companies like EPS Security, the TMA works toward the betterment of the communities EPS diligently serves.



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Part A: Company Information

ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

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AWARD(S) FOR WHICH YOU ARE APPLYING

- ✓ Monitoring Center of the Year-SMB
- ✓ Monitoring Center Operator of the year



CENTRAL STATION DESCRIPTION

YEAR BUILT: 1988

LAST REMODEL DATE: Fall 2015

NUMBER OF ACTIVE STATIONS: 19

NUMBER OF FULL TIME OPERATORS: 14

NUMBER OF PART TIME OPERATORS: 0

NUMBER OF SUPERVISORS: 1

NUMBER OF COMMERCIAL SUBSCRIBERS: 18378

PERCENTAGE WITH SUPERVISED OPEN/CLOSE: 5.1%

NUMBER OF RESIDENT SUBSCRIBERS: 11035

PERCENTAGE OF NON-OWNED SUBSCRIBERS: 0%

TYPES OF SIGNALS MONITORED:

BURGLAR	TEMPERATURE
FIRE	ACCESS CONTROL
VIDEO	CONNECTED HOME
SUPERVISORY	ELEVATOR
WATERFLOW	OTHER (POC/INTEGRATION)

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES:

DIGITAL DIALER
CELLULAR
INTERNET



YOUR MONITORING CENTER IS BEST DESCRIBED AS:

EPS Security is full service, monitoring our own installations.

CENTRAL STATION LISTINGS:

UL #347451-003	FM (COMPLETE SERVICE)
CPVX - BP1963-1 (UL)	UUFY - S1237-1 (UL)
CVSG - BP8289-1 (UL)	

TMA FIVE DIAMOND STATUS:

EPS Security is a Five Diamond Certified company. Our latest certification was renewed in April of 2021.

DISASTER RECOVERY:

EPS Security's most recent disaster recovery plan was revised in fall of 2021.

TRAINING PROGRAMS:

TMA Central Station Ops Online. EPS Security has 12 graduates on staff. 8 of those are Level II graduates.

MONITORING CENTER PROCEDURE MANUAL:

EPS Security has a detailed procedure manual that is updated monthly.

SIGNALS AND CALLS HANDLED:

Number of Signals/Week: 27259

Number of Signals requiring operator interaction/week: 9721

Number of Alarm only signals: 1,136,311 (Includes Multiples/Duplicates - 2021)

Number of Weekly inbound calls: 2783

Number of Weekly outbound calls: 4,856

Average response time (Received to First Call): 41 Seconds

ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS:

EPS Security is a proud member of TMA, NetOne, and Local First.



Part B Monitoring Center of the Year

EPS SECURITY

- 1. TRAINING AND EDUCATION - Please provide detailed information on your new hire and on-going training programs. Please specifically address content, testing, evaluation/analysis, and methodology. Share the qualifications and training for your trainers. Define additional training modules and target skill sets. Explain how you determine and address training and knowledge gaps over time. Describe how training programs are allocated and include any incentive programs that you have implemented around training.***

We strongly rely on referrals from our current employees and a local workforce development association called Michigan Works to find qualified applicants. In addition, we leverage social media, in-house job fairs, and job posting sites such as Monster, Indeed, and MLive to find new team members. We also utilize our fleet vehicles, encouraging our community members to "Join the Team" at EpsSecurity.com/careers.

Understanding the importance of timeliness and accuracy in the alarm monitoring industry, we aim to take a comprehensive approach to training, in order to promote confidence and comfort among operators. When a new employee starts within the monitoring center, their first two weeks are working next to our Monitoring Center supervisor on the first shift. During this period, the new employee is building a relationship with their supervisor, teaching them how to navigate our automation. In addition, they are getting to learn how the other departments interact with the monitoring center. After the initial two-week period, the operator moves to the shift they were hired for and will spend ten weeks following their trainer's schedules.

Once the new employee is with their trainer, they will listen to their trainer answering the phones and handling low-priority signals at their station. When the trainer signs them off that they know how to navigate automation, the trainee will start to answer the phone calls while the trainer is doing the computer work. Once the trainee has been signed off on answering incoming calls and making outgoing calls, we will slowly start adjusting their priority levels throughout the ten weeks until they are handling all signals. Finally, at eight weeks, the trainee will complete TMA level 1. This prevents the



new operators from receiving too much information too quickly. Once that has been completed, the trainee will be signed off on and start their schedule at ten weeks.

Our trainers are sent for additional training at the Employers' Association located here in Grand Rapids. At this training, they learn about DISC styles, how to communicate and motivate others, and how to be an effective trainer.

Technology is constantly changing in the industry, and our operators need to stay updated with new equipment. We handle these situations in multiple different ways. We will email the information out to our team to make sure that everyone is aware, we also use Slack for any questions that may come up during their shifts, and we work with our training department to have classes set up to go over new products. We will have technicians go into the field, and they will test new products for the monitoring center so that they have real-life experience. For example, when we first started the area of rescue, we would have technicians testing the AoR phones until the operators became comfortable handling those signals. We also will have our training department host monthly meetings where the operators can come in and put their hands on our devices and panels. They will be able to arm/disarm test panels, replace batteries in the device, reset hand pull alarms all for them to build the confidence to help our customers out.

EPS Security has also instituted a Career Development Program, allowing operators to progress their skills and take on additional responsibilities. As a result, operators have a clear path of expectations and benchmarks to progress through levels in which they attain a new title, added responsibilities, and receive further compensation. EPS is committed to developing dedicated, career-long employees.

2. DISASTER RECOVERY - Please explain your center's disaster recovery solution. Provide details relevant to its scope, how you train to the plan and how/when you test the plan.

EPS created its first disaster recovery plan in 1999. The plan is reviewed semi-annually, with the most recent review in October 2021. The disaster recovery plan includes an extensive redundancy effort with two sites protecting data integrity. As of 2016, there are redundant receivers, database servers, internet connections, and even dual power grids from Detroit and Chicago. Below is our UL-certified disaster plan.

Equipment Required:

1. (15) Mobile Laptops
2. (15) USB Headsets (have 4)
3. (15) Bria softphone licenses (have 5)



4. (2) Mobile Jetpacks (Verizon & AT&T)
5. VPN Access to DICE in Bay City (Short Term)
 - a. Grand Rapids route to be used if connection is available
6. VPN Access to DICE in Bay City (Long Term)
 - a. IT built HPC environment to house VPN. (BGP to sales offices)
7. Remote monitoring operations (work from home) can be utilized if authorized by management and applicable UL standards.

Instructions for Short Term BCP:

1. Monitoring Center personnel will evacuate the area in accordance with all applicable safety and evacuation plans.
2. Management will contact staff to log on from home and will release current staff to return home.
3. MC personnel will be released back to the normal center when the “all clear” is given by the Director of Operations.

Instructions for Long Term BCP:

1. If the evacuation will be long term (greater than 24 hours), the next scheduled shift will work from. Management will communicate this at least two hours prior to the oncoming shift.
2. Shifts will continue to report and work from home until such time as it is safe to return to the normal center, as advised by the Director of Operations.
3. The Monitoring Center Operations Manager and/or designated personnel will coordinate all MC activity.
4. Work station access for other critical personnel will be coordinated by IT.
5. With approval, other support roles may be permitted to work remotely.

When the operator has been at EPS for ten weeks, they are issued their DR recovery kit. Their kit includes everything they need to be successful during their shift. The operator will spend a couple of days in the office working on their DR equipment to be confident with it, and their trainer will be able to assist with any questions. Our monitoring center operates on a rotating hybrid schedule. Operators are allowed to work from home two shifts out of every week which keeps them updated with their DR equipment and training.



3. USE OF TECHNOLOGY - Explain how technology is used to support business intelligence for monitoring operations; customer support; training; sales and marketing; HR; accounting; and, end users/subscribers.

EPS Security uses the following Monitoring Center Based Services:

- Managed Access Control
- Email Alerts
- SMS/Text Messages
- VOIP, Internet & Cellular Communication Paths
- E-Link (My Account) Remote Services
- Outbound Voice for Supervisory Signals
- Inbound Voice for Service Technicians
- Web-based Account History and Service Management
- Remote Download Capability
- Remote AlarmNet diagnostics
- Remote TotalConnect Administration and Technical Support
- Reporting Options

The monitoring center uses Slack as a messaging app that connects them with everyone within the company. They quickly and efficiently communicate with other departments about issues throughout their shifts. We also have a customer email box that is monitored 24/7, allowing customers to request service. We use Freshdesk as an online cloud-based ticket creator to quickly respond to our customer's needs. Our operators can request time off, check their pay stubs, and monitor their career growth through the Kronos app.

4. FALSE DISPATCH PROCEDURES/REDUCING FALSE ALARMS - Explain standard alarm procedures and how your monitoring center uses technology to reduce false dispatches. Outline your approach for identifying offenders and corresponding remediation. If applicable, identify any training programs that you have developed for key stakeholders, inclusive of employees, end users, or others.

EPS Security utilizes Enhanced Call Verification, which has resulted in more than a 90% reduction in dispatches. Our on-site False Alarm Task Force meets twice monthly to



decrease false alarms. For each meeting, a report is compiled of any account with two or more false alarms in two weeks. These accounts are reviewed, and the committee determines the best way to correct the problem. Once it has been established that a malfunction in the alarm system has not caused the false alarm, EPS employees provide helpful information to the customer explaining how to troubleshoot their system to reduce the number of false alarms. Finally, our Monitoring Center supervisors perform a follow-up on all alarms from the previous day we could not make contact with at the time of the alarm. The EPS employee notifies each customer when an alarm is tripped, attempts to update contact numbers, and provides customer training as needed. Currently, EPS incorporates TMA, SNA, NFPA and the Burglar and Fire Alarm Association of Michigan guidelines in its daily procedures. Our technology includes DICE™ software and Honeywell products, including dual technology devices and cross zones.

5. COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES - Detail how you help employees engage in community activities and causes

EPS Security fosters an environment of volunteerism among our staff. Volunteers from the Monitoring Center and throughout EPS also participated in “Maranda Park Parties”. Annually, a local TV station holds five or six “park parties” in area towns to promote community and awareness while having a fun time through music and family fun. EPS is not only a sponsor of the event, but a full participant of every single “park party” throughout the summer. McGruff SafeKids ID kits are handed out along with other valuable information. It’s a great opportunity for EPS to give back to the local communities we serve, and we have a great time doing it.

EPS also is involved with the local organization “Kids Food Basket” which provides sack lunches to children in local school districts. Other contributions to local charities and events are provided through Friday “Jean Day” events where employees donate a specified amount to a chosen non-profit organization to participate. Non-profit donations are constantly changing and include many different organizations. Eps employees were able to raise \$23,000 for United Way.



6. METRICS - Identify KPIs and frequency of reporting. Explain how these reports are used to manage day-to-day operations.

EPS Security regularly monitors the performance of the Monitoring Center. Monthly metrics are gathered that measure monitoring and phone efficiency, alarm accuracy, and customer service quality. These metrics across operators are also tabulated for rolling department averages to ensure we meet goals.

At the end of the month, operators are provided with a monthly KPI scorecard showing them their YTD review scores.

Department leadership gives bi-weekly metric scorecards to each operator individually via email. If the employee has any questions, they will set up a meeting with their supervisor. Each operator is made aware of the expectations and where they stand each measurement period.

We use this information and interaction to identify additional training needs for department meetings and reward our top performers. These measurements have also been intertwined with the annual review process, so the performance scoring system remains consistent.

7. EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION - Explain your center's approach for recognizing employee excellence in areas of productivity, Q/A scores, attendance, etc. Provide information on any employee referral programs and retention bonus programs.

EPS uses the TMA Excellence Awards as an incentive to promote attendance and performance among employees. Suppose senior management feels an operator is exceeding the high standards outlined in their TMA training and certification, as well as internal performance metrics. In that case, they are nominated for the Monitoring Center Operator of the Year award. EPS has established a Toperator that is announced monthly; our Toperator is the top performer within the monitoring center based on their KPIs. If they are the Toperator, you are awarded a \$40.00 gift card to Amazon, and they have bragging rights for the month. We also use Caught with quality's which are written documents that the supervisor will go over with the employee when they go above and beyond for our customers. These documents will go into their official employee file. EPS does offer an employee referral program, and If the individual hired completes the qualifying period, you will be eligible for a \$500.00 bonus. An additional \$500.00 will be paid when the new employee completes six consecutive months of employment at EPS Security. We also offer our monitoring center operators additional compensation for having perfect attendance. The employee can bank 240 hours into



their sick time bank, which provides paid time off for short-term disability. Once the employee has reached the cap of 240 hours, as long as they have perfect attendance, they will receive 4 hours of paid time which is automatically added into their next payday.

8. QUALITY OF RECORDS (Alarm history, recordings, etc.) - Detail your center's records retention process, including its approach for alarm history and phone calls. Explain how you use history to evaluate current challenges, productivity, and effectiveness. Lastly, how is history used to understand current business, customers, and employees?

The monitoring center takes a comprehensive approach for monitoring our history and phone calls. Every two-week period the operators have 20 random alarms and ten phone calls reviewed by upper management to ensure an exceptional customer experience. We take a proactive approach to monitoring changing weather patterns and have additional staff available to log into automation if needed. We have multiple status screens within the monitoring center that allow the operators to observe the incoming signals and phone calls. In addition, our team monitors the history of accounts, looking for common patterns that could be occurring, and will have our in-house technical support further investigate to prevent additional issues from occurring.

9. RELATIONS WITH AHJs - Explain how your monitoring center works with public safety to increase effectiveness, reduce false alarms, and increase awareness of industry trends, technology, and contributions.

EPS Security has established excellent relationships with the local responding authorities. We have an open-door policy with the local police, fire, rescue and 911 personnel. We regularly host guests with tours of our facilities as well as coordinated meetings. To ensure we are always on the same page as authorities, we make sure to update all parties whenever there is a procedure change at EPS. Our proactive communication and overall coordination allow us to effectively respond to authorities and customers alike.

EPS proudly partners as a sponsor with local media stations and authorities alike that promote awareness in the community. We take pride in educating children and parents



with programs like “Take a Bite out of Crime” with McGruff and also Fire response and evacuation plan education with our friends at the fire department.

10. BUSINESS STRATEGY/CUSTOMER RELATIONS - How do you approach and manage communications with your customers? Share how your center solicits voice of customer? How do you keep them apprised of business developments, advancements, and new products or services?

EPS Security gathers data from the automation software, and the phone system reports to ensure customers are being taken care of efficiently. In addition, alarm events are pulled by supervisors each week and scored for accuracy. Finally, phone call recordings are pulled weekly and reviewed with operators to point out both positive and negative aspects of their interactions with our customers. These measurable skills contribute to how performance is monitored across the department. Overall, the priority at EPS is simple; Responsiveness, Trusted Advisors, & Personal Touch. EPS regularly updates our website to keep our customers informed of new developments, advancements, and products. In addition, we provide mass mailers to our customers to introduce new services and products.

11. ENGAGEMENT WITH INDUSTRY GROUPS - Identify relevant industry association memberships that you center maintains. How does your company participate in or contribute to these associations?

EPS Security works closely with many industry organizations to learn best practices and form bonds with peers as well as having a say with responding agencies as their departments or groups evolve. These organizations include Security Networks of America (SNA), the Burglary & Fire Alarm Association of Michigan (BFAAM), and our certifying organizations such as UL, FM, and TMA.



Part C Monitoring Center Operator of the year

EPS SECURITY

BACKGROUND

1. Name of person being considered for the TMA Manager of the Year

Sydney Johnston

2. Official job title

Monitoring Center Lead Operator

3. How long has this person worked for the company?

3.5 years

4. What has been the progression of jobs within the company during this time period?

Sydney started at EPS on July 30th, 2018. As a level one operator, she had begun to master level one tasks within a short time. On Sept 17th, 2019, she obtained senior level, which includes handling alarms coming into the monitoring center and handling incoming customer records requests. On May 3rd, 2021, Sydney obtained our lead level operator, which includes additional responsibility.

5. How long has the nominee served in his/her current position?

Sydney has been a lead operator since May 3rd, 2021



5. What is the nominee's experience, both within your organization and in the security industry?

Sydney graduated from Grand Valley State University with honors with a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and a minor in Spanish. Before starting at EPS, she worked as a police cadet, which drew her into being a dispatcher. Sydney wanted to continue to use her criminal justice degree, and dispatching is where she found her passion. She came up as an operator, and it was quickly determined that she was leadership material. She has been in her role as a lead operator since May 3rd and continues to excel in everything she does.

6. What is the nominee's industry education, job-specific education and training, and industry certifications?

Sydney has completed the full scope of EPS' internal training program, serves as a trainer herself, and has assisted in a large portion of the Monitoring Center Training Manual content. In addition, she has completed additional leadership development training through the Employer's Association, applicable safety training, and disaster recovery and business continuity training. Sydney is CSAA Level II certified.

7. Describe the nominee's current areas of responsibility.

As a lead operator, Sydney has adapted to her new responsibilities and can prioritize and organize tasks that need to be completed.

Sydney is charged with effectively and efficiently monitoring alarm signals through automation software.

Promptly and professionally answer phone calls and log information from subscribers.

Process account changes including contact lists, zone changes, individual ID, etc. Create and schedule service tickets.

Coordinate and delegate monitoring floor activities.

Serve as a trainer during the new employee on-boarding process.

Execute disaster recovery protocols in the event of an incident.

Monitor schedule and solicit coverage as needed.



Complete various additional projects as requested by management.
Participate in discussion and provide feedback for procedures to management.
Research and provide prompt response to customer inquiries and complaints.
Setting up new accounts to be place online as requested.
Review end of shift reports and monitoring error reports.

8. Describe the nominee's performance level, generally, on the job.

Sydney truly is the backbone of the monitoring center at EPS. As a lead operator, she has one of the most challenging jobs, and she excels at it. Sydney is a high-level performer. She routinely is awarded the "Toperator" award, issued monthly to the top-performing operator across measurable metrics. These metrics measure responsiveness, workload contribution, accuracy, and efficiency. Sydney makes herself available to answer the questions from less experienced operators and is the "go-to" on the floor for customer issues. She is trusted, respected, and well-liked.

9. Provide three examples of how the nominee demonstrates that he/she is a team player on the job.

- Sydney serves in an on-call role. She has volunteered to come in several times even in situations where she is not on-call to help the team. Sydney consistently adjusts her schedule to meet the department needs.
- Sydney monitors our Slack channel for questions from operators and will respond to them even when she is not at work. She has a team-player mindset that has allowed her to contribute to handling not only her own workload but also in assisting co-workers with their work.
- Sydney took on a major project that requires ongoing account information updates for all of our new installations. She has a great attitude in taking this on and completing the project while still being responsible for monitoring and without sacrificing any efficiency or accuracy. She is someone who is always willing to assist upper management with any projects that need to be completed.

10. Has this person ever been promoted? Provide details.

Sydney has served as a department Lead Operator since May 2021. She has had increasing responsibilities and new tasks assigned throughout her career at EPS. When a supervisor position becomes available, she will be the top candidate.



11. Describe an exemplary call during which someone's life and/or property were saved due to the actions of the nominee. How did the nominee make a difference in that dispatch?

Sydney's training came out on a frigid wintery morning when she received two separate CO detector alarms from a customer's site. She offered to send the fire department to the house to check for levels of CO, and the homeowner declined. Sydney gave the homeowner a summary of what CO poisoning looks like (dizziness, confusion, headache) and advised them to call the fire department asap and remove themselves from the home if they experienced any symptoms.

The customer called in the next day to report to EPS that they did have the fire department come on-site, and they did find the furnace malfunctioning with levels of CO in their home.

The customer was extremely grateful for Sydney's responsiveness, as well as the level of care and concern she expressed. Sydney's diligence in making sure they understood the potential severity of the situation ultimately saved their lives.

12. In what ways does the nominee help to boost morale within the Monitoring Center?

Sydney always brings a great attitude, a friendly smile, and often treats into the monitoring center! Being available as a resource for less experienced operators is great for providing a comfort factor on the floor. She has helped organize fun days in the monitoring center liked themed clothing or "get to know you" activities.

13. Please describe any other information the judges should know about this person.

Sydney's level of dedication to EPS is without parallel. She genuinely loves her work and finds fulfillment in helping people. We are privileged to have her on our team.



14. Why does this person deserve to win the CSAA Monitoring Center Operator of the Year award? Provide examples of when this person went beyond the normal expectations to provide exceptional customer service.

This past year Sydney has had a multitude of additional responsibilities while working through a global pandemic. She has thrived in this role. She is highly respected, detail oriented, efficient and accurate, and is a true team player. All in all, Sydney is a valued and respected member of the EPS team. Always willing to help, she is intelligent, thoughtful, and has a high level of understanding of the industry, its products, the EPS vision, and the needs of her coworkers and customers alike. It is for this and the many reasons previously listed that Sydney should win the TMA Monitoring Center Operator of the Year Award.