

# Alarms advice for domestic properties

Burglars want easy pickings and will avoid properties that have effective security. Research has shown that improvements in home security such as fitting an intruder alarm, have played a significant role in reducing burglaries.

Before you buy an alarm, follow our advice to help you choose a suitable system

## DID YOU KNOW

- ❖ The majority of burglaries occur when there is nobody at home; most are not planned but committed by opportunists
- ❖ An alarm can be part-set to cover areas that you are not occupying whilst at home
- ❖ Wire-free alarms are available if you are worried about wiring in your house
- ❖ Systems can include a 'Hold-Up Alarm'. Invaluable if there is an intruder in the house, for example a typical location for one might be in the bedroom

There are three main types of security systems; they operate differently and are treated differently by the police.

## Audible Alarm

Audible alarm systems sound a loud siren or bell, designed to scare a burglar and alert neighbours and passers-by. For the police to respond, someone at the scene would need to call the police and report that a crime is in progress.

## Monitored Alarm

In contrast monitored alarm systems are just that – monitored 24/7 by an approved commercial 'Alarm Receiving Centre' or ARC. When an alarm is triggered the ARC immediately checks the signal to verify it is a genuine alarm, alerts a keyholder and, if necessary, the police.

A key point to note is the police will only attend an alarm signal from a monitored alarm as long as the system complies with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Security Systems Policy, which details how the system is installed, monitored and maintained. It also requires security companies providing this service to be approved by an independent inspectorate body and registered with the local police force.

The two inspectorate bodies are the NSI (National Security Inspectorate – [www.nsi.org.uk](http://www.nsi.org.uk)) and the SSAIB (Security Systems & Alarm Inspection Board – [www.ssaib.org](http://www.ssaib.org)). Both inspectorates have search functions on their websites to assist in checking out if a security company installing alarms is genuinely approved. If so it will ensure you have a reliable and well maintained system that meets relevant British and European standards and which could result in lower insurance premiums.

Compliant security systems and reputable installation companies and ARCs are essential to ensure that you will get the appropriate response to an alarm activation. If the security system is not compliant there will not be an immediate police response, something which could be vital if someone is in immediate danger or property is being stolen.

## DIY Alarms

Whilst DIY kits may provide a cheaper alternative, the NPCC does not recommend them as the alarm system may not be designed to meet the needs and risks of your property. In addition, problems with installation, maintenance and reliability may not become clear until a burglary has occurred

## **PLEASE REMEMBER**

It is never advisable to deal with cold callers or telesales enquiries, and you should always avoid doing doorstep or telephone business. Whilst traders who call at your door can be honest and genuine, some are not and can be extremely persuasive.

Examples of bad practices associated with cold-calling and door-step selling include pressure selling, waiving your rights to a cooling off period, unclear contracts, over-priced security systems and unduly raising the fear of crime.

Never sign up to long term monitoring contracts that require payment up front. Only deal with installers that offer you a written quotation without obligation.

Turn away any company that tries to scare you into purchasing an alarm with stories of burglaries in your area. If you feel a company has tried 'hard sell' tactics, you should consider contacting your local police or Trading Standards office.