

Alarm System and Requirements:

Some residential systems are designed to sound an alarm and/or illuminate the area to scare off an intruder. These system then sends a signal from a sensory devise directly to a light system or to a siren located in your attic or on the outside of your home.

When a sensory device detects an intruder, the sounding device is activated and/or the house lights are turned on. It is hoped that the lights or sound will alert the homeowner (if at home), a neighbor or a on duty police unit. Since the typical residential burglar is not a professional, a local system will usually scare him away.

Many companies will install a combination system which includes a local alarm (siren and/or lights) and a central reporting alarm. An advantage of having the central reporting system is that it is being constantly monitored by an alarm company. If the alarm goes off, the alarm company notifies the necessary personel.

It is a good idea to have at least one smoke detector built into your alarm system. Smoke is the primary killer in fires and a smoke detector placed in a hallway between bedrooms can save lives. These detectors can also be monitored by the same company that monitors your security system.

Added protection is provided by a back-up power supply in the event of a power failure and a built-in ability to test the system regularly.

You get what you pay for. In this regard, be sure that the sensor devices (magnetic contacts, motion detectors, pressure mats, screens, etc.) to be in stalled are Underwriters Laboratories (U.L.) approved for burglary protection.

There are usually two costs involved when dealing with an alarm company: an installation charge and a monthly service charge. It is not recommended that you buy or lease a system from a company which does not offer a contract for continuing maintenance and service.

Once the alarm company representative has made an appraisal of your security needs, ask him for a written proposal and a copy of the contract you will have to sign. Take some time, look it over, and think about it. Check the alarm company's reputation by calling Better Business Bureau. You should also consider two additional estimates from reputable companies and compare costs.

Never sign a contract which does not list all points of protection and does not itemize the equipment to be installed.

Learn the system you have purchased. Not understanding how the system works can lead to false alarms, which can lead to false alarm fines.

Remember: A good alarm system is an investment in your security and personal well being. The mere presence of an alarm is often a deterrent. Advertise the fact that your premises are alarmed by using warning decals.

Purchasing Checklist:

When shopping for a burglary alarm system, use these guidelines to check out the system you are considering as well as the dealer:

THE BUSINESS

- ___ Is it local?
- ___ Do they have a state license?
- ___ Do they offer 24 hour service?
- ___ Will the business work with your insurance company for reduced rates?
- ___ Is there a warranty?
- ___ Is there a service contract?
- ___ If the system is monitored at a central location?

EQUIPMENT

- ___ Avoid motion detectors if pets roam your house freely.
- ___ Is it electrically or battery operated?
- ___ If electrically operated, does it switch automatically to battery power without activating (power failure)?
- ___ If activated, will it automatically shut itself off and will it reset?
- ___ If the control box is exposed, will it activate if tampered with?
- ___ Are all wires protected from the elements and rodents?
- ___ If an audible system, is it loud enough for neighbors to hear?
- ___ Does the system have a time delay to allow time to activate or deactivate without false alarms?
- ___ Is the system approved by Underwriters Laboratory (U.L.)

Preventing False Alarms:

The Cost of False Alarms -

A security system can greatly reduce the chance of having an unwanted intruder in your home, and loss of property. Remember, the system is only as good as the quality of the components and installation. 99.9% of the alarms reported to the local police agencies are false! Each one must be handled as a real threat until it is determined otherwise. False alarms add unnecessary risk to the responding officers and the public in general.

False alarms are very expensive to the tax payers of Montgomery County. The following table illustrates why each security system owner should strive to eliminate false alarms:

FALSE ALARMS handled by the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office in 2004:

- Valid Alarms - 9
- False Alarms - 19,433 (not including response to alarms within city limits)
- Work Hours Responding to False Alarms - 5,161

Because of the high cost and risk incurred by responding to false alarm calls, Montgomery County has an Alarm Ordinance. The intent of this ordinance is, simply, to reduce the number of false alarms received by the law enforcement agencies and fire departments.

HOW TO REDUCE FALSE ALARMS:

1. Have all loose fitting doors and windows with sensors tightened. A loose fit may break the sensor contact, even without opening the door/window.
2. Insure everyone who has access to your house, has the code and knows how to arm and disarm your security system.
3. Have your alarm company check and service your alarm system regularly. Notify them immediately if you think the system is not working properly.
4. If the alarm goes off accidentally, notify the alarm company and/or your local law enforcement agency immediately.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME:

- Close and lock all doors and windows tightly
- Keep pets, balloons, fans and heaters away from motion sensor areas.
- After activating your system, wait a few moments to insure your security system armed itself properly.