

# Burglar Alarms Advice

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Police advise that you ensure installers are registered with and inspected by one of the following:

SSAIB (Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board)  
Tel 0191 2963242  
<http://www.ssaib.org/>

NSI (National Security Inspectorate)  
Tel 0845 006 3003  
<http://www.nsi.org.uk/>

It is always advisable not to buy anything at the door, and that includes burglar alarms. Always get a minimum of three quotes from companies who provide a free survey and quotation. Some will offer big discounts if you sign up straight away...don't be fooled!

There are two types of burglar alarm:

- Audible/bells only
- Monitored

## Audible/bells only

As the name suggests, this system when activated, will ring an internal and external sounder at the premises. In line with the Environmental Protection Act 1990, covering noise pollution, the external sounder should shut off after 20 minutes unless silenced earlier by an authorised user. This type of system will have an initial cost to install, and an annual contract for maintenance.

## Monitored

This still functions in the same way as an audible/bells only system but in addition the system will contact an Alarms Receiving Centre (ARC) to notify them that the alarm has been activated. The ARC will then take action according to the instructions given to them by your alarm installation company. This will involve contacting your nominated key holders and may include contacting the police (see Police Response section for more details).

Alarms can be monitored via various communication methods and will usually require a telephone line to be installed at the premises. Speak to your installer about this and for independent advice contact NSI (National Security Inspectorate) or SSAIB (Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board).

Both audible/bells only and monitored systems can be either hard wired or wire free. Wire free systems are quicker to install, but may be slightly more expensive, and the batteries need to be replaced regularly by your installer.

NSI and SSAIB provide a list of current approved companies, which you can request directly from NSI / SSAIB or access from their web sites.



But remember the only security system that is ever going to work is one that you use! Set it - don't regret it!

## Police Response (Monitored systems only)

The National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) policy: Guidelines on Police Requirements & Response to Security Systems 2015 lays down the standards for a pre-planned police response to a monitored alarm system.

The aim of the policy is to enable the police to provide an effective response to genuine intruder alarm calls, thereby leading to the arrest of offenders and a reduction of losses by improving the effectiveness of alarm systems and reducing the number of false calls.

Note: Only companies approved by either NSI or SSAIB and registered with the police can apply for and obtain police response to your alarm system on your behalf. Please check with your installer before purchasing.

### Definition of a False Alarm

The definition of a false alarm is an alarm call that would normally be passed to the police and has NOT resulted from:

- A) A criminal attack, or attempt at such, on the protected premises, the alarm equipment or the line carrying the alarm signal
- B) Actions by the emergency services in the execution of their duty
- C) A call emanating from a personal attack system made with good intent

The policy lays down standards for the police response, the installation and maintenance of systems and for Alarm Receiving Centres (ARCs).

The alarms have to be registered with the police by the installation company and are given a Unique Reference Number (URN). The issue of a URN is subject to a fee payable by the occupier.

Please note that this process may take a number of weeks and your system will not receive a pre-planned police response without one! Please take this into consideration when considering time-scales relating to things such as insurance requirements, taking delivery of expensive items, going away on holiday etc.

Alarms allocated a URN are the only ones that qualify for pre-planned police response. Such systems must have a minimum of 2 appointed key holders, these being persons who must meet the following criteria:

- Have a full set of keys and any security codes to access all areas of the premises
- Be trained in how to operate the alarm system
- Have their own means of transport
- Be telephone subscribers
- Reside within 20 minutes safe travelling time of the alarm premises

It is your responsibility to ensure these details are up to date and that the key holders will attend when required. Failure to attend an activation within 20 minutes may result in the loss of future police response. Please also ensure that you notify your alarm company when people are away on holiday and provide them with suitable alternatives.

### **Under the policy there are three levels of police intervention:**

- Level 1 - Immediate.
- Level 2 - Police response is desirable but attendance may be delayed (e.g. due to resource availability).
- Level 3 - No police attendance, key holder response only.

Following the issue of a URN the alarm will be subject to a Level 1 response.

However, following two false calls in a rolling 12 month period the police response will be downgraded to Level 2.

Following three false calls in a rolling 12 month period the system will be downgraded to Level 3 and police response will be withdrawn. Police response may be restored following three months free of false calls where the original problem has been solved and the system has been upgraded to the latest standards available (see confirmation below).

### **Confirmation (sometimes referred to as verification)**

There have been very important changes in this area. The use of the expression 'confirmed' indicates that there is some form of confirmation of activity in the building made to the ARC. Premises to which the police response has been withdrawn will now be required to have a confirmed system to qualify for a police response.

At present confirmation can be considered to be either sequential, audio or visual. With 'sequential' the ARC will receive a series of alarms as each detector is triggered by the intruder. 'Audio' is achieved by having microphones in the premises enabling the ARC to listen in. With 'visual' CCTV is used so that the ARC is able to view the internal area of the premises from where the alarm originated.

Companies who are NSI or SSAIB approved can apply to join the list of companies who can apply for Police Response to monitored alarm systems.

### **Police Response to Commercial Premises**

For commercial premises the consequences of losing police response due to false alarms can be significant. Here are some tips on how you can avoid being taken off police response to your security system.

Every security system activation must be considered a major incident and notified to a senior manager for his/her attention.

We have found that as soon as a company is taken off police response the top management, often the MD, gets involved and writes letters to the Chief Constable, Home Secretary and/or others. Unfortunately, whilst you may feel better having had your say, these letters will not get you back on police response.

However, if just a little of this energy had been used before your company was taken off response then the problem should have been avoided. Each and every security system activation must be dealt with as a major incident (you can be assured that removal from police response will be a major incident) and appropriate enquiries made.

The Senior Manager must make it his/her business to find out why the security system was activated. Questions asked at this level focus the minds of the staff and show them just how seriously the company takes this issue.

If staff error - take action now! Retrain as necessary to avoid a recurrence. Ensure that ALL staff understands just how important the security system is to your company's survival.

If a fault on the system - take action now! Inform your alarm company and ask them what they are doing to ensure that the fault is repaired. Get a response from them in writing.

If doors or windows were left open - take action now! Ensure that all staff understands just how important the security of your company is.

If the cause was vermin, birds or pets moving around - take action now! Get in a specialist vermin control company if necessary. Speak to your alarm company to get advice on any temporary measures that can be put in place to stop another false alarm until the problem has been eradicated. If a pet activated the system then remove your pets or ask your Alarm Company to make it impossible for your pets to set off the system again.

If the false alarm was the fault of the alarm company/ARC/utilities supplier – take action now! Regardless of whose fault the activation was it is still a false alarm and will be counted as such. Speak to your alarm company to get advice on how to stop a recurrence of the problem.

If a genuine activation - take action now! Are you sure that the police officers who attended have logged it as a genuine alarm? You must obtain and keep a record of the Crime Reference Number that relates to the cause of the activation (for example a break in). The Alarms Administrator will require this should a dispute arise. If in any doubt then ring the police on 101 and ask to speak to the Alarms Administrator to confirm.

If the activation was thought false but later turns out to have been genuine - take action now! You must report this to your local station and obtain and keep a record of the Crime Reference Number that relates to the cause of the activation (for example undetected break in or attempted). The Alarms Administrator will require this in order to amend your activation history. If in any doubt then ring police and speak to the Alarms Administrator to seek further advice.

You must find out what caused the activation now so that you can take remedial action now. Waiting until you lose police response before doing something is not an effective option. Remember the same fault/problem can cause several false alarms all of which will count against you!

This information is available to download and print to assist you in educating your staff.

The consequences of losing police response due to false alarms