

An Garda Síochána

Crime Prevention Information Sheet



Home Security Intruder Alarms



Why install an intruder alarm system?

It is widely accepted that intruder alarms are an effective deterrent against burglars, thereby helping to reduce the likelihood of your home being targeted. However, it is important to understand that an intruder alarm is not a replacement for good physical security. It should, rather, be regarded as a back-up to good physical and other security measures and precautions employed to protect your home.

Intruder alarm systems

Essentially, Intruder alarm systems fall into two categories - 'wired' systems or 'wire-free / wireless' systems. Each of these categories can be sub-divided into two types -

- **Audible only**
When the alarm is activated, an internal and/or external siren/bell operates to draw attention to the building
- **Remotely Monitored**
When the alarm is activated, the internal/external siren/bell operates and a signal is also sent to a central monitoring station which can inform you, a chosen keyholder(s) and/or the Gardaí as required and appropriate.

Auto-dialler - an auto-dialler can be utilised with any of the above systems. When the alarm is activated, the auto-dialler within the alarm system will ring pre-determined telephone numbers to inform you and/or keyholders of the alarm activation. It must not be programmed to call the Gardaí.

Understanding and using your alarm system

It is important to understand how your alarm system operates. Your installer should explain the operation of the system to you and all other members of your family. Insist on a training session to demonstrate its features. Don't be baffled by techno-speak or other jargon, ask the installer to explain.

It is also important that all your keyholders are familiar

with the operation of your alarm system and that they know the activation and deactivation codes etc.

Keep all instruction manuals in a known and accessible location. Do not write alarm codes etc. on the instruction manual or on walls or doors near the control unit or keypad. This is a common practice and must be avoided.

What system is best for me?

This is often a difficult decision to make and may be influenced by a number of factors including cost, design of residence, location and whether the house is suitably pre-wired. Your local Crime Prevention Officer can offer advice and you should also talk to friends and neighbours about systems that they have installed. The alarm installation companies can provide specialist advice and your home insurance company may also be in a position to assist.

Choosing an Alarm Installer

All alarm installers and installation companies must now be licensed by the Private Security Authority. A list of all licensed installers is available on their website.

There are numerous companies and individuals operating in the alarm installation industry. You will find most listed in the Golden Pages telephone directory.

It is recommended that you obtain at least three quotes from reputable installers.

The Gardaí do not recommend any particular alarm company but do recommend that all installed alarms should comply with the European Standard EN 50131. Note that one of the criteria for a Garda response is that the alarm system meets this standard or the older Irish Standard IS 199 which has now been replaced by EN 50131.

Monitored or un-monitored?

This is a matter that should be carefully considered. In

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PLEASE CONTACT
your local GARDÁ CRIME PREVENTION OFFICER
or
visit the Garda website at www.garda.ie**

order to guarantee a Garda response to an activation of your alarm, you must have a Unique Reference Number (URN) issued by the Gardaí. These are only issued where the alarm system -

- complies with approved standards,
- has been installed by an approved installer, and
- is monitored by an approved monitoring company.

Further information on this matter can be provided by your alarm company, monitoring station, local Garda Crime Prevention Officer or you can read and download the full Garda Alarm Policy from the Garda website (see Useful Contacts & Links at the end of this information sheet).

Garda Intruder Alarm Policy

The Garda Alarm Policy has recently been revised with a view to reducing the number of incidences of false alarm activations. This will help to provide a more effective service to the public.

All alarm systems, including domestic, should have dual verification installed from January 31, 2008. Your alarm installation company will explain this in detail, but essentially, it involves verifying an alarm activation by means of two or more detection devices which send two separate alarm signals to the monitoring station.

Glossary of common alarm terms

Control Panel / Box

This is the heart or nerve-centre of the system and, in a domestic residence, is often situated in a cupboard or under the stairs. The control panel is connected to the electricity mains but also has a battery back-up facility.

Keypad

The keypad allows you to input numbers/codes thereby activating or de-activating the alarm. Often placed in the hallway, not far from the entry/exit point. Mainly used to switch the alarm on and off.

Magnetic Contact Sensors

These are sensors that are generally used to detect the opening of a door or window. There are two parts to them: a magnet and a contact and are usually fitted to the surface of the window or door. Flush fitting types are also available.

Movement Sensors/Detectors

Many types are available, PIRs (Passive Infra-Reds) being the most common. They are normally installed in the corner of a room near the ceiling and detect a rapid change in infra-red energy e.g. by the movement of a person. Other types include microwave, ultrasonic and combinations of each (dual technology).

Vibration and Acoustic Sensors/Detectors

Vibration sensors detect physical vibrations e.g. where a door or window is banged in a hard manner. Acoustic sensors detect airborne vibrations e.g. where glass is broken. A dual technology sensor incorporating both is

also available.

Personal Attack Button

Also called a 'PANIC' button and has one or two recessed red buttons that, when pressed, causes the alarm to activate immediately and may also transmit a further signal to a remote monitoring station if connected.

Internal Sounder / Bell

This is fitted inside the home and provides a very loud audible warning noise.

External Siren / Bell Box

This is the 'box' that you will see on the outside of homes and other buildings. It is normally sited quite high up, generally just under the eaves, and should be tamper-proof.

Strobe Flasher

Fitted to the external siren/bell box to give a visual warning of the alarm activation. Can be programmed to continue flashing after the audio sounder/bell has stopped.

Remote Signalling

With this facility, your alarm activation is transmitted to a remote monitoring station.

Zone

The alarm installation company will, for the purposes of identification and convenience, divide your home into zones when installing your alarm system. These zones are managed by the control unit and can be utilised to de-activate certain areas of your home at particular times, to alert you to open zones when setting your alarm and also to provide information when an alarm activation occurs etc.

The advice contained in this information sheet is not intended to be exhaustive or absolute. At all times it is wise to seek appropriate professional advice where additions or alterations are made to your property to improve security.

Nothing contained in this publication should be interpreted as mandatory, obligatory or designed to conflict with any statutory regulations.

Useful Contacts and Links

The Garda Crime Prevention National Centre of Excellence

Garda H.Q., Harcourt Square, Dublin 2.

Tel: (01) 6663822, Fax: (01) 6663314

Email: GCPNCE@garda.ie

An Garda Síochána

www.garda.ie

The Private Security Authority

www.psa.gov.ie

The National Standards Authority of Ireland

www.nsai.ie