

AN INTRO TO

# Security Systems

An introductory security system buying guide

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CHAPTER

1

Monitored or Non-Monitored

# Chapter 1

## Monitored or Non-Monitored

A monitored security system is one that is linked to a central response station. When an alarm is triggered, the response station is notified and either calls the people on your contact list or notifies the appropriate emergency personnel.

A non-monitored security system, while not linked to any kind of communication that can notify emergency personnel, can still trigger alarms and possibly scare off burglars.

### **Monitored Systems**

Monitored security systems are charged a monthly service fee around \$20 or more, depending on the provider, the length of the agreement, and the types of services being provided.

When an alarm is triggered, the central response station is notified by the control panel. The response station will typically call you, ask for your password, and ask if it may be a false alarm. If no one answers, the response center will notify emergency personnel or your responsible party, depending on what sensors/detectors were triggered. If unable to reach you, the response station will go down your emergency contact list until they are able to reach someone.

# Chapter 1

## Monitored or Non-Monitored

When considering different companies and response centers, look for a response center that is UL certified. This means the response center has been verified by the independent non-profit Underwriters Laboratories, known for testing products and services for maximum safety and reliability.

### **Non-Monitored Systems**

With a non-monitored system, no one will be notified when an alarm is triggered. That means anytime you leave your house, you leave it vulnerable, hoping that the alarm alone will scare away intruders or that your neighbors might call the police. You'll save on monthly monitoring/service fees, but why have an alarm system if you can't have peace of mind?

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CHAPTER

2

Wired or Wireless

# Chapter 2

## Wired or Wireless

A wired security system requires wiring the system throughout the house and is usually installed by a professional alarm company.

A wireless security system uses remote transmitters with batteries. Wireless systems have grown in popularity in recent years.

### **Wired System**

To have a wired alarm system, the wires should be placed during the construction of the home. Sometimes, if there is an addition to the home or for example, an unfinished basement, the control panel can be placed there and the rest of the home wired from it. However, if an existing home was not wired for a security system when built and is completely finished, a wireless system might be the best option.

Wired alarm systems require no transmitter battery maintenance and are easy to maintain.

### **Wireless System**

Wireless systems are tamper-resistant. They have batteries that require replacement every few years.



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Wireless systems have grown in popularity in recent years.

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CHAPTER

3

Equipment Options

# Chapter 3

## Equipment Options

There are many different equipment options or features that you can get with a standard home security system. The following are possible features you can have with a security system:

- **Door sensor**

This sensor detects if a door has been opened.

- **Motion detector**

This is designed to detect any kind of motion, but can be configured to ignore pets. It uses heat patterns in the room to detect movement.

- **Window sensor**

This detects if a window has been opened or closed.

- **Glass break sensor**

This sensor is placed near a window or a group of windows to detect when it has been broken.

- **Smoke detector**

This is designed to detect the early presence of smoke.

- **Heat sensor**

This sensor is designed to detect high levels of heat, in the case of a fire. This is different from a smoke detector, and is typically found in garages, attics, or high dust environments.

# Chapter 3

## Equipment Options

Security system features (continued):

- **Carbon monoxide detector**

This monitors carbon monoxide levels and if the colorless, odorless gas is detected, it sends a signal to the response center and sounds a siren within the home.

- **Siren**

This produces the sound when an alarm is triggered.

- **Strobe**

In addition to or in place of a siren, this flashing light can alert you that an alarm has been triggered. This feature is especially useful for those with hearing impairment.

- **Key pad**

A device that controls the alarm system by entering in a coded sequence of numbers.

- **Key fob**

This keyless entry system is a remote way to turn your system on and off.

# Chapter 3

## Equipment Options

Security system features (continued):

- **Cellular communicator**

This communicates with the response center via cellular network data channels. It functions as the primary method of communication between the alarm system and response center for Alarm.com interactive services, including home automation services such as remotely controlling lights, locks, and thermostats, and arming or disarming the system. It can also serve as a back-up to a landline in case the phone line is cut or during a power failure.

- **Interactive services**

Interactive services allow you to access features of your security system through devices such as a smartphone, tablet, laptop, or computer. Through interactive services, you can use home automation features such as controlling lighting, thermostats, and garage doors, or you can arm or disarm your system, view live video, or monitor activity.

- **Closed circuit TV**

These video cameras allow you to capture video of people or assets and store them on a DVR, NVR, and even in the cloud.

# Chapter 3

## Equipment Options

Security system features (continued):

- **DVR (Digital Video Recorder)**

This device records video and stores a certain amount of days worth of video for retrieval later.

- **NVR (Network Video Recorder)**

This is a video storage device that utilizes cameras on a computer network and is IP (Internet Protocol) based. This device can store multiple days worth of video. NVRs also tend to be high definition.

- **Video camera**

These cameras deliver video to a DVR or NVR.

- **Card access**

This is a keyless door entry system using proximity cards, typically seen in schools or commercial properties, such as gyms.

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CHAPTER

4

Definitions

# Definitions

- **Alarm system:** A security system with a control panel, keypad, and various sensors and detectors to prevent burglary and enhance home automation.
- **Monitoring agreement:** When purchasing an alarm system, you have a guaranteed rate for monitoring and it renews automatically.
- **Control panel:** This panel is the “brains” of your security system. Every system has a back-up battery that will run the system for at least 24 hours in case of a power failure.
- **Home automation:** This feature allows you to control several systems within your house, such as lighting, thermostats, and garage doors, using your alarm system.
- **Interactive services:** This allows you to access features of your security system remotely through devices such as a smartphone, laptop, tablet, or computer. You can arm or disarm your system, view live video, control the lights or thermostats, or monitor activity.
- **Strobe:** In addition to or in place of a siren, this flashing light can alert you that an alarm has been triggered. This feature is especially useful for those with hearing impairment.
- **Window sticker:** A small sticker placed on the windows or exterior doors of the home to inform potential burglars that your home is protected by a security system.
- **Yard sign:** A metal pole and sturdy sign placed in your yard to inform potential burglars that your home is protected by a security system.



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