



## Users' guide to alarms

If you're thinking about how you can improve security at your home or business, you might be considering fitting an alarm system.

On average, it takes 60 seconds to break into a home. Alarm systems offer a good deterrent to would-be intruders as criminals don't like attracting attention to their activities. With an alarm sounding, and the thief unable to know whether a signal has reached the homeowner or a central monitoring station, their time is very limited, helping reducing loss and damage.

The following advice about alarms will help you understand more about their benefits, what you need to consider when choosing one and the options available.

- There are two types of alarm systems: **audible only**, which will sound a bell or siren when triggered, and **monitored systems**, which in addition to sounding a bell or siren will send a signal to a central monitoring station that can then alert the police. Some systems can also send an alert to your mobile phone if they are triggered, and can be linked to CCTV so you can remotely view what is happening at home
- As a minimum requirement, an alarm must comply with BS4737
- Wireless systems with passive infrared sensors (PIRs) offer good battery life and no unsightly wiring
- Modern alarms are simple to use and offer flexibility about areas covered, allowing rooms to be alarmed even if pets have access while you're out
- When choosing a security company to supply an alarm, get quotes from at least three companies inspected by a recognised body such as the National Security Inspectorate (NSI) [www.nsi.org.uk](http://www.nsi.org.uk) or the Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board (SSAIB) [www.ssaib.org](http://www.ssaib.org)
- A professionally installed alarm system for a standard home typically costs between £400-£600. Variables include the number of rooms where sensors are required
- Some companies offer monthly payments instead of upfront costs, so look at overall annual running costs when getting quotes
- DIY alarms are a cheaper option and many now come with a British Standard (BS) rating, but Northamptonshire Police recommends a professionally-fitted system with NSI or SSAIB approval
- Only discuss your personal details and requirements with a firm you have contacted – never deal with companies which cold call you. If you have any doubts about a firm, contact [Trading Standards](#)
- Depending on your insurance company and the type of alarm you fit, you may get a discount on your home insurance. Check your policy or call your provider for specific advice
- Remember an alarm alone cannot protect your property – you also need to ensure you have good security habits and physical security measures. Find out more at [www.northants.police.uk/crime-prevention](http://www.northants.police.uk/crime-prevention)

**To speak to our crime prevention team about protecting your property with an alarm email [crimeprevention@northants.pnn.police.uk](mailto:crimeprevention@northants.pnn.police.uk)**