

INTRUDER ALARM MANAGEMENT

Intruder alarm systems provide enhanced security to County Council premises, 24 hours a day. However, they are designed to be sensitive to detect intruders, and can be unforgiving if errors are made in their operation. According to reliable studies, more than 90% of all alarm activations are classed as being false. **The majority of these are easily prevented.**

False alarms waste Police time, and encourage members of the public in the belief that they can ignore alarm activations. There is also a waste of County Council resources, in the unnecessary response by staff to false alarms (in addition to the inconvenience to staff themselves), and the costs of calling out alarm installers. In addition, County Council property is put at risk, as after a number of false alarms, Police response will be withdrawn, with the potential for insurance cover to be removed, and certainly the greater exposure of unprotected sites to theft and other losses. There is also an enhanced risk to keyholders attending call outs by themselves, when Police response has been withdrawn.

The following guidelines are designed to avoid the majority of false alarms and will, if followed, be of significant benefit to County Council staff, clients and property.

◆ **Appoint a “nominated person” to have prime responsibility for your alarm system.**

Use and management of the alarm system is your responsibility. Appoint a “nominated person” as a focus for contact with your alarm installer, to maintain a logbook, and to receive all communications, including those from the Police. In most circumstances, they should be the **only person** allowed to reset your alarm system.

◆ **Keep keyholders to the minimum number whilst ensuring 24 hour availability.**

Keyholders that only operate the system on rare occasions are prone to make mistakes, so they must be adequately trained. Ensure that a control system is in place, with keyholders signing to accept responsibility for keys.

◆ **Ensure that keyholders are easily contactable at all times when “on call”.**

This is particularly important at holiday times. Have “deputies” readily available. They must not reside more than 20 minutes from the premises and they must have their own transport. Police transport will not be provided. If the keyholder refuses, without good cause, to attend when requested this will lead to the withdrawal of police response.

◆ **The safety of keyholders attending alarm activation**

The callout of keyholders to alarm activations should be the subject of a risk assessment under the Management of Health and Safety at work regulations. Issues to be considered are remoteness of the location, lighting of premises, size of site, history of vandalism/personal safety problems, time of day/night etc (this is not an exhaustive list). In normal circumstances keyholders should wait for the police to attend before approaching the premises and then do so with the police. Where a premises has been taken off police response they will need to make appropriate arrangements to ensure keyholders do not attend incidents as lone workers.

◆ **Make sure that these persons are properly trained to use your alarm system.**

This is particularly important at holiday times, when people new to your alarm system are

often involved. Arrange this training with your alarm installer. Remember to train all new users.

◆ **Before leaving your premises check all doors and windows are properly secured.**

◆ **Always follow the entry/exit procedure agreed with your alarm installer.**

Do not allow entry or exit through any door other than the one designated. Make switching off the alarm your first task on entry (and switching on your next to last one on exit).

◆ **Ensure that no alarm movement detection devices (sensors, etc.) are obstructed by decorations, curtains, stock, furniture, spider's cobwebs or other items.**

Even such innocent items as Christmas decorations and mobiles can cause alarm activations.

◆ **Check your keys.**

Ensure that all keys necessary to enter the premises are readily available and that code numbers, where applicable are known (**only by authorised persons**) before entry. Make sure that all keys are accounted for and their whereabouts known.

◆ **Keep heat and water sources well away from your alarm system.**

If you consider introducing **any** new source of heat, movement or sound into an area protected by an alarm detector, please contact your alarm installer **beforehand**.

◆ **Tell your alarm installer about any alterations to your premises that will affect areas protected by the alarm system.**

Do not permit **anyone** else to make changes to your alarm system.

◆ **Tell your alarm installer about any alterations to your telephone system.**

Alterations to phone systems will often have a major impact on alarm system's effectiveness.

◆ **Beware of electrical alterations impacting upon your intruder alarm system**

Ensure that any electrical or other cabling work carried out takes into account the siting of intruder alarm cables, as false alarms can be triggered when computer and other cabling is installed to run close to intruder alarm cabling.

◆ **Please be aware of the potential for obscuring intruder alarm sensors when alterations are carried out or furniture moved.**

(For example, incorrect siting of light fittings, electrical trunking, shelves, partition walls). Such situations make it possible for entry to be gained to areas concerned without triggering the intruder alarm system.

◆ **Contact your alarm installer immediately in the event of any problems encountered when resetting the alarm.**

Don't simply switch the alarm back on again, particularly when there is a recurrent problem.

◆ **Treat your alarm system with care.**

If wiring or detection devices are damaged or **tampered with in any way**, contact your alarm installer **immediately**.

- ◆ **Do not permit anyone other than your recognised Alarm Contractor to change, move or in any way interfere with your alarm system.**
- ◆ **Keep an alarm logbook to record all activations, false or genuine. After a false alarm check the system carefully and, where possible, note the cause of activation.**

Tell the alarm engineer immediately on their arrival.

- ◆ **Make sure regular maintenance checks are carried out (6 monthly).**
Remember that excessive false alarms will lead to a withdrawal of Police response. Ensure that your record book is updated at the time of maintenance visits.

- ◆ **Regularly clean alarm movement detectors.**
Even small insects can trigger false alarms.

- ◆ **“Walk check” alarm movement detectors regularly, as they can be compromised.**

- ◆ **If you activate the alarm by mistake you must contact your alarm company central station immediately.**

Contact your designated alarm company central station (if you are on BT Red ABC contact your designated Police station) within 90 seconds, quoting the unique reference number/password of your alarm system, and the activation will not be recorded as a false alarm. It is **vital** that you keep this number/password safe and **not** written next to the telephone. If you are unsure about these procedures please contact your alarm installer.

If you have any further queries please contact your alarm company