

Security Systems For Home & Office

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When you were a child, what made you feel safe? Your favorite blanket? A teddy bear? A tight hug from your daddy? Me too...all of the above. But now that I'm an adult, the bogeyman doesn't just go away when the lights are turned on. The older I get, I realize more and more that the bogeyman could be anywhere, and anyone.

My parents always told me to lock my car doors, even in the driveway. What do you know...the one time I didn't, my speakers were stolen. It felt so violating to know a stranger had been in my car and went through my stuff. I would hate for that same thing to happen the one time I don't lock the door to my home (because I'll be gone just a minute, of course), returning to find my house ransacked and things missing. These days, a hug from my daddy still makes me feel safe, but the protection of my home is still better left to technology.

A security system can protect your home and give you peace of mind, whether you are at home or away. A series of sensors and alarms are connected to a control panel which functions as a central computer. Signals received by the panel when the system is armed triggers a call to the monitoring center using existing phone lines, and the station operator contacts the proper authorities.

The security system is controlled by keypads located near common entry doors. Additional keypads and remote access systems are also available. The security system itself is made up of several product options, which can include burglar alarms, fire alarms, medical alert systems, temperature alarms, water and flood alarms, and video surveillance. The right security company will find the appropriate combination of options to meet the needs of you and your family.

Burglar Alarms: The term "burglar alarm" covers a broad category of sensors and alarms intended to protect your home or office from intruders. Magnetic contacts are installed on doors and windows in two parts: a switch is installed in the door or window jam, and a magnet is installed in the door or window itself. A signal is sent from the magnet to the alarm system when contact with the switch is broken. Magnetic contacts can be added to any door or window at ground level and those which can be reached from a low roof or tree.

Windows can also be monitored by either an acoustic sensor, which can detect the exact pitch of breaking glass, or a shock sensor, which can detect tremors caused by breaking glass. Many of these sensors can cover an area up to 35 feet, allowing several windows to be protected by one sensor.

Motion sensors come in many different types and may be used for many different applications. The most common motion sensor on the market today is known as a PIR, or passive infrared detector. This type of sensor requires both heat and motion to trigger it, eliminating false alarms. Some types of motion sensors can also accommodate dogs and cats in the home without triggering the alarm accidentally. Some systems allow internal motion sensors to be deactivated while the rest of the system remains armed, so the alarm can be turned on while the residents are at home.

Fire Alarms: Most security systems on the market today can also double as fire alarms with the addition of a smoke or rate of rise sensor. Since they are connected to your main security system, both sensors will alert monitoring center personnel to contact your local fire department when evidence of a fire is detected. Most sensors also sound a fire warning horn to alert anyone currently in the home. A smoke sensor works the same way as the typical smoke detector you have in your home today, while a rate of rise sensor detects heat. A rate of rise sensor may be beneficial in areas where large amounts of smoke or steam would accidentally set off a typical smoke detector, such as in a kitchen or bathroom.

Medical Alert Systems: An additional feature of many security systems is a medical emergency alert function. Some systems have a button on the main control panel pre-programmed to summon emergency personnel when it is pushed. Some systems will provide a main control panel button which can be designated to contact anyone of your choosing, such as a trusted friend or family member. Some systems also offer personal medical emergency pendants, allowing the wearer to summon emergency assistance when away from the main control panel.

Temperature Alarms: An additional security system feature you may want to consider is a low temperature or "freeze" sensor. This type of sensor sends a signal to your monitoring center when the temperature in your home or business falls below 40 degrees. Monitoring center personnel then place a call to the person you have designated as your contact to resolve the situation.

Water and Flood Sensors: Certain trouble areas of your home, such as a basement or crawl space, could suffer extensive water damage from a burst pipe or other water source. Water sensors can help detect rising water before it ruins your house.

Video Surveillance: Video surveillance systems through closed circuit television (CCTV) are becoming more popular for residences as well as businesses. A standard CCTV system includes cameras, monitors and time lapsed video cassette recorders for viewing at a later date. Additional options available on a CCTV system include zoom and wide angle lenses, pan and tilt capabilities, and remote monitoring through existing phone lines.

Depending on the level of security required, a location may have one or more

cameras which can be disguised to blend in with the surroundings. A CCTV system has many uses, from guarding against employee theft to monitoring a babysitter or housekeeper.

Most security systems rely on home telephone lines to contact the monitoring company in case of an emergency. For added protection, radio or cellular monitoring can be combined with standard monitoring. When your home telephone lines are cut, the signal is sent to the monitoring company using radio waves or cellular technology. Additional equipment may be required, and additional monitoring fees may apply. The additional investment, however, may be well worth the added peace of mind.

Regardless of the options you choose, all of the components of any security system should be UL listed. A UL listing indicates that Underwriters Laboratories certifies that samples of the product have met UL's published Standards for Safety. The UL mark is seen commonly on appliances and computer equipment, personal flotation devices, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, fuses, electrical panel boards, furnaces and heaters, fire extinguishers and sprinkler systems, bullet resistant glass, and thousands of other products.

Acquiring the proper security for your home is a big decision; be a wise consumer and get the most for your money, while making sure you really need all you are paying for. Decisions affecting the protection of your home, your family and your stuff should not be made lightly; do your research, and it will pay off!