



Consumer Protection and the Alarm User – before you Buy



If you are considering purchasing an alarm system, do Your homework first! By taking a little time now, you can Avoid potential problems later.

- Understand/identify your needs, environmental factors and budget. Contact your local Consumer Affairs Office, Better Business Bureau or state Attorney General's Office for information on any alarm company with which you are considering doing business. Consumer offices will often maintain records of filed complaints and will provide you with information on the basis for the complaint, as well as its resolution.
- Contact your Police Department/Sheriff's Office to find out if there are any permit/registration requirements for alarm systems, as well as any fines or fees that may be imposed for false alarms.
- Contact your state or local Licensing Bureau to determine if the alarm company with which you are considering doing business has all of the required licenses, bonds, insurance, etc. (if applicable).
- Know your responsibilities and those of your Alarm Company before you buy or lease!
- Read and fully understand your entire contract *before* you sign on the dotted line. Remember, ignorance is no defense! If you don't understand something, be sure to ask questions until you do.
- Nothing that has been guaranteed to you orally will be enforceable unless it is in writing in the contract.

Comparison shop. Select two or three different alarm companies from which to receive written quotes. Comparison shop for things such as best price, features you want, most favorable monitoring terms and conditions and for alarm companies that take false alarms seriously and have false alarm reduction plans in effect. Don't be afraid to ask each potential alarm company how their specific alarm system and its installation will avoid potential false alarms.

Knowing what questions to ask is half the battle. However, if you've never had an alarm system before, how can you be expected to know what is important? Do you know the difference between a local and a monitored alarm system? How about the difference between a glass break and a motion sensor? What are "panic" features anyway? Is there a cancellation policy? Purchase vs. lease? Does the company do its own monitoring or does it contract out to a third-party monitoring center? Is any of this even relevant?! The False Alarm Reduction Association, which is comprised of law enforcement personnel from all over the United States and in Canada, has published a *Consumer Guide to Purchasing a Burglar Alarm*. This guide provides you with fundamental information that you should have in order to make an informed decision. Use the handy chart, which lists questions you should ask of each potential company and record the answers to your questions for future reference. You can obtain this guide, along with other false alarm reduction information, from FARA's web site at www.faraonline.org.

Be a smart consumer! Know what you want (or at the very least, what questions to ask to help you



Determine what is best for you), what you can afford and what your responsibilities will be as an alarm user. Match up your expectations with the alarm company that comes closest to, or matches exactly, your specific Needs and desires. You want your burglar alarm system to bring you Security and peace of mind; isn't that worth a small investment of your time On the front end so you won't live to regret it on the back end?

