



Questions to ask before buying a home burglar alarm

The company:

1. Is the alarm company licensed in Minneapolis? (The seller must have a solicitor's license. Ask to see the picture ID issued by Business Licensing with the salesperson's picture, company name, and license number. Call Business Licensing at 612-673-2080 to verify the license. If there's no license, send them away and call 911 to report it.)
2. How long has the company been in business?
3. What is the alarm background of their installers?
4. Do they have staff available 24 hours a day in case of false alarms?
5. Can they work with you on getting a cut in your insurance premiums if you install one of their alarm systems?
6. Do you lease the equipment, or can you buy it outright?
7. If you buy it outright, for how long is the equipment guaranteed?
8. Do they sell maintenance contracts?
9. Is the company a member of any local business or merchant's group?
10. Will the company pay the fee for False Alarms charges incurred when it is due to malfunction of the system itself? Will they put this in writing?

The equipment:

1. Is the equipment approved by Underwriters Laboratory (UL)?
2. Is the system electrically or battery operated? If electrically operated, does it switch automatically to battery power without activating the alarm in the event of a power failure?
3. If the alarm system is activated, will it automatically shut off after a reasonable alert time period (10 - 15 minutes)?
4. After the system is activated, will it automatically reset if attacked again?
5. If the control switch or box is exposed, will it activate the alert if attacked?
6. Is the system tamper-proof (i.e., wires and sensors protected from the elements, rain, wind, etc.)?
7. If it is a local system (audible to immediate area), does it ring loud enough to attract the attention of your neighbors?
8. Do your neighbors know about the system and what to do if it goes off?

Consumer Information:

1. Have you reviewed the consumer reports on burglar alarms?
2. Have you looked at several different burglar alarms systems to compare price, warranty, and service?
3. Have you decided how much you are willing to spend?
4. Have you decided what areas of the house you want secured with a burglar alarm system?
5. Do you have good door and window security such as:
 - Solid core door for exterior use?
 - Deadbolt locks with 1" throw and case-hardened cylinder guard?
 - Maximum security strike plates?
 - Locking or pinning devices for windows?
6. Do you live in an area where neighbors cannot see the entrances into your home?
7. Do you live in an isolated area?
8. Do you live in a high-crime area?
9. Do you keep valuable collections in your home?
10. Do you leave your home unoccupied for long periods of time?

If you have answered "yes" to most or all of questions 6 through 10, a burglar alarm may be particularly useful to you.

11. Are you aware that false alarms occur often?

The Minneapolis Licenses and Consumer Services Division imposes a penalty for each false alarm. Penalties shall be:

- \$30 registration fee for the first false alarm—no alarm, no registration fee
- \$100 for the second false alarm
- \$200 for the third false alarm
- \$300 for the 4th false alarm
- \$400 for the 5th false alarm

Each additional false alarm will increase by \$100 per alarm.

For unpaid fines and/or five or more false alarms per year:

- Businesses: may result in suspension of the business license and police not responding to excess alarms.
- Residences: may result in police not responding to excess alarms.

The city ordinance governing alarm systems is at www.municode.com/resources/gateway.asp?pid=%2011490. Click on Title 13 (column on left side of the screen). Type 176 in the search box at the top of the screen and click “Search.” Then click on Chapter 176 in the resulting list.

12. Have you considered installing a home safe as an alternative to an alarm system? In some cases, a safe is a lower-cost alternative to a burglar alarm.

For more information:

1. Call your crime prevention specialist for additional information on:

- Burglar alarms
- Deadbolt locks
- Strike plates
- Window security
- Neighborhood Watch

Call 311 (or 612-673-3000) or see [www.minneapolismn.gov/police/crimeprevention/police outreach safe-teams](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/police/crimeprevention/police_outreach_safe_teams) to locate your neighborhood crime prevention specialist.

For further crime prevention resources, please visit www.minneapolismn.gov/police/crimeprevention.

2. Call the Better Business Bureau at 651-699-1111 for information on specific burglar alarm companies.
3. Call the False Alarm Unit with Minneapolis Licensing and Consumer Services office at 612-673-2562 for burglar alarm ordinance requirements and compliance.

Remember:

A burglar alarm system complements, but does not replace, good neighbors or good home security.



English: Attention. If you want help translating this information, call 612-673-3737
Spanish: Atención. Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para traducir esta información, llame 612-673-2700
Somali: Ogow. Haddii aad dooneyso in lagaa kaalmeeyo tarjamadda macluumaadkani oo lacag la' aan wac 612-673-3500
Hmong: Ceeb toom. Yog koj xav tau kev pab txhais cov xov no rau koj dawb, hu 612-673-2800
Sign Language: TTY 612-673-2626
If you need this material in an alternative format, please contact the Minneapolis Police Department at 612-673-2912.