

## Home security system questions to ask

Before you buy a home security system, there are a few questions you should ask.

### Questions for the company

1. Ask and research how long the company has been in business and find out their history of performance and service. This may include checking a few references.
2. Check to see if the home security company has insurance to cover any damage to your property during installation. Make sure the installers are properly licensed and bonded.
3. Check to see if the company has 24-hour-a-day system monitoring. Find out if anything is subcontracted (installation, service or monitoring).
4. Will the company work with you on getting a cut in your insurance premiums if you install one of their home security systems?
5. Do you lease their equipment, or can you buy it outright?
6. If you buy the equipment outright, for how long is the equipment guaranteed? Does the company offer a written guarantee, and if so for how long? Are parts and labor covered? Are software and firmware updates included free of charge?
7. Do they sell maintenance contracts?
8. Is the company a member of any local business or merchant's groups?
9. 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?
10. Remember to always read all contracts carefully before signing.

### Questions about the equipment:

1. Is the equipment approved by Underwriters Laboratory (U.L.)? Is the central monitoring station U.L. approved, and if so where is it located?
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? Is the battery rechargeable?
3. If the security system is activated, will it automatically shut off after a reasonable alert time period? Does it automatically reset, or must it be manually reset?
4. After the security 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, manipulation, 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 home security systems?
2. Have you looked at several different home security 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 home security system?
5. Do you have good door and window security such as:
  - a. Solid core door for exterior use
  - b. Deadbolt locks with 1-inch throw and case-hardened cylinder guard
  - c. Maximum security strike plates
  - d. Locking or pinning devices for windows
6. Do you live in an area where neighbors can't 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 home security system may be useful to you.

11. Are you aware that false alarms occur often in the City of St. Louis Park?

The City of St. Louis Park imposes a penalty for each false alarm in excess of one per calendar year. Please see the City of St. Louis Park's website for ordinance information: Article VI False Alarms: Sections 18-151 to 18-158.

12. Have you considered installing a home safe as an alternative to a home security system?

In some cases, a safe is a lower cost alternative to a home security system. For more information:

1. Call your Community Outreach Officer for additional information on:
  - a. Setting up a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) survey of your home
  - b. Home security systems
  - c. Deadbolt locks
  - d. Strike plates
  - e. Window security
  - f. Neighborhood Watch
2. Call the Better Business Bureau of Minnesota and North Dakota at 651.699.1111 for information on specific home security system companies.

Remember that a home security system can complement but does not replace good neighbors or good home security habits.