

THINKING ABOUT BUYING AN ALARM SYSTEM? FEELING PRESSURED BY THE SALESMAN?

Have you been told by an alarm company salesman that their system is better than any other, and that because they are so good, the Sheriff's Office will respond to their signals faster? Have you been told by an alarm company salesperson that the Sheriff's Office response is guaranteed to be within 3 to 5 minutes?

Have you been told by an alarm company salesperson that they are going to give you a "free" alarm system that will protect your home or business from an intruder? That all you have to do is sign on for a 3 or 5 year monitoring contract at a set price per month? Has the salesman told you that the "free" system they are installing, (which usually consists of a motion detector and two door contacts), is all you need to secure your home or business?

Do you feel you are being pressured or coerced into buying a system "today" or "right now", because the price is a "one time only" deal, or because the crime rate in your neighborhood is so high you need the protection of an alarm system as soon as possible, or for any other creative reason the salesman comes up with?

If you have been told these things by any alarm company salesperson in their sales pitch, do not do business with that company. Reputable companies do not employ those tactics to get your business.

The Sheriff's Office will **never** endorse any particular alarm company. We cannot guarantee any alarm company is better than any other. At best, we can only advise which companies are active in false alarm reduction, and which companies are willing to work with us to achieve that.

When your alarm signal is activated the monitoring company is required by Florida State Statute to call inside the business or residence to verify the alarm as valid. If no answer is received, they are then required to call a secondary phone number to ascertain if the alarm user wants a law enforcement response. If the alarm user does want deputies to respond, the monitoring company will then call the appropriate agency for dispatch. The deputy assigned to the call will respond from his current location, which may be miles from the alarm. Given all the steps necessary in the handling of an alarm call, in addition to traffic concerns depending on the time of day, **it is impossible** for any law enforcement agency to guarantee they will be on scene within 3 to 5 minutes. The Orange County Sheriff's Office dispatches all alarm calls as soon as possible, but there is always the chance that there may not be an available unit at the time of the alarm call, or that the unit may be responding from a different part of the county.

An alarm system is not "free", if the company requires you to sign on for a monitoring contract in order to get it, or if there is an installation charge for the equipment. Many companies require a monitoring contract period of between 2 and 5 years, with a monthly payment paid by the alarm user. Many times the "free" system includes only one inexpensive motion detector and two door contacts, and you will have to pay extra for any additional equipment needed to properly secure your home or business. All points of entry and exit should be alarmed, and the equipment should be quality equipment, properly installed by licensed contractors. **All of the equipment installed** should be of the new "false alarm reducing" technology. If you are installing the cheapest and most basic equipment in order to save money, there is a good chance you will have false alarms, which may cost you more money in false alarm fines and frequent system repair bills.

Do not let any salesperson pressure you into buying a system right then and there, especially if they tell you their offer is only good for that day. Legitimate companies want you to be an informed consumer, and want you to compare what they offer and what others offer. They want customers that are happy with what they buy and that trust the company they buy from. Interview two or three companies and compare everything they are offering. Decide what you need, make comparisons, and make an informed decision based on your needs and budget. Keep in mind that you really do get what you pay for, so be sure you are buying an alarm system that will satisfy all of your needs and concerns.

Before you make a final decision, check the alarm company's license status on the Department of Professional and Business Regulation website, and check with the Better Business Bureau for any complaints against the company. Clicking on the useful links tab on this web page will provide you with shortcuts to those websites. **Before you sign a contract, be sure to check** the fine print on the back of the contract and determine if you can you break the contract without penalty if you are not satisfied with the service. Be sure you have a thorough understanding of the terms of the contract before you sign.

Finally, remember that an alarm system is a **deterrent**, and should be considered as only one part of an overall security plan. The types of doors, windows, locks, outdoor lighting and landscaping used are equally important in making your home or business more secure. Visit www.ocso.com and click on the E-Brochures or Crime Prevention tabs to learn more.

If you would like further information or assistance when considering the purchase of an alarm system, please call the Orange County Sheriff's Office Alarm Administrator at 407-836-3969. Office hours are Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.