

WHAT SHOULD I THINK ABOUT BEFORE BUYING AN ALARM SYSTEM?

Consider what type of system would be best for your particular needs. When interviewing alarm companies, ask the salesperson to explain all of the options available to you. Make a decision based on what you need, and be sure the system is able to handle **all** of your security needs. Don't cut corners if it will compromise your safety, and remember you get what you pay for. A "bargain" system is not a bargain if it frequently malfunctions or causes you to incur false alarm fines in the future. Buy a quality system that suits your needs.

If you decide to rent vs. buy, who is responsible for the maintenance of the system? If you rent it, will the company make necessary repairs free of charge, or will you be charged a fee? If you buy it, what type of warranty does the company give on **both** equipment and installation? How long will it take to get service if the system malfunctions or needs replacement parts such as batteries? **Who will pay for false alarm fines if they are caused by faulty equipment? GET IT IN WRITING!**

Does the entire system conform to current ANSI, and UL (or the equivalent) standards, and does it meet local code requirements? **Is the company licensed** by the state to install alarm systems? **All** alarm companies must display their state license number on their business cards and any sales material they are giving you. Check with the Department of Business & Professional Regulations to make sure the license is current and valid. This can be done online, by entering DBPR in your search engine. In addition, any actions taken against the alarm company for fraud, improper sales techniques, etc., can be viewed on the Florida Attorney General's website. Florida State Statute 489 Part II covers all aspects of alarm company rules and regulations; check it out online **before you buy. Be sure to use a licensed, bonded and insured contractor.** If you use an unlicensed contractor, your insurance coverage may be voided, and you may not be able to place a claim against any damages you may incur. **Licensing laws are in place to protect you; use them to your advantage.** Finally, check for any complaints against the company with the Better Business Bureau, to see if there is a pattern of poor customer service or failure to address and rectify consumer complaints satisfactorily.

Per Florida State Statute 489, Part II, all alarm sales persons and installers must have an FDLE background check done, and must display a picture I.D. on their person, in clear view of the customer. If your installer does not have a picture I.D., ask him/her to produce it immediately. If he/she cannot or will not produce the proper identification, don't do business with that person! In addition, they are required to have BASA/FASA training and certification, and all written materials they give you must have their alarm company license number on them. **Always be sure** to double check with the alarm company if you have any doubts as to the person or persons they have sent to your home or business, whether it is for sales, installation, or repair. **If any person just "shows up" at your door trying to sell you an alarm system, don't let them into your home until you contact the alarm company they represent, and you are comfortable with them being there. If they refuse to leave at your request, call 911 for assistance.**

Be sure the company is bonded and insured. Find out if the company has a **local** number to call or if you must call long-distance. Get a list of all phone numbers you will need for assistance, service, etc. Ask for the name of the person you will be dealing with if a problem arises. Ask who you will deal with if you are not getting satisfaction with a problem; is there a General Manager who will assist you? Ask who will monitor the alarm. Be sure the monitoring company is also properly licensed in the state of Florida. If you or any of your family members or employees have special needs, be sure the monitoring station can properly assist you and is ADA compliant where required.

Designate your responders, persons who can respond to the alarm location with a key to assist the deputies with access to the building, and who may act as your agent in the event of a burglary or emergency. Submit an accurate, up to date responder list to the alarm company, as well as to your local law enforcement agency if required. Update the list as necessary to keep the information current and accurate. Also check any registration or permit requirements in your area.

Why are responders necessary? Law enforcement cannot get inside locked buildings without a key, and your safety or your employees' safety could be compromised if someone is still inside the building when you return home or open for business. Many times burglars enter through a roof, or some other difficult to see place, and the deputies need to be able to do a thorough check of the inside of the building as well as the outside. **Never** check the building yourself before the deputies get there; you could be injured or worse.

BE AN EDUCATED CONSUMER. Get several estimates from different companies, and be certain that you are comfortable with the company and monitoring service you choose. Have the salesperson tell you everything you need to know about the system and the monitoring company, and get everything in writing. **ANYTHING THE SALESPERSON GUARANTEES TO YOU VERBALLY SHOULD BE IN WRITING** on the company letterhead or worksheet and signed and dated by both you and the salesperson.

Once the system is installed, all household members or business employees with access to the system should be thoroughly trained in its use by the installer, to include the proper procedures for arming, disarming, and cancelling law enforcement response to a false alarm.

ONE FINAL WORD OF CAUTION:

NEVER let any salesperson inside your home, or answer personal questions about the layout of your home, your everyday habits and lifestyle, work hours, vacation plans, etc. or information on your current alarm system, until you have **verified** they are a legitimate representative of a legitimate, properly licensed and bonded alarm company. If you have any questions please feel free to call the False Alarm Administrator at 407-836-3969. Office hours are Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Messages received after hours will be returned the next business day.