Best Practice Security Alarms Protection for Managed Premises

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The security of multi-occupancy leasehold managed residential buildings is a key consideration for managing agents, to ensure the highest standards of safety for both property and occupants.

To help achieve this, security alarm systems provide effective risk protection for a variety of residential buildings.

Professionally installed, maintained and monitored intruder alarms can operate either in standalone mode, or as part of an integrated system involving other equipment such as door entry systems and surveillance cameras covering the common areas of a building.

Security alarms play a central role in safeguarding multi-occupancy buildings, as well as any equipment and stock housed within secured areas of the property. Additional functionality is provided by the system's visual deterrence, helping for example to prevent any opportunistic incidents. Monitored and confirmed security alarm activations also ensure compliance with the buildings insurance requirements

commonly overseen by managing agents.

For insurance purposes, monitored alarm systems typically need to be installed by competent providers operating to recognised industry standards accepted by the Police. These stipulations are set out in the National Police Chiefs' Council's (NPCC) 'Police Requirements and Response to Security Systems' document, last revised in April 2018.

Since the original 1995 introduction of a unified Police intruder alarms policy, designed to tackle an untenable 92% national false alarm rate at that time, the Policy's scope has been widened to cover 'security systems', reflecting technological changes and updates since then. The NPCC's Policy covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with similar policy requirements from Police Scotland.

Policy implications

For security alarm users, this means Police will only respond to remotely monitored security systems that meet the Policy requirements. This includes 'Type A' remote signalling systems terminating at recognised Alarm Receiving Centres (ARCs) and Remote Video Response Centres.

The installation and services provided by the installing company, and the ARC, must be certified by a United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) accredited certification body such as the National Security Inspectorate. The Policy states that the Police will respond to security system activations either as a result of a confirmed activation through a remotely monitored security system, or where a person at the scene reports an offence in progress and requests police attendance.

Two levels of police response are determined by the NPCC Policy:

- Level One – immediate response (subject to priorities); and
- Level Three – response withdrawn. Level Three occurs as a result of three false calls to the police for intruder alarms in a 12-month rolling period.

Installation requirements

Aside from these operational stipulations, the Policy requires security alarm systems to be installed and maintained by a company approved by a UKAS accredited certification body. A 'Certificate of Compliance' to PD 6662 (a scheme for the application of European standards by installers in the design, installation,

commissioning and maintenance of intruder and hold-up alarm systems) and BS 8243 (the other key alarm standard, covering installation and configuration of systems) must also be provided by the approved company. In addition, monitoring of the alarm must be provided by an approved ARC.

Once both of these conditions are fulfilled an application can be made to the Police for the system to be issued with a Unique Reference Number (URN). This means that if/when the alarm is activated, the ARC will verify the alarm using prescribed confirmation methods before passing on any confirmed alarm to the Police, who will duly recognise it using the system's URN.

Alarm response

For users of Type A (remotely monitored) alarm systems, Police response to confirmed alarm activations, or genuine 999 calls, is also contingent upon the premises having at least two keyholders, whose details are maintained by the monitoring centre or a central keyholding service.

These keyholders' responsibilities include being trained to operate the alarm, while managing agents employing a commercial keyholding service must be aware of the Security Industry Authority licensing regulations and BS 7984-1 in relation to keyholding and response. There are similar Police penalties if these keyholder requirements are breached.

How best to comply

Managing agents can best safeguard properties they're responsible for, comply with Police requirements, and ensure that security systems work effectively, through the use of third-party certificated providers.

NSI Gold and Silver approved companies offer agents confidence through the independent inspection of their competence, business practice and communications with clients, including sample inspections of installations. These service providers demonstrate commitment to the highest standards of competence in the design, delivery, operation, management and maintenance of security alarm systems.

The effective deployment of security systems, including remotely monitored alarm equipment, helps safeguard leasehold homeowners as well as the integrity of any residential property's facilities. Risks posed to buildings, valuable equipment and operational plant are thereby minimised, with the underlying reassurance of valid insurance in the last resort.

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