



## COMMERCIAL PREMISES – ALARMS/CCTV

### BURGLAR ALARMS

**Alarms come in various forms and the premises owner's requirements will depend on factors such as how remote their property is and how responsive the neighbours would be to an alarm activation.**



Alarm companies can provide a monitoring and police reporting service as well as service and maintenance. All of this does, of course, cost money and, should the premises owner decide to have such a system fitted, they would be well advised to have two or three quotes for both price and service comparison.

**Trading Standards** has a list of reputable traders and can be contacted on **01234 228280**, or view their listings at [www.bedfordshire.gov.uk/tsapproved](http://www.bedfordshire.gov.uk/tsapproved).

Alarm companies can also be registered with the National Security Inspectorate. You can check if a firm is registered by visiting [www.nsi.org.uk](http://www.nsi.org.uk).

There are also many DIY systems that can be fitted by a reasonably competent person and not requiring an in depth electrical knowledge. There are also a number of battery-operated, wire-free, systems on the market.

These are an economical option and whilst there is not the services of a monitoring company, some such systems will contact telephone points - including mobiles - of choice (eg, the Yale wire free alarm kit, currently available from Homebase at £249, which will contact up to six phone numbers; Micromark do various systems starting from around £80 to £250).

Most DIY stores supply alarms, as do the Argos and Littlewoods catalogues. Look for the **British Standards Kite Mark BS6707**.

**Please note that these alarms will not illicit a police response and will rely on the property owners or neighbours alerting the police.**

### CCTV SYSTEMS

CCTV often unrealistically raises expectations and it is important that you realise the limitations of any camera. At its best, for example town centre CCTV, an operator can focus and zoom in or out to obtain the best 'product' image. Realistically the type of camera you attach to your premises will be of a fixed focal length and so the positioning of the camera, to obtain best possible facial recognition, is the priority.

Again, the types of systems available vary from professionally installed units to home systems that can be plugged straight into the TV or VCR without expert knowledge. Most "home" kits integral PIR sensors which, if activated, will switch on your TV or VCR from standby mode, or switch channels automatically so that you are immediately made aware of a 'visitor'.

There are restrictions on what and where you can record and there are implications under the Data Protection Act to name but one.

There are exceptions for Crime Reduction and Personal Safety purposes, particularly in domestic applications. Care should be taken not to intrude onto adjacent properties and any recorded material should not be readily available or viewed to a wider audience as entertainment. Indeed, in the event that an offence is recorded, the integrity of the evidence can be best preserved by the restriction of viewing to the owner (yourself) and any investigating body, ie, the police.



You can contact Trading Standards or the NSI to find a reputable CCTV installer. They, in turn, will advise you of your legislative responsibilities and provide you with appropriate signage.

### AND FINALLY...

We are sure you will appreciate that the above is by no means exhaustive and may not include every possible aspect of security. However, should you feel that the Crime Reduction Officers can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us on [crimereduction@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:crimereduction@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk)

**PLEASE NOTE:** Bedfordshire Police does not recommend or endorse products, services or suppliers. For a comprehensive survey to ascertain suitability for alarms and cctv, you should contact a reputable company. However, there will be circumstances where perhaps there is only one manufacturer or supplier of a particular product and it is unreasonable to tell somebody about a product that could solve their problem but refuse to tell them where to get it from. Where possible, we will provide a couple of sources that you can investigate for yourself. Those companies and products mentioned in this document are used because they are locally available, represent value for money as well as good practice and have, to date, generated no negative reports in our experience.



## GETTING THE BEST FROM YOUR CCTV SYSTEM

How many times have you watch fuzzy, poor quality images on television of offenders committing a crime or disorder and not been able to identify anyone? More and more businesses are investing in CCTV systems to help prevent and detect crime, but all too often, the images they capture are poor quality and of little evidential value. This poor quality can result in many images being rejected before they reach court.

If you've invested large sums of money in a CCTV system, it's simply a waste not to use it in the most effective way possible. It may also be unlawful. If you want to protect your premises and bring offenders to justice, Bedfordshire Police has prepared this advice to help you when buying, installing and using CCTV.

### Top Tips For Top Pics

- ▶ Make sure cameras are positioned correctly and are in focus. For example, you cannot identify anyone if all you can see is the top of their head.
- ▶ If you have a number of cameras, think about the area they are covering. Do they really need to cover wide open areas which mainly cover shots of a ceiling or a wall?
- ▶ Think about installing a camera at your main front door, showing people entering and leaving the premises. No matter how quickly they are moving, everyone has to stop for a few seconds to open a door – long enough to get a good picture.
- ▶ If it is fixed camera, is it balanced properly to give good quality images?
- ▶ Regularly check the time and date on your system and take into account changes such as British Summer Time.
- ▶ Arrange a regular maintenance contract to have your CCTV system cleaned and serviced – don't forget to include any recording equipment.
- ▶ In between services, carry out your own "spring cleaning" by making sure lenses and the heads on any video recording equipment are clean.
- ▶ If using VHS systems, make sure you buy good quality tapes. Change and rotate tapes regularly. You must keep the images for the period you stated when notifying the Data Commissioner and no longer. Store video tapes in an upright position in a clean and secure location, away from heat and humidity. Label all tapes and discs clearly. Tape management systems are available to help keep your system lawful.
- ▶ Have signs clearly displayed around your premises stating CCTV is in use and its purpose.
- ▶ Remember, if in doubt, contact your CCTV provider for advice on how to improve your system

### If you still use a Video Tape CCTV system –

DO ✓	DON'T ✗
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ ensure your system has been notified to the Data Commissioner.</li> <li>✓ make a benchmark recording when you first install the system to compare against future images to ensure quality.</li> <li>✓ change your video tapes at least every week and check the time and date stamps are correct.</li> <li>✓ ensure your tapes are kept for the appropriate period of time that you notified to the Commissioner's Office.</li> <li>✓ use good quality tapes and check them by playing them on a different machine.</li> <li>✓ ensure the picture is clear enough to identify people and vehicles.</li> <li>✓ check the cameras are covering the most effective areas.</li> <li>✓ make sure the lighting is sufficient to capture a good picture without being so bright as to cause 'flare' on the image.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ continually re-use the same tapes – the quality of image will become progressively poorer.</li> <li>✗ let the tapes get dirty or expose them to heat or humidity.</li> <li>✗ place the tapes near a magnetic field, e.g. loud speakers.</li> <li>✗ touch the video tape itself.</li> <li>✗ buy cheap, inferior video tapes.</li> <li>✗ use 240 minute tapes.</li> <li>✗ record in long-play.</li> <li>✗ have a viewing angle that is too wide.</li> <li>✗ use video tapes more than 12 times.</li> </ul>



## GETTING THE BEST FROM YOUR CCTV SYSTEM

### UK Police requirements for Digital CCTV systems –

#### QUALITY:

What resolution?

What compression?

How many pictures per second?



- Specify your requirement – decide what you want to see and where, and select a system that will do it.
- View the recorded pictures or print out to check quality – don't rely on the live screen to assess the system performance.
- The system clock should be set correctly and maintained (taking account of GMT and BST).
- Picture quality should not be reduced to fit the available storage capacity of the system.
- Regular maintenance should be conducted on all aspects of the system.

#### STORAGE:

What should I keep?

How should I keep it?



- The system should be operated and recorded pictures retained in secure environment.
- Electronic access controls, such as passwords or encryption, should not prevent authorised access to the systems or recordings.
- The system should have sufficient storage capacity for 31 days' good-quality pictures.
- The system should be capable of securing relevant pictures for review or export at a later date.

#### EXPORT:

How much video should the system export and in what format?



- A system operator should be available who is able to replay and export recordings.
- A simple system operator's manual should be available locally to assist with replay and export.
- The operator should know the retention period of the system and export time for various amounts of data.
- The system should be able to quickly export video and stills to a removable storage medium, with time and date integral to the relevant picture.
- Export should include any software needed to view or replay the pictures.
- The system should have an export method proportionate to the storage capacity.
- Pictures should be exported in the native file format at the same quality that they were stored on the system.

#### PLAYBACK:

Can the pictures be easily viewed by authorised third parties?



- The playback software should:
  - have variable speed control including frame-by-frame, forward and reverse viewing;
  - display single and multiple cameras and maintain aspect ratio, ie, the same relative height and width;
  - display a single camera at full resolution;
  - permit the recording from each camera to be searched by time and date;
  - allow printing and/or saving (eg, bitmap) of pictures with time and date.
- The time and date associated with each picture should be legible.
- Once exported to removable media, it should be possible to replay the files immediately.