

25 MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT COMMERCIAL ALARM SYSTEMS

1. All security companies use the same technology, so it doesn't matter which one I choose.

Truth: Most companies use technology that has been around for decades. Many even buy their products from the same wholesale house. If you want "traditional" services, take your pick of those companies.

If you'd rather pay a security company to prevent losses rather than just tell you each time you have a loss, keep reading.

2. Since all security companies offer the same type of service, and none of them will get the police there any faster than the other, I might as well look for my best price.

Truth: Price can be important, but value is more important. If you shop for the "cheapest" system, that's what you'll get, not only in the product, but the quality of their work, and their ability to service your system in a timely manner.

There are products that differ from conventional alarms and offer alarm verification, the earliest possible detection of a break-in and the fastest police response. Always check out a company's performance and/ or service guarantees.

3. Security companies offer better products for businesses than they do for homes.

Truth: While some companies hide behind slightly fancier keypads for businesses, if you looked a little closer you would find that a large percentage of companies install the exact same system in both their residential and small to medium sized commercial accounts.

Business security is different than home Alarms. There are companies that specialize in commercial loss prevention, and will recommend a state-of-the-art solution that is guaranteed to secure your business.

4. Motion detectors are efficient devices.

Truth: Most police officers will tell you that motion detectors are the single biggest contributor to equipment-based false alarms. Hasn't everyone had some experience with ceiling fans being left on, party balloons left behind, the A/C moving something when it kicks on, thunder that strikes the building, roaches or spiders on the detector, or "critters" on the floor. And even if it does detect a real bad guy, doesn't that mean that he's already found a way to get inside your business.

There is a better way. It's called verified alarms; either Live Audio or Live Video detection monitoring at a local central station.

5. A couple of well-placed motion detectors, along with door contacts, will adequately protect my business. In fact, maybe I don't even need to contact all my doors, if there are motion detectors or beams inside.

Truth: How much of your business is really protected this way... about 20-25%, perhaps? And the more doors you have, especially in businesses like automotive shops or warehouses, the more tempting it will be for an alarm sales rep to suggest such a thought to keep the price down. Don't accept this premise, as it is a major compromise to protecting your business.

Doors are not only the #1 point of entry statistically in an intrusion, but door contacts also will verify each time you arm the system that all doors are indeed closed. There are systems that supplement all door contacts and other “perimeter” devices with an alarm verification system, making it more difficult for a bad guy to get into your building undetected.

Wouldn't you rather have a system that guarantees 100% protection of your facility?

6. A conventional burglar alarm will get the police to my business as fast as possible when it goes off, and provide police with as much information as possible.

Truth: Conventional alarms are unintelligent, and non-verified, which means that without some type of confirmation, police usually dispatch at a much lower priority. And other than to report that a device has been activated for some reason, stations monitoring conventional alarms really have no other information to pass on to the police.

Companies that offer verification systems are dispatched at a much higher priority, decreasing police time and increasing the likelihood of an apprehension. In addition live audio and video monitoring will record the entire event for identification and prosecution purposes. Trained central station operators are able to interpret and relay real-time information to responding law enforcement personnel (are there any employees in the building, how many bad guys, what room(s) are they in, do they know they've been detected, etc.)

7. I have insurance, and very little to steal, so I don't really need a “good” security system. In fact, this is a “good” neighborhood, and we don't really have many problems.

Truth: The amount of risk you want to take for your business is up to you. But many people don't take enough time to think through how their business would be affected if they did have a break-in, or some other emergency that threatened their employees.

Computers are easy to replace, but how do you protect the data in these computers? What would happen to your employees' and customers confidence in your company if you had to tell them that some stranger now had their Social Security and credit card numbers? Can you afford to be closed for several days to recover from major vandalism? Can your employees afford it? Will your insurance company continue to cover you the second time it happens? Many companies go out of business because of one major loss incident, and asking yourself questions like these will help you better define what kind of protection you really need.

Many Business owners also assume that because of their location, they are immune to “real” problems. Your local law enforcement agency is one excellent source of information on the history of your neighborhood, and the relative risks involved, and you should use this resource.

Your security provider should never trivialize the importance of a security system justify offering you anything less than the proper protection just to get your business.

8. I only need a minimal system because I have burglar bars.

Truth: The very fact that you have burglar bars or a folding gate suggests you are aware of a potential trouble, and compromising your inside security is asking that trouble to visit. By presenting burglar bars at the main entrance, you may actually be encouraging the bad guy to look for alternative entries...which may end in entry being gained from a direction that most conventional systems wouldn't even detect. After all, why should a bad guy take time to mess with burglar bars, when it may be easier and less obvious to knock a hole in a real wall, or rip the A/C unit or a vent off the roof? You'd better have other efficient ways to protect your business than just bars.

The best solution is to be ready for a break-in attempt from any direction, detect it very early, dispatch the police quicker, and get them to respond faster.

9. My business has “audio” because it has glass break detectors.

Truth: This type of detector is tuned to the frequencies of breaking glass, which will activate an alarm system when triggered. However, no one actually “hears” the breaking glass. Therefore, there is no way to confirm whether it is an active break-in, or perhaps a bullet or a rock instead which doesn’t always mean an attempt to enter the business is occurring. This results in many false alarms, because the monitoring company must dispatch regardless.

Verified Intrusion with Impact Activated Audio and video monitoring reduces false alarms and improves police response time.

10. I’ve just moved into a new space, and a security company has suggested that they can simply reconnect the existing security system’s wiring and equipment. I can save a lot of money because of lower installation costs and monthly rates.

Truth: While some money may be saved initially on the installation, the truth is you’re just inheriting problems that may have existed beforehand with deteriorating wiring or worn devices. Is this in your best interests? Most companies do not guarantee they can protect you against loss anyway, so they have no risk issues. You take all the risk, and they are off the hook. They don’t even have any liability if faulty wiring or equipment ends up costing you big bucks in false alarm fees. Is saving a few dollars on the monthly monitoring really worth it? Why pay them anything at all, if there is no guaranteed service?

Companies that guarantee their services prefer to install all new devices and wiring, and not take any chances on compromising your protection. The initial devices and wiring, and not take any chances on compromising your protection. The initial investment may be higher, but you will have peace of mind and a system that offers true value.

11. Security sales reps know how to evaluate my security needs and offer proper protection.

Truth: Most sales reps receive training on how to sell burglar alarms, and the bottom line is to get the order. Their only distinction from other conventional competitors is price, and they will cut every corner to give you their best deal. They often walk in the door with a pre-determined package to sell, regardless of your actual needs.

Ask yourself these questions before buying from anyone. You will quickly know if the person in front of you is truly interested in protecting your business or just trying to sell you something.

- Did they survey your business and take notes, or were they immediately ready with a “solution”?
- Did they ask you about your business and your concerns, or were they more interested in what price the “other” company offered?
- Did they give you a price based only on what you thought you needed?
- Or worse: did they give you a price over the phone without ever seeing your business?

A professional security sales rep’s primary objective is to properly evaluate and offer loss prevention solutions, and to have your best interests at heart. They know what questions to ask, put thought into what they offer, and will present a “cheap but ineffective” solution just to get your business. They understand that most of our business comes from referrals and want you to be satisfied with their products and services. Their goal is to recommend effective reliable security and will layer in video,

access control or fire monitoring, if the situation warrants. They take pride in the way they do business and they're always available after the sale to assist you.

Account executives should take a consultative approach for their clients.

12. it's better to own my alarm than to lease it, because it gives me value and equity.

Truth: Whether you buy or lease is your business decision. Ownership has little to do with an alarm company's products or services' intrinsic value to you nor is there any equity advantage to owning. Actually, most alarm companies don't mind telling you that you'll "own" their system when the initial monitoring agreement expires, because the product is so inexpensive to begin with, and depreciation quickly runs its "resale value" to almost zero. They would never bother to retrieve the equipment if you then switched companies. In fact, many of those companies generate substantial revenue by simply taking over the last company's system and re-routing the monitoring so they can bill you.

There are alarm systems available that have greater value than other systems because of increased capabilities and reliability of the product, the services they offer, and the guarantees they offer.

13. All Alarm companies do their own monitoring.

Truth: Most of the larger companies do their own monitoring, but a very large percentage of all smaller alarm companies handle sales and service only, and immediately sell your monitoring contract to larger independent monitoring companies. The only time that monitoring company would ever become aware of your business is when they might someday get an alarm signal...and then you better hope that they have all your information correct.

The most effective security monitoring is provided by companies that own and operate their own local central stations. Their operators have assigned accounts, and they are aware real-time of every single arming and disarming done by your employees. You'll know them by name, and they'll call you when someone forgets to turn on the alarm. They also have the capability to distinguish between a false alarm and a real alarm, and can even reset your system instead of getting you out of bed unnecessarily at 3AM. If an operator causes a fine due to an improper dispatch, the company should accept responsibility for the fine. And if they miss a break-in and fail to dispatch, the company should accept liability under certain situations. This is personal service at its best.

14. If something goes wrong with my security system, my security company will fix it for free.

Truth: Maybe, but you should always ask, I would also read the contract. Your "low monthly" may very well not cover everything you thought. Most companies offer at least a 90-day warranty on parts and labor, and a long-term agreement to replace defective parts at no cost. BUT, they will bill you for all labor after those 90 days. Premium rates will apply on weekends, if they even offer weekend or late-night emergency service. And no company replaces equipment or does repairs for free if the problem is caused by negligence, employee abuse, lost power or phone lines, or an act of God. Be informed.

Monitoring fees may be monitoring only or may include monitoring and service, if the service is included in the monitoring fee it should include both routine equipment repair and 24/7 emergency service at no extra fee, except in those obvious cases such as willful damage by an employee, an act of God, and the like. This means that when your system refuses to arm itself at midnight on Saturday, you won't have to wait until the next Monday morning to get someone out to fix it. In fact, in many areas, they should provide two to four hour emergency on-site response,

no matter what time it is. There is no situation where you should ever have to compromise the security of your business of service delays or high costs.

15. When I arm or disarm my keypad, the alarm system “checks in” with the monitoring station.

Truth: Most conventional alarm panels never communicate with the outside world; they only turn themselves on and off. Those companies never know when their systems are armed. A few companies can “poll” their panels monthly (for an additional fee) to gather information on when the keypad was armed.

The most effective security systems call their monitoring station with each arming or disarming, send a status report on the readiness of each device in the system, and check the authorization of the person using the keypad. You can get immediate information on-line about “Code-ins” and “Code-outs”, and use this site as a powerful management tool to track many items related to your business’ security. You can also call 24/7 to request immediate information on your employees’ use of the security system. Want more? How about a courtesy call each time an employee forgets to arm your system, or stays later in your business than you would prefer.

16. The police are called immediately when my alarm goes off.

Truth: Most monitoring stations are required to call the business first to see if an employee has activated the alarm by mistake. Employee error is the single largest source of false alarms. Only after they have attempted to reach someone at the business and failed are they permitted to contact the police. The bad guys know that as long as your phone is ringing, the police haven’t even been called yet. And with the new “Verified Response” ordinances currently sweeping the nation, law enforcement is finally getting a handle on their (95=%) false alarm rate by forcing business owners to verify their problem before the police will even respond. However this enhanced call verification takes extra time giving the intruders more time before the police are notified. Most intruders are only in a building for a short period of time.

Some central stations can in most cases bypass these issues and contact the police immediately because the alarm can be rapidly verified by on-site equipment. A verified break-in receives much more attention than a conventional burglar alarm going off. Faster police response is the result, which increases the likelihood of an apprehension and loss prevention.

17. The police will respond to my alarm even if I have no permit, or it has expired.

Truth: Do you really want to test this theory? Truth is, in many jurisdictions, the police absolutely will NOT respond if your permit is not current.

The proper thing to do is to keep your permit current if one is required in your area, even a verified alarm may not be enough to convince police to dispatch anyway, even though they can virtually assure police that there is an opportunity for an apprehension. So what is the bottom line? Keep your permit current.

18. A panic button is a panic button – they’re all the same.

Truth: Physically, yes. Most companies carry the same assortment of buttons, switches, foot rails, and wireless devices for panic or duress situations. Monitoring companies will immediately dispatch the police upon receipt of a signal from such a device, and the police generally take such a signal quite seriously. Unfortunately, neither the monitoring company nor the police usually know why the button was pushed, and what they are responding to. The police must provide a response they consider proper, without any verification of the details or circumstances involved.

Verified alarms – audio and or video can provide immediate verification of a panic/duress alarm, in a way that lets authorities know exactly the nature of the emergency and the degree of danger present for employees and/ or others in the business. This valuable real-time information allows authorities to respond properly and in the most efficient manner.

19. False alarms and associated fines are a fact of life, and a negative aspect of any alarm system.

Truth: According to the Department of Justice, 95-98% of all alarms are false and a waste of law enforcement's time, which is why fines were instigated in recent years. No one disputes this statistic. The largest percentage of false alarms in homes is caused by human error. False alarms in businesses are quite often caused by faulty equipment or wiring, or motion detectors that are activated for a wide range of reasons other than someone gaining entrance to the business. Most monitoring companies have no choice but to report all such infractions, without being able to verify why the system was activated. Many companies have had to resort to installing expensive video monitoring systems, or pay for private patrol service, as a backup to avoid heavy fines or losing their alarm permit entirely. Continuing false alarms also may mean increased risk of major loss due to police indifference.

20. There is no way to detect a break-in until the bad guy has actually gotten inside the building.

Truth: With most conventional systems, unfortunately, this is very true. By definition, a motion detector detects motion, and sometimes heat...of a body moving around inside the business, in a limited area of coverage. Translate that to mean: They've already found a way to get inside!

It doesn't have to be this inefficient. The best option is to detect the bad guy on the outside trying to get in, verify the threat to your business, and dispatch with confidence. The trick is to call the police before they get in, not because they got in. Verified impact activated audio detection does this very well; often resulting in apprehensions outside the business, before the bad guys ever got in!

21. Bad guys almost always come through doors or windows, and rarely through a wall or ceiling.

Truth: Doors and window are two of the most common points of entry into a building, and combined, represent 60-65% of all break-in attempts. What about the other 35%? Here's a thought: if you are in a strip mall, what separates your business from the one next door? Most commonly it is only a couple of pieces of plasterboard and perhaps, a false ceiling.

Impact audio verified systems allow detection due to loud sounds made by criminals breaking through cinder block walls, metal walls, plasterboard walls, and getting up on the roof and dropping down through suspended ceilings.

22. Bad guys rarely cut phone lines, but if they do, my security company is notified immediately, and calls the police.

Truth: Many burglaries happen when phone lines are inoperative, and this can be anything from weather-related service issues to damage to trunk lines from a vehicular accident a mile away. Add to that the increasingly common occurrence of bad guys cutting phone lines on the outside of a building, and you have several scenarios where some type of backup system may be prudent.

No monitoring company maintains a constant 24-hour connection with every customer to recognize when a phone line is lost. Contrary to many business owners' beliefs, security cannot report a "down" phone line without a backup system. When

a security panel loses its primary “landline”, it immediately looks for a backup landline. If one is not available, it looks for a cellular or radio backup system. If that is not available, then the system is out of options, and cannot report any trouble.

Discuss this potential risk with your security company. Backup cellular or radio units should report their status daily to the company, so that its clients can always rest assured that the backup system is working, and will be there if needed.

23. It's a good thing to set off a siren to chase the bad guys away.

Truth: A siren is a key component to any conventional alarm system... to the bad guy, because it is a confirmation that they have been detected and gives them a timetable to work under. They can count on the phone ringing, because the monitoring station must first call the business to rule out employee error before calling the police. When the phone stops ringing, the bad guy knows that the police are being called, and the average response time after this call is over 18 minutes. They are confident that they will never be caught. And if they get away, they'll be back.

A silent alarm does not allow the bad guy to know when or even if they have been detected. Combine that advantage with an early detection verification system that allows for a high-priority dispatch and the chances for an apprehension goes up dramatically.

24. The bad guys always get away.

Truth: With a conventional burglar alarm, that is most always the case. Because the police can only be contacted after the business is called, and most police agencies dispatch non-verified alarms on a low priority, they may not arrive for quite some time. Bad guys know they have plenty of time. And if your business has a history of false alarms, don't look for a speedy response the next time you really need the police.

However, one security company using verified audio detection can claim more apprehensions in the past 49 years (over 155,000 and counting) that its next closest competitors combined. And recent statics show that 15-20% of the criminals they apprehended never got into the building.

25. Security companies have some liability for any losses I incur.

Truth: Chances are, if you look at your current agreement, or any new one presented to you, you will find some version of this statement. “not liable for loss” or their definition of liability might be a few months of free monitoring, should a loss occur and you complain loudly enough. By accepting this premise, you are letting these alarm companies off the hook, and you allow them to perpetuate the problem rather than work with you to solve it. Why pay an alarm company any monthly fee, when all they can do is tell you when you had a loss?

Summary

Sonitrol's unique Early Detection Impact-Activated Audio System is a powerful ally for law enforcement, because it is a verification system. Police respond much faster to an alarm when they are virtually assured that it is real. They know they have a good chance for an apprehension because the bad guys never know if and when they have been detected. And they are given the information that they need to respond properly, efficiently and safely to each Sonitrol alarm.

At Sonitrol, we really do listen to your problems. Literally. And we give police the chance they want and need to resolve your problem.



THE LEADER IN VERIFIED ELECTRONIC SECURITY

Don't be at a loss – We know you can't possibly keep up with all the new technology available in commercial loss prevention...that's our job. Properly trained Sonitrol sales consultants will listen to your needs, help you identify and evaluate your security risk issues, and recommend appropriate loss prevention solutions. Along with audio security, this may include access control, camera surveillance, environmental monitoring, and fire safety. You can be assured that your Sonitrol representative will be working in the best interests of your company and your employees' best interests to provide the best solutions, and not compromising your security requirements just to get your business.

One company you can count on – Sonitrol has been standing behind its security products and services for almost fifty years. Our Commitment to Service Warranty Program is unique in that we are the only security company that offers it. Any company could offer a \$10,000 performance warranty against loss, 24-hour a day emergency service, a false alarm fine guarantee, and a 90 day money-back guarantee, along with on-line "code-in, code-out" reports and assigned operators, all at no extra charge... but they won't. They will perhaps offer lower monthly rates... but what services do you really get in return?

Trust Sonitrol to provide the industry's leading verified response technology that provides guaranteed protection 24/7.