



Palos Verdes Estates Police Department

340 Palos Verdes Drive West, Palos Verdes Estates, CA 90274 (310)378-4211 www.pvestates.org

HOME SECURITY INFORMATION GUIDE FOR RESIDENTS

Types of Security Systems

There is a wide variety of security systems, and each has special features that set it apart from its competitors. When differentiating between security systems, it's important to consider, in addition to overall cost, these three broad categories:

1. **Monitoring:** the means by which the system communicates with its monitoring center.
2. **Installation:** the method of installation - professional or do it yourself (DIY).
3. **Home Automation:** the ability to control various events in your home beyond basic security, including turning lights on and off, thermostat settings, and others.

These categories help you determine which system and company best suit your home and lifestyle.

Monitoring Methods: (Landline, Cellular, or Broadband)

You want to be confident that your system will be able to communicate effectively with your monitoring center 24 hours a day, in case of an emergency. Consider the three ways your system can contact the monitoring center when your alarm is triggered, and choose the one that best suits your home:

1. **Landline** - Your system uses a copper wired landline phone connection to communicate with the monitoring center when the alarm is triggered. (The system itself can be wireless or Wi-Fi, it just requires a landline to connect with the monitoring service.)
2. **Cellular** - Your system uses a cellular uplink to communicate with the monitoring center when the alarm is triggered. (Often considered more reliable because your alarm system will not go down if the telephone lines are cut. However, in PVE many areas received poor cellular signal strength).
3. **Broadband** - Your security system sends a signal to the monitoring center through your broadband internet connection when the alarm is triggered. A broadband connection is capable of notifying the monitoring center at least four times faster than a landline connection. Though generally not as reliable as a cellular monitoring, it is less expensive.

Installation: (Professional Installation vs. DIY Installation)

Some companies let you choose between professional or DIY installation, while other companies only offer one or the other. Do it yourself (DIY) systems do not require professional installation, which means an installer doesn't come to your home to set up the system and show you how to use it. Instead, you purchase or are mailed the equipment and given instructions on how to set it up on your own. Typically, DIY systems are wireless, making installation fairly easy. Most customers say they can install their systems in 30 or 40 minutes. The DIY installation option typically means that the customers own the equipment and can move it, so this tends to be the choice of renters or people who change addresses frequently.

A professionally installed system usually requires an installation fee, although some companies offer fee waiver or reduction promotions. The benefit of a professionally installed system is that you don't have to

worry about making a mistake during the installation process. A professional will ensure that the system is set up properly and answer any questions you have, thereby giving you recourse should there be a problem.

Professionally installed systems can be either wireless or hard-wired; it's important to find out beforehand because some require a landline. If you're not sure how long you'll be in your current home, it's important to note that if your system requires professional installation, it usually means there are stipulations for moving it to a new home.

Home Automation: (Control your home from your phone)

Home automation is futuristic. It lets you can control your home remotely from a smartphone or web-enabled device, and energy management solutions in addition to lights and security protection.

With home automation, you can remotely arm and disarm your system and control your lighting, thermostat, and small appliances. You can even remotely view pre-recorded or live video surveillance, making it feel like you never left home. Each security system offers varying levels of home automation and control, so decide what you need to control remotely, then select a company and package that meet your needs.

How to Determine Which System is Right for You

1. Are you a renter or a homeowner?

If you're a renter, you should probably choose a wireless system that you can install yourself so you own the equipment and can easily move it from one location to the next. This may eliminate or reduce to the need to make holes in walls.

If you're a homeowner, you can install pretty much any security system you want, depending on your needs and budget. However, because you own your home, you might want to look into a landline system with a cell uplink backup, covering all eventualities and delivering total protection.

Note: Some system occupy the landline to notify the monitoring service of an alarm activations thus preventing you from calling 9-1-1 during that time. Others allow phone priority, so check the system specifications.

2. Do you plan to move in the next one to three years?

If you move often, then you will want to pay closer attention to the alarm company's contract and whether you will own the equipment or not. Companies that require a long-term contract, for example, may not work for your lifestyle. However, many companies offer moving programs that will allow you to transfer your service and equipment for free. Moving programs often require that you've been a customer for a certain length of time, and sometimes they do not guarantee that all of your equipment will be moved.

If you plan on moving within the next few years, you may want to get a system that lets you own your security system equipment, so you can take it with you when you move. Although some companies will help relocate their equipment if you move, you'll be sure to keep your system if you own it outright.

3. Do you want mobile access?

If you want total control over your home, mobile access is a must. Most security systems let you arm and disarm your system from a key fob, smartphone, or web-enabled device, but some companies also offer the ability to control lighting and thermostat settings via mobile access.

Here is a list of actions that are generally included in most home automation systems:

- Arm and disarm your system
- Lock and unlock doors
- Monitor water and flood sensors
- Receive security alerts
- See which windows and doors are open
- Access a complete history of your system's events
- Get real-time notifications
- View live video via security cameras
- Adjust lights and thermostat
- Set custom notifications
 - Get notified via text, email, and video alerts when your children come home from school or when the housekeeper arrives and leaves.
 - Get notified if select locations like your medicine cabinet, liquor cabinet, or garage door have been opened

4. Do you want or need security cameras?

Aside from catching an intruder in the act, there are quite a few instances where you might want security cameras. They come in handy when you're at home as well as when you're away. When you're at home, you can keep an eye on family members in other rooms or see who is at the front door from the couch. When you're away, know what's going on at home, see who set off the alarm, keep an eye on the babysitter, know when the kids get home from school, and watch the maintenance workers. The benefits of security cameras extend far beyond preventing intrusion.

Decide if a security camera is something you're interested in and then check out the options available with each company. Some systems do not offer security cameras or video monitoring. There is nothing wrong with having an alarm system separate from a video system, but there are advantages to having them combined into one single system. Be a good consumer and investigate the marketplace to find the best solution for your needs.

Security Terminology

If you're new to buying a home security system, you may have come across some unfamiliar terminology on security websites. Here's a glossary of security terms that we hope will help alleviate any confusion.

2-Way Voice

Usually a common add-on feature, 2-way Voice allows you to speak directly to a monitoring center representative through your control panel. If there's an emergency and your hands are full or you can't get to your control panel, you can talk to a representative through a built-in microphone and speaker.

24-hour Monitoring

Nearly every home security monitoring company offers monitoring services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, however inquire before finalizing your selection to ensure you are getting what you expect and want.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

These sensors detect this toxic gas that you cannot otherwise see, smell, or taste. If your home reaches dangerous levels of carbon monoxide, this sensor will warn you so you can get your family to safety.

Cellular Monitoring

Cellular security systems are 100% wireless and contact a monitoring center through a cellular uplink instead of a landline or a broadband internet connection. Cellular monitoring is fast and has no wires to cut.

DIY Installation

DIY installation means that you set up your security equipment yourself, without an installer, though some security companies will walk you through the process over the phone. These are usually wireless systems.

Equipment Warranty

Different security companies offer different equipment warranties, but most warranties stipulate that the company will repair or replace any malfunctioning equipment parts for a certain length of time after purchase and/or installation. When shopping for a home security system, make sure you understand the company's warranty before you purchase equipment or monitoring.

Flood Sensor

A flood sensor will detect water before it does a massive amount of damage or floods your home. Typically, flood sensors are put in the basement.

Freeze Sensor

Flood sensors detect when your home reaches dangerously low temperatures and notifies you before your pipes freeze, saving you from costly damages. This is a feature that is uncommon in this region of Southern California and arguably not necessary.

Glass Break Sensor

Glass break sensors detect the frequency for glass breaking, so if someone breaks one of your windows, you'll know about it. This is a very important feature and one that is highly recommended since window break entries are a common means of entry into your home by burglars.

Heat Sensor

A heat sensor detects a rapid increase of temperature in your home, notifying you if you seem to be in danger of a fire. Often, a heat sensor and smoke sensor are the same device. This is an uncommon feature in this region.

Home Automation

Home automation refers to the ways you can use a smartphone or other web-enabled device to remotely access your home's features beyond security. These include locks, small appliances, lighting, and thermostat settings.

Interactive Monitoring

See Remote Access.

Medical Alert

See Personal Security Devices.

Personal Security Devices

A personal security device is usually a small pendant you can wear around your neck or place in your pocket. In the event of a medical or personal emergency (in conjunction with medical or life safety monitoring), you can push a small button to alert emergency services that you need help. The monitoring service will dispatch your local emergency services to your pre-designated home location unless you subscribe to a GPS based system.

Relocation

Some companies offer relocation kits or relocation guarantees that enable you to transfer your security system to a new home if you move. This is especially common when you don't own the equipment. When you own the equipment and install it yourself, you usually can relocate the equipment without any caveats and fees. If you do not own the equipment, you usually need to pay a fee or be a customer for a minimum amount of time in order to move your equipment to a new location.

Remote Access

Remote access refers to the ability to access your security system through a smartphone or other web-enabled device. At a minimum, most security systems that offer mobile access allow you to view your system's status and receive text or email alerts. Some security companies also let you remotely view a camera feed or control your locks, thermostat, lights, and small appliances.

Sensors

Sensors are the part of your security system that detect motion, glass breakage, or other conditions such as flooding, freezing, fire, or carbon monoxide. Your security system may be made up of many kinds of sensors depending on what your needs are, and what you may wish to purchase.

Smoke Sensor

A smoke sensor detects smoke particles in the air and warns you if you are in danger of a fire. Often, heat sensors and smoke sensors are the same device.

Upfront Cost

This is the amount you initially pay for your security system, monitoring, and any activation or installation fees. Upfront costs vary, depending on whether you buy the equipment, whether you get professional installation, and other factors, including what company you choose. Upfront Cost does not include any ongoing costs such as monthly monitoring fees, etc.

Wireless Monitoring

See Cellular Monitoring.

Window/Door

A window or door sensor will detect if a window or door is opened.