

# Loss Prevention

## Please route to:

- Owner
- General manager
- Sales manager
- Service manager
- Office manager

## Disarmed alarms provide no protection

*If thieves are able to disconnect your burglar alarm system, it can cost you plenty.*

### Breaking and entering

It's happening everywhere, from California to Georgia. In several recent theft cases, sophisticated thieves have disabled burglar alarms to prevent them from sounding a warning and alerting the local police department. In one case, the telephone line was cut at the junction box. In another instance, the phone line serving the alarm system was severed at the top of a telephone pole. With no burglar alarm system protecting the building, the thieves broke in and took all the time that they needed without fear of being caught. In still another case, an entire truckload of product was stolen when thieves simply hooked up a truck to a fully loaded trailer that was parked at the business dock and drove off.

Make no mistake, these thieves are professionals. The heists were well planned and executed. Results in all three cases were similar – tens of thousands of dollars of stock, inventory, office equipment and vehicles – all stolen. These companies were left with empty warehouses, and no product to sell to their customers. Protecting your property, equipment, inventory and facilities against thieves requires you to be proactive with regard to security.

### Burglar alarm basics

It is important to understand how the typical burglar alarm system works, its strengths and its weaknesses. Burglar alarm systems may be activated by a wide range of detection devices including motion sensors, door/window contacts, glass breakage detectors, etc. There are two

general types of alarm systems. The first one sounds only a local alarm (on the property). The second system, a monitored system, sends an alarm to a central station monitoring service. The drawbacks of the local system are obvious. It is possible that nobody will hear it or that it will be ignored or disabled.

The monitored system is more commonly used in commercial properties and provides a higher level of protection. The detection units send an alarm to a central station monitoring service. The central station contacts the local police department to respond to the intruders. The primary weakness in this case is the method by which the system sends the alarm to the monitoring service – via telephone line. As noted above, in most cases, if the phone line is cut, the monitoring service either doesn't know the alarm system is inoperable or it assumes a power outage or other technical problem is at fault. Either way, there is no police response.

Detection devices are critical elements of burglar alarm "basics." If your present burglar alarm system consists only of door and window contacts, it may not provide adequate protection. Thieves avoid these sensors and enter buildings without being detected by breaking holes in concrete block walls. Once inside they can "shop" at a leisurely pace and take what they want. A good system includes interior motion sensors in addition to door and/or glass breakage sensors. Infrared or photoelectric beams along docks or overhead doors are also a good investment.

### Backup communication equipment is the answer

There are several options or features that can be added to an existing "central station" alarm system that will improve reliability and help ensure

a prompt police response. The key is to make sure that your alarm system has an uninterruptible path to the central station or an alarm is sent if the phone line is disabled. Adding these features makes the existing burglar alarm system more dependable, and therefore provides better security for your facility:

1. A cell phone backup system is the best and most reliable equipment available. The telephone line is backed up by a cellular system that contacts the central station to report alarm activations.
  2. The second choice is a radio backup system. It is less expensive but also less reliable. A radio is used to report alarms to the central station if the telephone line fails.
  3. A "line cut monitoring" feature can also be added to most burglar alarm systems. This alerts the central station that the phone line is not functioning properly. There may be more false alarms with this service due to the many other problems that can affect the telephone line.
  4. Install a battery backup on the alarm system itself if you don't already have one. This will ensure that the detection system will continue functioning if electrical service to the building is lost.
- Install good old-fashioned burglar bars on windows and doors. They can delay or prevent entry by thieves.
  - Increase exterior lighting to illuminate the entire perimeter of the building. Deny thieves a hiding place that would allow them to enter without being detected.
  - Don't leave trailers loaded with inventory in open, unprotected areas. Secure trailers in areas that can be locked or otherwise protected, schedule deliveries so that full trailers are not left overnight, etc.
  - Also avoid using small portable buildings or tool sheds to store valuable equipment, supplies or inventory. They are easy to break into and provide little or no protection. Steel shipping containers that can be secured with a high-security padlock are preferred.
  - Post signs stating that the property is protected by burglar alarms, surveillance cameras, etc.
  - Examine door and window hardware to ensure it is functioning and locking properly.
  - Equip exterior doors with double-cylinder deadbolt locks.

### Other physical security issues

Take every opportunity to review and improve overall security of your facilities. Examine the property from a burglar's viewpoint. Where would you enter the building? When? Are there weak points that may be attractive to thieves such as skylights, dark corners and unprotected wall openings or entrances? Here are some ideas for upgrading existing protection:

- First and most importantly, if your facility is not already protected by a burglar alarm system that is monitored by a central station monitoring service – Get one.

### Loss prevention information

For questions about this loss prevention topic, contact the Zurich Risk Engineering Department at 800-821-7803.

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