

Church security guidance

Installation of intruder alarms



These notes are intended to provide guidance to Churches that wish to install or update an alarm system in order to qualify for an intruder alarm discount.

Intruder alarms often act as a deterrent to trespassers and can help to minimise losses in the event of a break-in. However, detection devices will need to be carefully selected and installed in order to avoid damaging the fabric of the building.

As well as localised sounders, intruder alarm systems should also incorporate remote signalling to inform authorised persons of an intrusion to the premises.

New alarm systems should be installed to PD 6662, BS 8243, BS 9263 and in accordance with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Policy on Police Response to Security Systems.

Remote signalling systems will contact the alarm company's alarm receiving centre, which is manned 24 hours per day. The alarm receiving centre should conform to BS 5979 Category II or BSEN 50518.

To comply with the NPCC Policy on Police Response to Security Systems all intruder alarm systems installed after 1 October 2001 and those systems installed prior to this date but which have subsequently lost police response must be capable of generating confirmed alarm conditions.

Whilst the NPCC Policy specifies three types of alarm confirmation, Methodist Insurance will require that the alarm be sequentially confirmed unless otherwise agreed.

Where audible-only intruder alarm systems are installed, they will only generate a Police response in the event of independent third-party corroboration of a break-in and the requirements of BS 8243 will not apply.

The system must be installed and annually maintained by a company on the official list of recognised firms of any UKAS accredited Inspectorate and on the local Police force list of compliant companies. The installers must also be approved by Methodist Insurance.

A copy of the alarm company specification must be sent to Methodist Insurance for approval prior to giving instructions for the alarm to be installed, or any contract signed.

The specification must include either confirmation by the alarm company that sub-contractors will not be used, or specify the extent to which sub-contractors will be used.

Signalling

Where the alarm has remote signalling, it should use a dual path Grade 4 alarm signalling product.

In addition, there must be an external, self-activating bell which incorporates a strobe light. The bell must be situated well out of reach of the ground and face the main road, and the housing must have no protrusions which could facilitate the attachment of chains, wires or ropes.

Bells must be protected by mechanical or electronic means against the insertion of expanding foam and configured to operate instantaneously.

An internal loud tone bell or siren must also be installed.

Detection

All external doors must be fitted with concealed magnetic reed switches. Space protection must be used in all areas containing money, communion plate altarware or other valuables. Consideration should be given to providing space protection for the whole church. Single valuable items in an area which otherwise would not be protected can, as an alternative, be protected by magnetic contacts or vibration detectors.

Any safe used for the keeping of money or valuables should be within an alarm protected area. The alarm must be set at all times whenever the church is unattended.

Physical security

In addition to the above requirements for the actual alarm system, certain minimum physical security precautions must be taken in order to qualify for the intruder alarm discount:

- All accessible opening windows must be fitted with key-operated window locks. This refers to those windows which can be reached without the aid of a ladder.
- All external doors must be fitted with a five-lever mortice deadlock to BS 3621. Other forms of locking may be acceptable.
- All keys must be removed from the building whilst it is unattended.

Visitors

Please be aware that persons visiting the church will need to be accompanied by a key holder in order to unset the alarm system.

Important note

It is the responsibility of the party implementing the above specification to ensure that the implementation does not contravene any statutory or Local Authority requirements, e.g. under the Health & Safety at Work Act, Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order etc.

Alarm discounts

The amount of the discount will depend on the extent of the system and the method of signalling. The following are in descending order from the highest to the lowest discount:

- full building protected with remote signalling
- target area protection, e.g. safe, office etc. with remote signalling
- full building protection with audible signalling assuming someone is able to act upon hearing the alarm operate
- target area protection, e.g. safe, office etc. with audible signalling assuming someone is able to act upon hearing the alarm operate.

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Need to contact us?

For further information and advice on security for churches:

Call our Risk Management Advice Line on

0345 600 7531

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (excluding Bank Holidays).

We may monitor or record calls to improve our service.

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