



Security – Are you alarmed?

Part 2

There is a clear need to promote greater home security awareness within the community! So please watch this space in future.

In the first part of this two part series I addressed a number of fundamental issues concerning alarms, specifically are they worth the investment and secondly in purchasing a system the various avenues that are available to residents in the Algarve. This week we examine in more detail the factors you should consider before purchasing a system

Like medical insurance much of the important detail is in the fine print. In my experience property owners sometimes become more engrossed in the specifications of the equipment rather than the job it needs to do once installed. What is important is that the system itself, and by that I mean the performance of the emergency response intervention company together with the equipment, meets your objectives. In other words it is no good spending say € 5000 on a

Checklist in Purchasing an Alarm

- ✓ Undertake an independent security survey beforehand to establish you complete security needs.
- ✓ Do not purchase from door to door salesmen without obtaining other quotes beforehand. Never let such salesmen into your property without identification or verification.
- ✓ Make sure you have clear objectives and what you want the alarm system to do for you.
- ✓ Consider the benefits of alarm systems that connect to remote monitoring centres.
- ✓ Check company procedure and likely response times in the event your alarm is activated though either an intruder or panic alarm.
- ✓ Check running costs, particular costs and clauses in respect of false alarms.
- ✓ Check fine print details, maintenance, warranty, termination of contract clauses etc
- ✓ Check with friends of their experiences with alarm companies.
- ✓ Keep it simple and ensure all operating instructions are in a language you understand.

sophisticated alarm system if you are let down by a high level of false alarms, slow response and poor support and maintenance. Thankfully in the Algarve the Alarm and Intervention companies have many years of practical experience in the field and in most cases provide a high level of service quality.

To be honest for general household security unless you are a security expert the choice of suitable equipment is best left to the alarm and intervention company. This is simply because they purchase from well established and reliable suppliers, and most importantly have confidence and experience in the equipment they are installing. Certainly equipment can be purchased separately and installed by one company, and then connected by another company to its emergency response/monitoring centre, but unless there are specific reasons for this it is easier to deal with just one company.

Most providers of alarm systems will base their quote and recommended system on your objectives, the layout of your property and what you can afford. Few, if any, consider how this will become part of a comprehensive security plan for your property. Basically there are several types of systems for residences commonly used, specifically i) systems with indoor detectors, ii) those with only outdoor detectors, iii) those combining both, iv) CCTV and v) various perimeter protection systems such as underground protection. Naturally the cost tends to run in parallel with the systems described ranging from perhaps € 500 for a basic indoor system with two detectors to € 20,000 for a sophisticated underground protection system. A good supplier will discuss the potential costs with you before providing a formal quote.

Not only is the capital cost important, but also the running costs. Assuming an emergency response service is part of the system costs are based on the type of system used and sometimes the number of detectors. This usually ranges from around €30 per month upwards and should be considered in conjunction with the capital costs. Some providers will keep the initial costs down to attract clients, but recover the cost through higher monthly charges. Beware of companies immediately offering substantial discounts – there are reasons for this! Other factors to consider are the costs of a call out resulting from a false alarm which can be higher at weekends. A high level of false alarms is not only an indication that the system is not working as it should be but is costly to you as the property owner. False alarms are often triggered by animals, atmospheric conditions and bushes trees etc which interfere with the area covered by the detector. Another monthly expenditure often levied by some companies is a “key holders service” whereby the intervention company can gain access to your property when you are absent in the event of an alarm being activated.

In examining cost an important factor is to bear in mind who owns the equipment; is it you or the alarm company. Most these days are simply purchased, but some systems I discovered recently are rented. There are pros and cons. Purchased systems may avoid longer contracts which you are tied to, but rented systems may allow for free technical upgrades etc.

It is important also to ensure that the system is easy to use and the operation system in a language you can understand. Avoid overly complicated systems which are heavily reliant on other components – the simpler it is the more reliable it is likely to be. Important when your life maybe at stake!

Other considerations are, does it have a panic alarm facility to summon assistance in an emergency? Does the system allow functions for notifying the emergency response monitoring centre for medical emergencies and in the event of a fire?

As you can see selecting an alarm company and a suitable systems needs to be treated in the same way as health insure and financial investments. Firstly it is essential to obtain independent advice before in

the form of a risk assessment and security survey, and secondly always obtain at least two quotes before purchasing an alarm. Also speak to friends who have already had alarms installed and ask them for their experiences particularly on occasions when their alarm has activated.