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Domestic Alarm Tips and Advice

Although every effort has been made in the design and selection of equipment for every intruder alarm system we fit to eliminate false alarms, there are some factors out of our control. This document has been created to provide knowledge of these factors, many of which *can* be controlled with minimal effort.

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## Movement Detectors

### Keep Sensors Clean

Clearing cobwebs away from movement detectors will not only keep the sensor’s view clear but it will also help to prevent false activations; spiders, for example, can be “seen” by certain movement detectors if they move directly over the lens. That said, if your whole system was recently fitted by us, rest assured that the sensors used have been selected to get as close as possible to eliminating false alarms caused by most environmental factors.

### Keep Some Space Around Sensors

As a general rule, if you can’t see the movement detector, it can’t detect you and therefore would not detect a potential intruder’s movement. So make sure the area around each movement detector is clear enough to have a good clear view of the room. If your system is monitored, you may have sensors with “anti-masking” technology. Having objects blocking, or too close to these detectors will cause a fault, alerting you to the problem as it occurs. Move the object from the view of the detector and the fault will clear.

### Keep Pets Away

If you have pets, make sure they are out of view of any movement detectors which have not been specifically desensitised to animals. Even if the animal is in a cage, make sure the cage is out of sight of the movement detectors or throw a cover over the cage so the animal inside cannot be seen.

### Keep Heat Sources Away

If you have a fireplace, ensure that it is no longer giving off any heat by the time the alarm system needs to be armed. PIRs or Passive Infra-Red movement detectors “see” the heat coming from a heat source and could mistake this for movement and cause a false trigger. Electric heaters, especially those set to come on with a timer, are potentially even more likely to cause a false alarm, as they are often fitted with a fan to push the heat around the room creating much more movement than an open fire.

### Beware of Reflections

In a room with a lot of windows or in a conservatory, sunlight may cause false alarms on certain movement detectors. This is almost always due to the light reflecting off an object in the room and not from direct sunlight falling on the detector. These false triggers will usually occur at the same time of year and at the same time of day as the sun will be in the same position in the sky. Simply moving any reflective objects, or closing curtains or blinds on sunny days will prevent false alarms.

### Beware of Any Movement

Objects such as helium balloons, may be perfectly still when they are left in a room, but the smallest air movement can cause them to move, potentially triggering a movement sensor and causing a false alarm. Combine this with the central heating coming on while you’re out and you have heat *and* movement; these two together are almost sure to cause a false activation. Here are some other causes of potential movement to look out for and limit when the alarm is armed:

* Automatic curtains.
* Printers (particularly laser printers which warm the paper significantly).
* Any falling objects.
* Clothes dryer or tumble dryer.
* Electric fan or fan heater.
* Robotic vacuum cleaner or mop.
* Open windows or doors.

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## Inertia Detectors

### Warn Window Cleaners

Although every effort has been made to ensure that any vibration detectors will only trigger with a genuine attack made on the door or window they are attached to, if a window cleaner knocks a window too roughly, the alarm may be triggered. Likewise, if any building work is being done nearby, warn any tradesmen that large vibrations too close to your property may set your alarm off.

### Beware of Animals

Pets will not usually mistakenly activate inertia detectors, unless they can reach the inertia detector itself or tap on the door/window frame directly. For example, if a dog scratches at a door to go out and this door has an inertia detector on it, the vibrations could cause a false trigger. Try to keep the pet away from said inertia by training to use another door if possible, or by putting a barrier in the way.

Birds will often fly into large windows, mistaking the clear glass as an opening. If there is enough force, a bird strike can cause a false trigger on an inertia detector. There are a number of measures you could put in place to prevent this. We would recommend decals - self-adhesive shapes to stick on the window so the birds can see it is a solid object. Alternatively, you could invest in having a one-way transparent film fitted so the glass is still clear from the inside, but is tinted from the outside.

### Weather

Be wary of high winds blowing foliage against a window with an inertia detector fitted. If possible, cut back any branches which could reach any of your windows if the wind picks up.

Heavy rain will not usually trigger inertia detectors but be sure to close any windows or doors if any attached inertias could possibly get wet as they are not usually waterproof.

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## Wireless Alarms

### Blocking Signal

If you see a “supervision lost” or “low signal” fault on your wireless alarm, it means the signal strength is low or has been completely lost between your alarm control panel and the sensor which has the fault. Try to clear any objects from between the control panel and the sensor in question to see if the fault clears. If the control panel is in a loft, clear a space around the alarm equipment and beware of foil-lined insulation which could perfectly block wireless signal. If signal strength becomes an issue not solved by these measures, please phone our office to book an engineer to move the transmitter or fit a booster.

### Wireless Batteries

A low battery can cause reduced signal strength and reduced detection sensitivity. If the battery capacity becomes very low, a fault will show on the keypad. In most cases, we recommend replacing wireless batteries every 2 years on the service visit.

To save battery life, some wireless movement detectors will effectively switch off for a period of time after “seeing” movement. So don’t worry if the detector’s LED seems to stop flashing after you walk in front of it once, as long as it flashes again if you walk in front of it again after a few minutes.

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## General Advice

### Rodents

A key reason to keep rodents out of your roof space is for the health of your security system. To sharpen and control the length of their teeth, many rodents will chew through the contents of your loft, including any alarm and CCTV cables they may find. To reduce the chances of infestation by rodents, ensure there is no easy access to your house either through the roof or otherwise. If possible, you could also create a space between the outer walls of your house and the closest trees and bushes either by trimming or removing them.

### Building Work

If you are planning any building work, it is best to come to us for advice on the specific work you are planning. However, the following is a list of things to consider while renovating:

* When removing an old carpet, do not use a blade to cut the edges away. Some of our cables may be hidden under the edge of the carpet and it’s all too easy to slice through them.
* When having a new carpet fitted, ensure the carpet fitters know where the cables are (sticky notes on skirting boards above where the wires were would be a good reminder too) so they can avoid slicing them when they run a blade along the edges to neaten up.
* When having a new door fitted, let the fitter know that you have a door contact attached to the alarm so the cable can be avoided and the old contact doesn’t get taken away, still attached to the old door.
* When having new windows or doors and you have an inertia detector attached, let the fitter know to work around it. Bear in mind that wherever the fitter leaves the cable poking out is where the inertia will be refitted
* When having fitted wardrobes or similar installed, ensure the fitters know about any alarm cables/equipment in the area so they can work around them.
* When decorating, the neatest job will be achieved if any detectors are first removed from the walls, the decorating is carried out, then the detectors are refitted. It is best to arrange for us to remove such detectors, as tamper faults will be caused if you attempt this yourself. If the detector is left hanging on the wire, wrap it in a plastic bag and tape around the wire to ensure no plaster or paint gets on the housing.
* If a plasterer/decorator ensures you that a detector can be worked around, phone us before work starts or email a picture of the detector to us. There are situations where the work will be as neat as the workman has suggested, but the detector can no longer be maintained by us. For example, the cover of the detector must slide upwards to be removed but the new plaster above the detector prevents this.
* When having the exterior of the house rendered or re-rendered, book us in to remove any exterior alarm/CCTV equipment (bell box, cameras etc.). We do not recommend any such equipment is rendered around, as if they need to be removed or replaced in the future, it can be very difficult and there may be a hole left behind which cannot be covered with the new equipment.
* When having work done on your mains electricity (inside or outside your property), it is best to phone us for advice. There are a number of potential problems relating to mains work being carried out. Many of these depend on the kind of work being carried out and your particular alarm system.
* If you want to give workmen access to your alarm system (for setting/unsetting) we would recommend programming an extra code or fob which can then be deleted from the system after the work is done.

### Power Cuts

If you have a power outage, your alarm system’s backup battery will keep your alarm powered for a time. How long this battery will last depends on a number of factors relating to your specific system, namely the size of your system and capacity of the battery. If you lose power for long enough to drain the battery, a replacement battery will almost definitely be required.

Mains surges occur for a number of reasons, for example: lightning striking utility equipment, a tree limb touching a powerline or power returning after an outage. Although your alarm is as well protected against this as is reasonably possible, these surges can sometimes still cause issues. If you suspect a mains surge, please book one of our engineers to check over the system.

### Monitored Systems

If your system is monitored via Redcare or a Digital Communicator, to avoid any false alarms that may go through to the police, put your system on test before carrying out any building work, or before testing the system yourself (by deliberately triggering a sensor to set it off). To put a monitored system on test, phone Custodian on 0844 879 1703, quote your postcode and surname, give them your password and ask them to have your system put on test for the desired length of time.