

Security System – Alarm Response Procedures

Very Important Note!

Please read this material carefully. Make sure that you and those people you trust to use your system understand this material. Your safety, security, and your lives may well depend upon what you do or don't do in an emergency situation. The lives of police officers and fire fighters who will respond to your alarm are also involved. Everything in this guide has a purpose, and none of it is unimportant.

In this guide we explain *what* we do when your alarm sounds, *why* we do what we do, and *how* our actions relate to your actions. Your security alarm provider will instruct you clearly on the operation of your system. All of this is “easy” once you grasp it – it just may be new to you. If you don't understand any aspect of this material, make notes and ask questions until you are sure. All questions are good questions. Ask your security alarm provider; ask us. We are always available, 24 hours a day, so all you have to do is call toll-free.

CONFIDENTIAL

Do not keep this booklet in plain view or next to the telephone. No one should know the details of your security system except those who you trust to use it. “Your Designated Contacts” should know just the basics (see this section in this guide for specifics). This guide should be out of sight. Use **reasonable caution**.

Using this Guide

This guide will help you receive full value and benefit from your alarm system. You will find policies and procedures and answers to many of your questions. All of this material is designed to communicate clearly about alarms and emergencies and what will happen in these situations.

This guide details our standard operating procedures. These have been tested and refined for decades. Your security provider may suggest some alterations to suit your situation. This is perfectly acceptable, the only exception being a proposed procedure change that would interfere with our proper response to an alarm condition.

With over two decades of experience in monitoring response, we stand firmly behind you as a team. Never hesitate to call for assistance 24 hours a day. If you have suggestions to improve this guide, please let us know. Thank you.

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DON'T record your CODES in this book!	
DON'T discuss system DETAILS with friends, etc.!	

I. Your Alarm System: Standard Response Procedures

Learning your Alarm System

You must learn how to use your alarm system. Here is, at **MINIMUM**, what you and others who will use your system should know (see Designated Contacts, also):

1. How to arm (turn on) the alarm.
2. How to disarm (turn off) the alarm.
3. How to clear the keypad after an alarm, and how to reset it (turn off, and then turn it on again).
4. How to shut the entire system down if ever needed.
5. What to do if and when the alarm goes off.
6. Your alarm provider is responsible for showing you how to use the system. You're responsible for learning.
7. Know when you **MUST** call your provider.
8. How to test your alarm system, and testing on a schedule you set up.



Standard Operating Response Procedures

These procedures are our *standard procedures* for the most usual types of alarms that are monitored. In general, these procedures are stable and have been in use for years. Some procedures may change or vary slightly if improvements are instituted, so keep in touch with your security alarm provider who should notify you of any changes. Any questions you have about correct procedures should be explained or clarified by them.

You may have an alarm system that has unique features. These features may call for special requirements in monitoring, *monitoring methods that vary from these standard procedures*. Your security alarm provider should advise you of any variations from the standard procedures detailed here. Also, there are slight variations for commercial or industrial systems that are not detailed right here (commercial users, please also see the Commercial Security Procedures and Notes insert). The types of alarm systems and applications are many and varied, but if something can be measured or sensed, chances are it can be monitored (pressure, flow, actuation, temperature, level, etc.). The alarm situations and procedures that are detailed in the following sections are common to most all systems.

From the Alarm to the Response

What happens? When the alarm triggers, the communicator in your alarm system instantly sends a signal to our alarm receiver equipment. The signal indicates your location and the alarm code (the type of alarm, e.g., fire, burglary, panic, etc.; all other emergency information is automatically, instantly processed into our computer system.

All your emergency data springs to the screen in front of the Security Operator. The operator quickly sees what must be done and immediately acts with the proper response to your alarm.



A fast verification call is made (3 rings), if necessary. They push one button to automatically call the appropriate emergency service to dispatch immediately. The emergency service (police, fire, rescue) speeds to your location. **Summary:**

- ❖ Alarm sounds, signal transmits to response center.
- ❖ Signal reception, alarm/user information displays for operator.
- ❖ Security Operator acts on information.
- ❖ Verification call if indicated, cancel alarm or dispatch of emergency services.
- ❖ Designated contacts called, if indicated.

Fast? Our usual completed response time is less than 60 seconds from the time the signal arrives, and often faster, depending on the type of alarm. We use high-speed computers and receivers designed for the alarm industry, so our response time is actually *increasing*.

What makes this speed possible? Computers are one element and trained Security Operators are another. Our procedures, techniques, software expertise, and refinements over the last several decades are certainly a factor (we've been in this business since the early 1980s). Another major reason is the efficiency of the telephone communication system in this country and the leaps in technology that have been implemented. Our network uses several routes for telecommunication signals, so if one route is down, another route is used. ❖

Your CODES

Two definitions: Your **ARM/DISARM CODE**: The code that you enter on the keypad as the interface of your alarm system, e.g., to disarm the system.

Your **PASS CODE** is a secret word/number combination (PIN) used to unquestionably identify you to the security operator in alarm situations or in other communications with the security operator. *Correct use of your PASS CODE is critical.*

Note: The code MAY be the same for both functions – talk with your security provider for clarification.

EXAMPLE: Verification call upon alarm receipt.

“This is (your security company) calling. May I please have your PASS CODE?”

Your PASS CODE: Critical Link

Your PASS CODE should be known **only** by you (those who are being protected), your security alarm provider, and the emergency response center. **Your use of your PASS CODE in the proper manner could save your life; improper use can invite anything ranging from inconvenience to disaster. Do not write your PASS CODE in this book and use caution where you write it down, if you do.**

You will select your PASS CODE when you fill out your monitoring agreement - up to twelve digits and/or letters. It is preferred that you use your American Response Center account number, but often a name, a key word, the name of a pet, or another number is easier to remember. Regardless, it should come easily and immediately to mind in an alarm situation, one that could be stressful.

Using your PASS CODE in Alarm Situations

If everything is all right: The security operator may call in certain alarm situations to verify that the alarm is a “real” alarm/emergency situation, or an accidental false alarm. They will identify themselves. They will ask you for your name and PASS CODE. **If everything is all right** (you opened the door without shutting off the alarm first, for example, and it is a false alarm), **tell the security operator your correct PASS CODE.** You may wish to explain what happened. By saying the correct PASS CODE, the security operator knows that it is you or an authorized person (someone in your family or someone who should have the correct PASS CODE). The operator will say, "OK, thank you," and with no other indication

that you are in trouble, the alarm should be canceled. All is well.

If you are in a duress situation: The only time that you should **not** tell the security operator your correct PASS CODE is when you are in a duress situation. Examples of duress situations: you are being held hostage; someone is holding you with a gun, knife, or lethal weapon; someone in your premises has become violent or is threatening you with bodily harm. If the **wrong code** is given, the operator will know that and say, "OK, thank you," and **notify the authorities.** Police will be dispatched.

Please consult your security alarm provider for any questions you may have or for clarification. **Make sure that you are clear on how this works.**



“My Pass Code is XXXXXX and, yes, everything is all right now.”

Verification Calls

Your security operator will often call you to verify that the alarm is an actual alarm situation for the type of alarm received. Why? You don’t want the police showing up because you opened a door or window by accident when the alarm was set. These verification calls are made quickly, efficiently. Verification calls are necessary to protect all those involved, and to prevent dispatches on false alarms. **Your PASS CODE is used in many of the alarm verification calls.**

Verification Call Exceptions

Some municipalities do NOT allow verification calls to be made on certain types of alarms. Some require immediate dispatch on a fire alarm *without* verification. Some police departments will not allow a cancellation or verification of a panic alarm, and will dispatch officers to investigate. ☒

Standard Alarm Signal Definitions - Procedures

Each individual emergency merits a specific response, but the most immediate responses are to life threatening situations, an understandable priority.

FIRE

This alarm signal means that smoke-heat-flame detectors have been activated at your location.

The operator calls to verify the alarm condition if verification calls are allowed by that municipal fire department (no verification on U.L. systems). If there is no answer in 3 rings, the fire department is notified. A designated contact notified. A pass code is not mandatory.

PANIC-HOLDUP-AMBUSH

This alarm signal means that you activated an alarm that indicates that you are under duress, and need immediate police assistance.

The security operator immediately notifies the police that a duress situation exists. No designated contacts are notified. The security operator *may* call the location, and a PASS CODE is mandatory.

MEDICAL ALERT

This alarm signal means that you have activated a feature on your home security system and that you need medical assistance.

The operator calls to verify the alarm. If no one answers in three rings, the rescue squad is notified. If medical data is included in our computer information, this information is given to the rescue squad dispatcher. A person on the designated contact list is notified. A PASS CODE is not mandatory.

BURGLARY

This alarm signal means that an intrusion device has been activated and indicates an attempted or actual illegal entry.

The security operator calls to verify the alarm condition. The PASS CODE system is used. No answer in 3 rings or an improper pass code generates an immediate call to the police. Verification calls are made 24 hours a day. A person on the designated contact list is notified.

TEMPERATURE

This signal means a device has been activated that indicates low or high temperature, an increase or decrease that is above or below prescribed limits in what is being monitored. Examples: To prevent freezing pipes in a cold climate in an unoccupied building or dwelling, to prevent thawing in a freezer. The Security Operator calls to verify. If there is no answer, a designated contact is notified.

LOW BATTERY

This signal means that batteries that provide backup power to your alarm panel, in the event of AC electrical

power failure, or system/devices that operate on battery power, need replacement.

The Security Operator calls to verify. The security alarm provider will also be notified.

CANCEL-ABORT

This signal means that the system was reset *after* an alarm condition by an authorized person with a key or combination. All cancel-abort signals are received in one minute or less after an alarm signal, sometimes overriding the alarm completely.

On cancel-abort signals that are immediately preceded by an alarm signal, the Security Operator handles them as an alarm and calls to verify, depending upon the type of alarm. If there is no preceding alarm to this signal, no action is taken. Use this signal to cancel an accidental alarm.

AC POWER TO THE ALARM PANEL

This signal means a power failure has occurred at your location on the electrical circuit that powers your alarm panel, meaning the alarm panel may not be receiving AC Power.

The operator calls* to verify. Your security alarm provider is also notified. *Verification calls may not be made at all during electrical storms, or when there are power outages covering a large geographic area.

TEST

This signal is a test signal to check the operation of the system.

The security operator communicates with you regarding the signal received unless it is a pre-set automatic test procedure.

SYSTEM TAMPER

This signal means the intrusion or burglary circuit has been interrupted, by accident or on purpose.

The Security Operator calls to verify the situation. The PASS CODE system is used. If there is no answer in 3 rings, the police are immediately notified.

Note: Your security alarm provider may request to be notified, as well, for designated signals, e.g., if you have an intrusion attempt (burglary), they'll be notified.

II. Your Designated Contacts

What is a Designated Contact? *It is a person you trust, and you may trust them enough to give them your key.* There is space on your monitoring agreement to list four persons as designated contacts. Although it is not necessary that they *all* be given a key, it is better if they have one. You choose who is to be called if our security operator is unable to reach you in certain emergency or alarm situations. In some situations these contact persons, or one of them, are automatically informed. These designated contacts could be relatives, neighbors, friends, or others. In some emergency situations they may meet the appropriate authorities, and grant them access with the key you may provide, if access is warranted.

In many alarm situations, our security operator will notify one of your designated contacts regarding the alarm or alarm condition after notifying the appropriate authorities, or if you cannot be reached.

What Your Designated Contacts Must Know

1. Instruct them **NOT TO GO INSIDE YOUR LOCATION.** If the emergency is a dangerous situation they could subject themselves to injury or harm. For example, in a burglary situation arriving *before* the police would put them in harm's way. This could be dangerous -- police could mistake them for the burglar. They should *wait* for the police to arrive before approaching the police and identifying themselves.
2. Your primary Designated Contacts need to have a key to your premises.
3. They need to know how to shut off the alarm, and how to set the alarm.

Keep Your Designated Contact List Current

As time goes by, those people you listed as Designated Contacts may change their circumstances. People move, change phone numbers, etc. Make a note on your calendar to do a quick check of your list as often as you please. New phone number and address? Moved out of state? Need to add or change a Designated Contact? Just call your security alarm provider, and they'll make the changes for you. It's all part of the service. Don't forget to notify them also if *your* phone number at work, for example, changes.

Keep a list of your contacts. **Call when designated contact information changes (moved, new phone #)**

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

III. When you "must call" your Security Provider

There are strong reasons to keep in contact you're your security system provider – and vice versa. Things change. Many different occasions and factors affect your system, and this affects your security. Some reasons for contact are for your safety, to deal with changes in your situation or environment, and some are to prevent false alarms and increase your satisfaction with your system. Here is a beginning list:

- DESIGNATED CONTACT CHANGE:** When there's a change with your Designated Contacts.
- TELEPHONE SYSTEM:** ANY physical change in your telephone wiring, planning on changing your telephone system phones, or to change, CANCEL, or add any custom services such as call waiting, call forwarding, call blocking. Changing phone services types, such as DSL, ADSL, etc. Call your security provider! **These can all disrupt the signal or block monitoring from reaching you. Call.**
- VACATION/AWAY:** When you go away for business or vacation.
- PEOPLE/GUESTS:** A temporary/permanent change in living arrangements -- someone moving out or in.
- REMODELING:** Planning changes in doors, windows, additions, interior wall changes, etc.).
- CONTRACTORS:** When anyone enters to do work, like a contractor, when you'll be gone.
- INSTALLATIONS:** Planning or installing intercoms, attic flooring/insulation, basement ceiling coverings, exterior siding, skylights, ceiling fans - new items that will be installed near system controls or devices.
- EMPLOYING HELP:** Hiring domestic help or having home services (home health aides, physical therapists, etc.) - those who will be coming to your home to assist someone when you may not be there.
- PETS:** If you will be adding new pets in your home.
- TAMPERING:** If you see signs that someone has tried to tamper with your alarm system, to find out how it works, or signs that someone tried to break in.
- REVIEW SYSTEM:** If you need to re-learn or review some part of your alarm system, or if people in your residence are causing false alarms.
- DEVICE NOT WORKING?** If something does not seem to be operating properly, or you discover something when you test the system.
- QUESTIONS:** Anytime you have questions about your system.
- ANNUAL SERVICE CHECK:** At least once per year have the entire system checked and serviced completely.
So, keep in touch. This is important!

Updates or alerts: www.american-response.com
Look for "For Subscribers" section.

IV. Testing, False Alarms, Going Away

Testing Your Alarm System, 1-2-3



Test your system every other month, or more often, regardless of other system tests or checks. How? The test is easy and only takes a few minutes. Ask your security alarm provider to show you, and answer any additional questions you may have. After you do it once or twice, you should find it as easy as 1-2-3.

This test is for communication to the central station only (use local test procedures when you test all devices).

1. Call the Security Operator, and state that you want to test your alarm system. They will put your system on "Test" status, so authorities aren't dispatched. They will ask you to call back when you're finished.
2. Hang up the phone. Test 1 or 2 of the alarm devices. Wait a minute before calling back.
3. Call back, tell the operator you were testing, and they will verify what alarm signals were received.

Record all of this information on the TEST RECORD provided for your use. When you see that you're running out of space on the TEST RECORD, tell the operator when you call to test and we'll send you a new one.



to
Test

TIP: Put your test schedule on your calendar.

Important: Do not make unauthorized or unsupervised tests of your systems.

Having the police, fire, or rescue personnel make emergency runs to your location for no good reason is dangerous for them and others, costly, takes them away from real emergencies, and is unnecessary. You could be held responsible and liable.

False Alarm Problems

False alarms are a real problem. False alarms can be controlled, prevented, and reduced. They don't have to be a problem, and there are solutions.

Police, fire departments, and alarm system providers know what causes false alarms. Seventy-six to 80% or more of all false alarms are caused by user-error. Why should you care about false alarms, and take reasonable precautions and actions?

- ❖ **False Alarms** take police and firefighters away from real emergencies, and other important crime or safety related actions.
- ❖ **False Alarms** can make neighbors and others insensitive to the alarm, figuring it's "just another false alarm." The alarm credibility suffers.
- ❖ **False Alarms** often endanger public safety personnel, and other citizens, when safety officers speed to answer an emergency alarm situation that is false. Police and firemen have died racing to answer alarms.
- ❖ **False Alarms** cost you and other taxpayers money for response to an alarm that is not an emergency.
- ❖ **False Alarms** may cost you *directly*, as many municipalities impose fines or penalties for multiple false alarms.

Ten Easy False Alarm Solutions

1. Know your alarm system, and how it works. Make sure others who use it know how to work it.
2. Keep in close contact with your security company (Important: See the "Must Call" section).
3. Keep doors (including interior doors) and windows in good repair, including latches and catches.
4. Keep pets, balloons -- particularly metallic/helium-filled balloons -- fans, and heaters away from motion sensors when the system is armed.
5. Have your system checked and serviced regularly by your security company.
6. Call your security company if you suspect something isn't working properly.
7. Test your system periodically.
8. Do not allow drafts or wind to move plants, curtains, or other movable items in motion sensor areas.
9. Ask your security provider to adjust your system to reduce the chances of false alarms. Periodically upgrade your system because improved equipment and technology improves system performance.
10. If you have a single button or hand-held special alarm devices (panic, medical alert, etc.), keep them out of the reach or sight of curious visitors or children, so they can't easily activate the alarm. Use a two-button alarm device if practical.

Going Away? Call...

If you are going away for the weekend, traveling for business, vacationing, or will be on any extended leave from your premises, call your security alarm provider at the number they provided for you. If you know the dates and times you'll be gone weeks *in advance*, please call *in advance*.

Please provide the following information:

1. Your Account Number and/or PASS CODE
2. The date and time you are leaving.

3. The date and approximate time that you will return.
4. The names of anyone who will be entering your home while you're away. We need to know who they are in case they trip the alarm by mistake.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If no one will be entering your home, the security operator will *not* call to verify any alarms. We will inform the authorities that you are away when we dispatch.

Peace of Mind

With your alarm system armed and everything arranged, you should find a much greater peace of mind while you are away, with almost no worries about the home front. If you like, you can give us a number where you can be reached, although most people don't. Don't forget that you can contact us 24 hours a day while you're away. Should you incur a problem while you're away, and you want to get an emergency message to someone locally, call the Security Operator. Explain who you are (Name, Account Number, PASS CODE), why you're calling, who needs to be contacted at a specific number, and what the message is. We will relay those important emergency messages for you. *We're here to serve you.*

V. Your Security Alarm Provider

The security alarm provider you have selected is an Affiliate of American Response Center. ARC is the hub of a nationwide network of independent alarm providers who monitor alarms through this centralized emergency response center from all across North America. For many years the owners and managers of ARC have worked closely with many of the most respected and experienced security alarm providers in the industry, and they have entrusted their valued customers to ARC. These include high security facilities, family residences, stores, and industrial concerns, as well as the very homes, families, and businesses of the security alarm providers themselves. ARC provides independent alarm providers with numerous services, all of which are designed to make the best of services available to you at affordable, economical rates.

The emergency response center that will constantly monitor your alarm system operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, year-in and year-out. ARC is actively managed and staffed by security professionals, and specially trained security operators. Their sole purpose and function is to properly monitor and respond to alarm signals. Security operators at ARC average over ten years of experience and, specially trained, they perform extremely well.

American Response Center has received national recognition in the alarm industry, and has been written about in leading security publications, like Security Systems News. With the strength of this organization and its growth, you can be assured that experienced help or assistance is just a phone call away. Always.

The Professional Monitoring Alternative

Central to the value of your security system is efficient remote monitoring. A local alarm that only sounds a siren or bell has value because it can warn you that an intrusion is in progress - if you are there to hear it. If you're not there, a siren or bell may scare off some intruders if the intruder thinks others can hear it and will do something about it quickly. A local alarm may alert neighbors, but solely relying upon this type of alert has proven to have severe limitations, and some terrible consequences. Neighbors may not be home. Neighbors might not know what to do or who to call. Is it a burglary attempt? A fire? A medical emergency? A false alarm? If they approach to determine what type of emergency it is, they may put themselves in harms way. Sometimes they take no action, or the wrong action. That's the way people are or can be.

With a system monitored by professionals, response is fast. When your alarm sounds, the signal transmits to ARC for verification and dispatch of the authorities in your community. With 24 hour monitoring, you aren't leaving your security to chance. A simple alarm *without* monitoring ignores all the other values that an alarm system can deliver: in a panic situation, under duress, a medical alert to bring the rescue squad, etc. With no monitoring, a smoke alarm can beep and beep, and with no one home to hear it, the fire burns on and on. With monitoring? Fast dispatch of the fire department.



“A simple alarm *without* monitoring ignores all the other values that an alarm system can deliver...”

A tape dialer that sends a tape-recorded message to the police emergency number may sound like a good alternative. However, a recorded message can't give additional information or answer questions. Worse, the message may be wrong for the type of emergency at hand. Many police and fire departments, for these and many other reasons, frown upon the use of this type of mechanical alert, to put it mildly. Many municipalities have outlawed or banned their use. Not allowed.

How would you like to have your security, in a life-threatening situation, depend upon a commercial telephone answering service responding appropriately to your alarm?

While it may be hard to believe, some alarm dealers use answering services, even though an emergency alarm may not receive any more priority from them than any other type of call. As one subscriber said, "Are you kidding? An answering service? They can't even get messages right." Enough said?

An alarm system without professional monitoring is like an ocean liner without a radio. Out of contact with those who could help or who would come to the rescue if they only knew there was an emergency...and what kind. With no radio they are isolated, cut off, stranded, and in peril. Your alarm system will be monitored 24 hours a day, and contact is only a phone call away.

Your 24-Hour Access to Security

What your security alarm provider has to offer you is truly professional monitoring services that are at the leading edge in this specialized area of the security industry.

- U.L. Certified -

Your American Response Center at a Glance

- ◆ Trained, professional security operators who are courteous, friendly, personable, and experienced.
- ◆ Specially designed facility for efficient alarm monitoring. Approved and Certified by Underwriters' Laboratories (U.L. Certificated: Central Station Protective Signaling, Monitoring Only).
- ◆ Fully computerized for fast responses and service.
- ◆ Complete test services.
- ◆ Full power back-up generators -- no power interruptions in a power failure.
- ◆ Easy to work with.
- ◆ Telephone line integrity through backup systems.
- ◆ Twenty-four hour communications & operations, 365 days a year.
- ◆ All types of monitoring available with custom services.
- ◆ Full twenty-four hour voice/data logging.
- ◆ Efficient services to all North America.
- ◆ Economical and affordable services.

Your Monitoring Agreement

The information that your security alarm provider fills in on your alarm monitoring agreement is important, and it is very important for you to check thoroughly when you sign it, and your system goes into service. The information supplied is the information that is programmed into our computers. It is used in responding to any alarms or emergency signals.

We check our data entry to minimize errors on what is entered, but our checks ensure only that the information you provided is entered correctly into the computer. When an emergency happens is NOT the time to find out that

there is an error in the information you supplied. Carefully choose those who will be your Designated Contacts.

Your Notes

**Use additional space at right for added notes.
Do NOT record your Pass Code in this book!**