HOME SECURITY

SAVED BY THE BELL
How the Christensens’ monitored alarm system saved their most treasured possessions

Holiday safety tips
Don’t let your vacation go up in flames
False alarms
What you can do to stop them

FOR KEEPING YOUR HOME SECURE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Protect what matters most. Hire a Canadian Security Association member today.
The holidays pose an increased risk of home invasion. Fortunately, a barrage of security options exist for you to customize the kind of coverage you need.

The Holidays Require a Security Beacon

The holiday season is about spending time with your loved ones; likewise, it is also unfortunately a prime time for property theft. Many homeowners are getting the most recent product available in past years. Make sure you are not comparing apples to oranges; systems are far superior to those on the market 10 years ago. To help you keep your home safe and secure during the upcoming holiday season, there are some simple, yet important steps that you can take.

First line of defence

■ Install a security system: “In a 2008 survey of a city public safety officials, 66 percent of police chiefs said security systems decrease the likelihood a home will be burglarized, and about 40 percent felt security systems increased their chances of apprehending burglars.”

■ Display your alarm company’s sticker: Facing your alarm company’s Decal in a noticeable area will help to discourage break-ins. Thieves always look for the easiest targets.

■ Door-break-ins: Keep gifts and valuable items where they can’t be seen from the outside. Also, be discreet about presenting gifts into the house. Exposures in items can make your home more attractive to burglars.

■ Make access difficult: Keep doors and windows locked. Arm your security system with deadbolts and install indoor motion-sensor lights. Trim shrubbery to eliminate hiding places.

If you go away

■ Don’t advertise your vacation: Many people post holiday plans on Facebook or other social media sites; likewise, your status with vacation notices can be open invites to thieves. Ask your caretaker to change the lock on the door to your house.

■ Make sure your house always appears occupied: Install timers to turn on and off internal and external lights, and TVs and radios to turn on and off on a consistent schedule. Inform your mail service and ask a neighbour to put out your garbage.

■ Safeguard your home: before you leave, turn off all appliances, lock doors and windows, and don’t forget to turn on your alarm system.

To reduce the risk of false alarms

■ Update your call list: if handling over your keys to a caretaker while you’re on vacation, make sure that person is on your alarm monitoring company’s “call list.” This will allow your caretaker to address issues in your absence, including false alarms.

■ Give your caretaker your alarm passcode: Ensure your caretaker has your alarm passcode and the telephone number for your monitoring station. In case of an accidental false alarm, they will be able to notify the monitoring company and possibly eliminate the risk of incurring false alarms fees.

■ Notify your monitoring station of any absence: Tell your alarm monitoring station the dates of your departure and return for your vacation, so they can modify their response procedures.

Security professionals play an important role in your home protection plan. The Canadian Security Association (CANASA) represents more than 1,200 security organizations across Canada, including alarm installers, monitoring companies, and consultants. All of our members adhere to a code of ethics and proper standards, so you can be sure your home’s security and safety needs will be taken care of by a qualified professional.

To learn more about CANASA and find a security professional in your area, visit canasa.org.

What to Look for in a Monitored Home Security Company

Here is a list of things you should consider to narrow your search once you’ve made the decision to purchase a monitored home security system:

■ Research your options: What is their reputation and history? How long have they been in the business? Are they part of a local company or are they a large national company?

■ How “local” is the home security product you are installing? Today’s home security systems are far superior to those available in the past. Make sure you are getting the most modern product available.

■ Does the home security company offer central station monitoring? A security system is only as good as the company monitoring it. A reputable home security company should provide its own central station monitoring instead of having another company monitor for them.

■ Does the home security company’s monitoring facility have back-up systems and are those facilities ULC-listed? Monitoring facilities that have a ULC rating (Underwriters Laboratory rating) have gone the extra step to ensure that they have reliable systems that will not fail.

■ Does the home security company’s monitoring facility have back-up systems in case of power failure? Find out if the monitoring facility has gas or electric power generators as well as battery back-up to ensure that monitoring continues despite power failures.

■ Does the home security company’s monitoring facility have a central control panel, and at least two doors monitored, as well as connection to a central monitoring station.

■ Secure your home from “hidden” household dangers, but Don’t forget to equip your home with effective smoke, fire, carbon monoxide and flood detection systems as those are hidden dangers to your home and family. For an additional cost, you will also equip your home with fire extinguishers and develop a fire escape plan and route that is familiar to all household occupants.

■ Ease-of-use and convenience:

Many homeowners admit that they don’t use their home security systems to the full extent because they use it inconsistently or “never” use it. When choosing a home security system, be sure to choose something that can be armed and disarmed easily by all family members.

■ Make sure the system you install is easy to use: A security system is only useful when it’s active and working – even when there is a power failure. Make sure the system you install has a battery back-up unit so operation is continuous.

■ What other benefits does the company offer besides installation and monitoring? Check to see what other benefits the home security company offers. You could potentially save on your homeowner’s insurance.
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** Certain conditions apply. Terms entire. Equipment cost extra. Valid with new 36-month residential monitoring service agreement.
Question: With the various threats that can face your home at any time, how can you ensure your house’s—and family’s—safety?

Answer: In addition to protecting against intruders, integrated security devices can monitor those hidden potential problem spots.

Feel secure, no matter where you are

"I remember the day well. We had taken our children toboggan- ing on the local hill to wear off some steam after having been cooped up in the house during a winter cold snap. Coming home, we were talking about having hot chocolate and what we were going to do over the Christmas holidays. As we rounded the corner, my heart sank. There were fire trucks with lights flashing arriving at my house. Rushing toward the house, I could see the smoke零食thating inside. We were lucky that day. A pot left on the stove, which had not been completely turned off, could have caused some serious damage. What saved us were our monitored smoke detectors."

More than just intruder protection

Today’s alarm systems do more than help protect against intrusion. You can integrate devices such as smoke detectors that alert a monitoring station before costly damage occurs, even when you’re not home, as in my case. The National Fire Protection Association states that one home fire is reported every 83 seconds. For that reason, it’s critical that you have a smoke detector installed on every floor in your home.

Hidden threats

In the chilly Canadian winters, a furnace that shuts off can be dangerous, not only because it could mean chilly temperatures inside, but pipes could freeze and burst. Low temperature sensors can detect when the mercury dips below a certain point in your home, and will send an alert via your alarm system to the monitoring station. Water sensors help detect moisture leaks before costly damage occurs. The National Fire Protection and Housing Corporation estimates that basement flooding insurance claims amount to about $400 million a year. That’s $4,000 to $6,000 claims a year with an average cost of $2,000 to $4,000 each. Receiving an alert when water is accumulating where it shouldn’t can help reduce those amounts. Also, if you travel or are away from home, a lot, it’s important to check with your insurance provider. Many require you to have these types of sensors or have someone checking your house regularly for potentially damaging situations. If you don’t, then your insurance may not cover any damage.

An invisible and deadly force

They call it the “silent killer” for a reason. Dangerous, odourless, and colourless, carbon monoxide can build up in your home undetected. At low levels it can cause health issues, particularly for children, the elderly and those with respiratory problems. At higher levels, it’s deadly. Health Canada estimates that over 400 people died from carbon monoxide poisoning in the last decade. Victims often don’t realize anything has gone wrong. Having a carbon monoxide detector integrated with your alarm system means that your monitoring station is alerted to potential dangers and can notify you or the appropriate emergency personnel.

Not only can these devices help keep your loved ones safe and protect your property—they can help you save money. Many insurance companies offer additional discounts for having monitored smoke and environmental sensors, on top of the discounts you get for having a monitored security system, meaning you can save as much as 15 percent of your home insurance.

Reliable and innovative monitoring solutions that fit your life.

You can’t always be there to protect what matters most. Count on SecurTek’s reliable, affordable monitoring solutions to protect your family, your home and your business, and to preserve your peace of mind.

SecurTek is one of only five security monitoring companies in Canada to achieve Five Diamond Certification for providing superior monitoring service in North America.

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Leanne Woodhouse
SecurTek
When the Christensens hired an alarm company to monitor their home, they thought the company was there to protect them from intruders, not monitor their fire alarm. This service saved their home.

**The ABCD's of fire extinguishers**

Fire extinguishers are divided into four categories: A, B, C, or D, based on their fire-fighting capability. The following is a quick guide to help choose the appropriate extinguisher for your home.

**Class A extinguishers** are for ordinary combustibles materials such as paper, wood, and upholstery.

**Class B extinguishers** are for flammable and combustible liquids such as fuel oil, gasoline, paint, grease in a frying pan, oil, and other flammable liquids.

**Class C extinguishers** are for electrical equipment such as appliances, wiring, overcharged fuel cells, and other electrical sources.

**Class D extinguishers** are for metals such as magnesium, potassium, and sodium, and are commonly found in a chemical laboratory.

A multi-purpose dry chemical extinguisher labeled ABC can put out most types of fires: wood, paper, cloth, flammable and electrical fires. If you plan on buying more than one, Fire Prevention Canada suggests purchasing a BC for the kitchen, an A for the living room and an ABC for the basement and garage.

### Learn how to PASS:

**Before using your fire extinguisher, make sure to read the instructions.** Although there are many different types of fire extinguishers, all of them operate in a similar manner:

1. **Pull** the pin. Some units require the releasing of a lock latch, press the puncture lever, inversion or similar manner.
2. **Aim** the extinguisher nozzle (horn) at the base of the fire.
3. **Squeeze** or press the handle.
4. **Sweep** from side-to-side at the base of the fire and discharge the contents of the extinguisher.

Extinguishers should be installed near an escape route and be easily accessible in case of an emergency. They should be maintained on a regular basis, at least once a year. Ask the retailer how to have your extinguisher serviced and inspected.

REFILL the extinguisher after ANY use. A partially used extinguisher might as well be empty. Also, ensure that your fire extinguisher is labelled by a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
False alarms have been a hot topic lately and for good reason. They tax police resources and heighten pressure on authorities to manage first responder dispatches. This can result in changes to alarm by-laws and increased false alarm fines to residents.

By working together, the general public, security professionals and police departments can reduce false alarms.

Consumer error is the number one cause of false dispatches. A false dispatch occurs when an alarm system is set off, police are called, and there is no intruder or emergency situation.

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When purchasing your home alarm system, think DSC.

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Holiday safety tips

**Home Safety:**

- Make sure to turn off all extension cords with holiday decorations.
- Don't discard chandelliers with flammable materials. Light bulbs can get hot enough to ignite the flammable material.
- If you have an artificial tree, prepare a steps or full situation, ash/ thorn walkways and driveways, more growth or safety over the holidays.
- If you’re planning on travelling over the holidays, ask someone to watch your house; install automatic alarms at times as extra protection.
- If you’re hosting holiday parties, have fire safety exit signs and have prepared to have overnight guests.
- Never place wrapping paper or gift ornaments in a wood burning fireplace. These materials increase the risk of a chimney fire.

**Christmas tree safety:**

- If purchasing a live tree, make sure it’s fresh and well watered. Cut approx. 2 inches off the trunk to help the tree absorb water. Check for freshness by tapping it on the ground — drooping needles, indicate a dry, highly flammable tree. Needles should be hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, they do not break. Remove a real tree within 14 days; otherwise, it can start to dry out and pose a fire hazard.
- If you plan on purchasing or already own an artificial tree, double check that it comes with a label certifying it’s fire resistant. When purchasing an artificial tree, ensure it’s fire resistant. Always remember to drive this figure up to 35 percent, pre- viously 20 percent of Canadian homes have been linked to a fire if the fire is extinguished quickly. Real and artificial trees should be placed away from any flame, radiator or vent — the heat will dry the tree, creating a fire hazard.
- Check tree lights annually. Replace lights if there are broken/intermittent bulbs, or if tree is fouled. Exposed over checking.

**Shopping safety:**

- When shopping, close your wrists and lock all doors. Keep purchased gifts hidden in the trunk of your car.
- If you plan to purchase gifts online, make sure the site is secure to protect against identity theft; look for https to verify security.

For more information re: your quality, you can better protect the items you care about, please visit, the dominion.ca.

### How you can prevent false alarms

False alarms have been a hot topic lately and for good rea- son. They take police resources and heighten pressure on authorities to manage false dispatches. This can result in changes to alarm systems by law and increased falsesan alarm fees to residents.

By working together, the general public, security professionals and police departments can reduce false alarms.

**Consumer error is the number one cause of false dispatches. A false dis- patch occurs when an alarm system in off, police are called, and there is no intruder or emergency situation.**

**Here are a few tips on how to make the best use of your se- curity system by reducing false alarms.**

- **Ask for Enhanced Call Verifica- tion and provide multiple contacts** (Enhanced Call Verification) means that your monitoring company will try to get in touch with two or more of your contacts to con- firm your alarm’s validity before issu- ing a call. This is in addition to the Rapid Enhanced Call Verification that re- quires Enhanced Call Verification have some reductions of unnecessary false alarm enforcement response between 10 and 10 percent.

- **Maintain your “call list”** Keep your “call list” up to date with cur- rent phone numbers for you and your contacts. With the right con- tact information, monitoring sta- tions can be proactive in deter- mining if police should be dis- patched to your home.

- **Schedule annual audits** Request annual mainten- ance inspections to ensure proper performance of your alarm system. Also, don’t forget to replace your back-up bat- teries every three to five years.

- **Proper train counselors** Ensure all key holders are trained in the proper use of your alarm system and know your passcode and monitoring station number in case the alarm is accidently set off. Never give a key to someone who isn’t familiar with the system.

- **Monitor your home’s environment** After any house- hold changes, such as a remodel- ling, contact your alarm company to ensure they won’t affect your system.

- **Plan your events/gatherings** When you have overnight guests, make sure the site is secure to protect against identity theft; look for https to verify security.

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### Showcased

**Questions:** Are you looking for a home security system to provide additional comfort and peace of mind? If so, an enhanced alarm system can provide peace of mind, reduce the risk of burglary and fire accidents and reduce insurance premiums. Consumer error is the number one cause of false dispatches. A false dis- patch occurs when an alarm system is off, police are called, and there is no intruder or emergency situation. How you can prevent false alarms

**Answer:** A few simple tips and techniques can help prevent false alarms and save you money. Here are a few tips on how to make the best use of your security system by reducing false alarms.

1. **Check tree lights annually.**
   - If you're hosting holiday parties, check your tree lights regularly. If you plan to purchase gifts, make sure they're fire resistant.
   - A few simple tips and techniques can help prevent false alarms and save you money. Here are a few tips on how to make the best use of your security system by reducing false alarms.

2. **If you plan on purchasing or already own an artificial tree, double check that it comes with a label certifying it’s fire resistant.**
   - When purchasing an artificial tree, ensure it’s fire resistant. Always remember to drive this figure up to 35 percent, previously 20 percent of Canadian homes have been linked to a fire if the fire is extinguished quickly. Real and artificial trees should be placed away from any flame, radiator or vent — the heat will dry the tree, creating a fire hazard.

3. **Check tree lights annually.**
   - Replace lights if there are broken/intermittent bulbs, or if tree is fouled. Exposed over checking.

4. **Shopping safety:**
   - When shopping, close your wrists and lock all doors. Keep purchased gifts hidden in the trunk of your car.

5. **If you plan to purchase gifts online, make sure the site is secure to protect against identity theft; look for https to verify security.**

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**Stay safe, secure and well protected.**

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