



## Highlights: Home Security Companies

Although home security systems enhance protection against home intrusion and other hazards, they also require significant expense. The latest issue of *Puget Sound Consumers' CHECKBOOK* magazine, available at [www.checkbook.org](http://www.checkbook.org), rates local alarm installation firms on both price and quality, and details how consumers can cut the costs associated with a home alarm system. CHECKBOOK also offers simple home security solutions that could be more important and less expensive than having a sophisticated alarm system. Below are highlights from the article:

- Of the alarm installation companies included in CHECKBOOK's ratings, some were rated "superior" for "overall performance" by 90 percent or more of their surveyed customers. But others received such favorable ratings from fewer than 60 percent of their surveyed customers.
- CHECKBOOK compared firms' prices for specific security system installation and monitoring jobs. Prices varied widely. For one installation job, including three years of monitoring service, prices among local firms ranged from \$1,099 to \$5,513, and some of the lower priced firms rated high for quality.
- CHECKBOOK recommends shopping every few years for central station monitoring. For three years of monitoring an existing system in one home, CHECKBOOK's shoppers found prices ranging from \$900 to \$1,438.
- With most types of equipment, it's easy to switch monitoring companies. Many monitoring firms charge nothing for the switchover, but some will charge a one-time fee of \$25 to \$150.
- CHECKBOOK advises consumers to inquire about a possible discount on homeowner's insurance costs if they have an alarm system. Many insurers offer discounts of two to 10 percent for systems with central station monitoring.
- CHECKBOOK suggests that most consumers should take other, often more important, steps before considering an investment in an alarm system, including:
  - Securing all doors with good deadbolt locks.
  - Securing all windows and sliding glass doors that would be accessible to an intruder.
  - Setting up outdoor and indoor timed or motion-sensitive lighting systems that will deter burglars.
  - Improving habits that affect home security, such as consistently locking doors, keeping track of keys, having newspapers and mail collected while you are away from home, and keeping valuable items out of sight.
  - Adopting a dog.
  - Using "bluffs," such as stickers or signs that advertise alarm systems or "Beware of Dog."
  - Securing attached garages and porches with strong locks and doors. Intruders often invade homes through these areas.

The media may cite selected examples of top-rated home security companies, as shown in the new issue of *Puget Sound Consumers' CHECKBOOK*, and CHECKBOOK's editors are available for interviews. Please call Jamie Lettis at 202-454-3006 to schedule.