

Church security guidance

Installation of intruder alarms



These notes are intended to provide guidance to Churches that wish to install or update an alarm system.

Intruder alarms often act as a deterrent to trespassers and can help to minimise losses in the event of a break-in. However, detection devices will need to be carefully selected and installed in order to avoid damaging the fabric of the building.

As well as localised sounders, intruder alarm systems should also incorporate remote signalling to inform authorised persons of an intrusion to the premises.

New alarm systems should be installed to IS. EN 50131. The system must be installed and annually maintained by a company licensed by the Private Security Authority (PSA) and approved by the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) or the Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Body (SSAIB)

Remote signalling systems will need to contact the alarm company's alarm receiving centre which is manned 24 hours per day. The alarm receiving centre should conform to I.S. 228 or I.S. EN 50518

Ecclesiastical will require that the alarm is sequentially confirmed unless otherwise agreed.

Where audible only intruder alarm systems are installed they will only generate a Garda response in the event of independent third party corroboration of a break-in.

A copy of the alarm company specification must be sent to Ecclesiastical for approval prior to giving instructions for the alarm to be installed, or any contract signed.

The specification must include either confirmation by the alarm company that sub-contractors will not be used, or specify the extent to which sub-contractors will be used.

Signalling

Where the alarm has remote signalling it should use a dual path Grade 4 alarm signalling product.

In addition, there must be an external, self-activating bell which incorporates a strobe light. The bell must be situated well out of reach of the ground and face the main road, and the housing must have no protrusions which could facilitate the attachment of chains, wires or ropes.

Bells must be protected by mechanical or electronic means against the insertion of expanding foam and configured to operate instantaneously.

An internal loud tone bell or siren must also be installed.

Detection

All external doors must be fitted with concealed magnetic reed switches. Space protection must be used in all areas containing money, communion plate altarware or other valuables. Consideration should be given to providing space protection for the whole church. Single valuable items in an area which otherwise would not be protected can, as an alternative, be protected by magnetic contacts or vibration detectors.

Any safe used for the keeping of money or valuables should be within an alarm protected area. The alarm must be set at all times whenever the church is unattended.



Physical security

In addition to the above requirements for the actual alarm system, certain minimum physical security precautions should also be taken:

- all accessible opening windows should be fitted with key operated window locks. This refers to those windows which can be reached without the aid of a ladder.
- all external doors should be fitted with a 5 lever mortice deadlock to BS 3621 or a heavy 'church' box lock. Other forms of locking may be acceptable.
- all keys should be removed from the building whilst it is unattended.

Visitors

Parishes should be aware that persons visiting the church will need to be accompanied by a key holder in order to unset the alarm system.

Important note

It is the responsibility of the party implementing the above specification to ensure that the implementation does not contravene any statutory or Local Authority requirements, e.g. under the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act

RCB Permissions

Churches are reminded that permission may be required from the RCB prior to any work being carried out.

Need to contact us?

For further advice Ecclesiastical customers can call our Risk Management Team on **01 619 0300** (Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm, excluding bank holidays)

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