

Get Your Home Alarm System In Top Shape for the Winter



Dear Policyholder,

Winter brings families together with the joys of the holiday season and the warmth of a comfortable home.

Let us remember that one of the greatest gifts we can give to ourselves and our families is a sense of safety at home and on the road. On behalf of The Atlantic Companies®, I would like to wish you a safe and secure winter.

From my home to yours,

Dan Olmsted, President and CEO

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If there's one season when your home alarm system should be working best, it's winter. As fireplaces come to life, candles, lights, and trees decorate homes, and curious children roam, the risk of fire peaks. As holiday shopping, trips to Grandma's house, and late-night parties keep us busy, burglars zero in on empty homes. As the temperature drops, the threat of frozen pipes and extensive water damage rises.

Alarm systems can minimize loss from all these risks, but they must be working properly.

Smoke Detectors

All homes should have smoke detectors. The chance of dying in a fire is cut in half when a working smoke detector is present, according to several studies.

1. Test your smoke detectors. Smoke detectors come in a variety of types, but they all have a manual. Read the directions on how to test and maintain the alarm. Most detectors will have a simple test button that does the job. Never test the alarm with an open flame.

2. Replace batteries at least once a year. It's a good idea to do so before the cold sets in because low temperatures can reduce battery power and cause the detector to fail — often triggering the alarm at night when you're asleep.

Multi-Purpose Alarm Systems

A multi-purpose alarm system includes burglar and fire alarm sensors and can



include gas, water and medical emergency alarms, as well. You control the system through one or more keypads located in prominent locations throughout your house. A central station often monitors the system around the clock through your phone line.

1. Schedule a service appointment if you haven't had one within a year. Multi-purpose alarms systems are complex and require cleaning and testing annually by a professional.

2. Refresh everyone in your household about how to use the system. Everyone should know how to use the keypad. You don't want someone to push the panic button by mistake. Everyone should know how to bypass sensors such as motion detectors when you are at home, clear incorrect keypad entries, and enter the cancellation code. Don't keep your alarm pass code near the alarm keypad, where a burglar can easily find it.

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Shiny Holiday Gifts? Check Your Valuable Items Coverage

Gold, diamonds, and other shiny gifts may brighten the eyes in your home this holiday season. Keep those eyes from crying by protecting and insuring the valuable items in your house.

Jewelry, artwork, fine china, and other items of exceptional value may exceed the insurance coverage provided by your Home policy. Home insurance typically limits coverage on categories of items including jewelry, furs, silverware, stamps and coins. For instance, standard industry policies limit coverage for jewelry and furs combined to \$1,000. The Atlantic Master Plan has higher and separate limits of \$10,000 for jewelry and furs.

But gifts from holidays past, present or future may exceed even those higher coverage amounts. To fully insure these items, you can place them on a Valuables policy — also known as “scheduling” them — with higher limits and broader coverage.

Even gifts costing a few thousand dollars could warrant added coverage,



since they add to what you already own. For example, a married couple insured their diamond engagement ring with a Valuables policy when they bought their first home. But additional jewelry acquired over the years may not have been scheduled on that policy. If the total value of non-scheduled jewelry is higher than \$10,000, the jewelry collection is not fully covered (due to the Home policy’s sub-limit of \$10,000).

In this case, consider Blanket Valuables coverage, which allows you to select a higher coverage limit for a group of similar items, such as jewelry, fine china, rare coins and stamps.

Besides Home policy coverage limits, you should consider the fragility of your precious items. Home policies do not cover a precious vase that gets knocked off its perch by a curious cat, but a Valuables policy does.

Home policies also do not cover loss due to flood. While you can usually move fine art or jewelry to higher ground when a flood threatens, antique furniture, grand pianos, and extensive wine collections pose a greater problem. A Valuables policy covers loss due to flood.

The end of the holiday season presents an excellent time to take stock of all the precious items you own, not only of the gifts you received, that may warrant valuables coverage. To learn more, download our worksheet titled “Insuring Valuable Items Question and Answer Guide,” available in the Helpful Hints section of www.atlanticmasterplan.com.

Why Appraisals Are Important

Expert appraisals serve an important purpose in documenting the value and specific characteristics of precious items for insurance purposes. If you inherit a precious piece of jewelry or purchase a rare antique at a once-in-a-lifetime bargain price, an appraisal of the item will help you set a reasonable replacement cost for it.

Appraisals may also be warranted for collectible items whose prices can greatly appreciate, such as fine art,

rare stamps and coins, Persian rugs, and rare wines. The value you set for them years ago may no longer be adequate.

To find an appraiser, you can access a searchable database at www.appraisersassoc.org. The site is run by the Appraisers Association of America, which provides the “AAA” certification.

Independent appraisers may bill hourly or by project. Usually, an appraiser will discuss or view the items and then estimate appraisal fees.

An appraisal report, experts say, must include:

- purpose (e.g., “insurance appraisal”);
- methodology, data and resources used, including analysis and markets;
- complete, accurate description of the property;
- date and location of inspection, and effective date of value; and
- appraiser’s qualifications and signature.

Home Alarm Systems (cont'd)

3. Set rules for using the burglary prevention sensors. Some people might only activate the burglary sensors when they go away for more than a few days. Others might activate the sensors when they leave the home for a few hours. Consider using the system more rigorously during the holiday season.

4. Protect your phone line, or get a back-up. Thieves know that monitoring services typically use the home phone line to connect with the alarm system; therefore, they try to cut the phone line before breaking into your home. If your phone line runs

underground, you're in luck. If not, ask your alarm system company if they have a cellular or radio back-up monitoring service. Besides defeating burglars who cut phone lines, these back-ups help when the phone line fails due to weather, accidents, or other reasons.

5. Make sure entry gates to your property automatically unlock if the alarm is tripped. The fire department, police department or emergency medical personnel will need easy and fast access to your home. You don't want them to wait at the end of your

driveway for someone to unlock the gate or to knock it down.

6. Place alarm system signs and decals in noticeable places — near the front, back, and garage doors and on windows that could be points of entry.

7. Last but not least, make sure everyone in your home knows what to do when the alarms goes off — especially in case of fire. Plan two escape routes from each room and designate a safe meeting place outside the home. Practice your escape plan regularly.

Items to Consider for a Valuables Policy

- Jewelry with precious metals and gemstones
- Silverware including cutlery, teapots, trays, and vases
- Antique and hand-crafted furniture
- Hand-loomed rugs, carpets, and tapestries
- Musical instruments
- Paintings and art
- China, crystal, lamps, mirrors, and other decorative items, including antiques
- Custom-made and designer furniture and accessories
- Top-of-the-line/designer home appliances
- Couture or antique clothing, shoes and accessories
- Furs
- Wine collections
- Golf clubs
- Collectibles such as coins, stamps, and sports memorabilia

Home Alarm Systems Can Do More Than You Know

Multi-purpose alarm systems continue to grow more sophisticated and varied in the threats they monitor. Most guard against fire and burglary; some can do much more.

Water Damage

Alarm systems can guard against the most frequent source of home damage — water. Sensors can detect leaks by monitoring water flow patterns and pipe temperatures or sensing moisture below common sources of leaks, such as a water heater. When the sensors are triggered, a device placed on the main water line into the house automatically shuts off the water supply. If you have a sump pump, you can also get a detector that will alert you when the pump fails. The system sounds an alarm and signals a central monitoring station.

The additional cost of these systems can range from \$500 to over \$1,000,

depending on the size of your home. That may sound like a lot, but consider the savings if you avoid even one major leak. In some states, the Atlantic Master Plan offers discounts of up to 2-5 percent on your Home policy premium if you have an automatic leak detection and water shutoff system installed.

Gas Leaks

Gas leak sensors will monitor critical areas where leaks may occur. There are also seismic sensors that can be used to shut down your natural gas if an earthquake occurs.

Valuables Theft

As an added layer of defense against theft, stress sensors that activate when stepped upon can be placed under rugs near fine art or other valuable items. They can be activated at night and when you are away.

Stay Safe When Your Car Stops Running



Satellite navigation, cell phones, and on-board computers have made the current generation of vehicles the most connected ever. But these high-tech tools can't prevent a flat tire, dead battery, or electrical system failure that leaves you temporarily stranded.

Waiting for assistance for even a few minutes on the side of the road is dangerous. Keep yourself and your family safe by following these tips, according to the National Safety Council and other experts:

Before Trouble Starts

1. Carry an emergency kit. Kits are available in stores or online or you can assemble your own. See sidebar: "Vehicle Emergency Kit Essentials."

2. Learn troubleshooting. Every driver should know how to check the battery connection, check oil and radiator fluid, and change tires. Check spare tire air pressure regularly.

When Trouble Hits

1. Move to the safest spot possible. Take your foot off the gas pedal at the

first hint of engine trouble or flat tire. Do not brake abruptly. Ease the vehicle toward the shoulder, breakdown lane, or roadside. Use turn or hazard signals.

Try to reach an exit safely if you're on a highway. When changing lanes, check mirrors and be aware of varying speeds of other vehicles.

2. Make the vehicle visible. Use emergency flashers. Place reflector triangles well behind the car to alert drivers. Turn on interior lights if they increase visibility. Be especially careful if you are stopped in or near a travel lane.

3. Consider what you can do yourself – safely. Before you change a flat tire or check the battery, be sure you are not risking further damage to your vehicle or, worse, to yourself and passengers.

When You Can't Fix the Trouble Yourself

1. Call for help. Use a cell phone to dial 911 for police. Then call for roadside assistance. Newer vehicles often have satellite navigation systems that provide emergency notification.

If you don't have these, you'll need to ask someone to call for help. Or you'll have to wait. When someone stops to assist you, roll down the window slightly and ask them to call the police for emergency help. Do not open the car door until it is safe to do so.

2. Signal for help. If no one can call, signal for help. Put up the vehicle's hood. Tie a makeshift flag to the antenna or hang it from a window or trunk. Do not wave down other drivers.

Most highways are patrolled regularly, and police, tow truck operators and conscientious drivers will know help is needed and act accordingly.

3. Make yourself safe. Weather conditions or darkness often make it more comfortable to stay in the car if you need to wait for help. If your vehicle is safely away from traffic but still visible from the road, wait inside the car with doors locked. Use judgment. Cars can be replaced; people can't.

If you must stay out of the vehicle, stand away from it while waiting for help. It's unsafe to stand behind or next to the vehicle if it's on the shoulder or road.

Is walking for help advisable? It is not if you're on an interstate or major highway. Local streets may be safe for walking. Stay away from traffic. Never attempt to cross a multi-lane roadway.

Vehicle Emergency Kit Essentials

- Flashlight, flares or reflective triangle; "HELP" sign
- Emergency tire sealant
- Change for telephone calls
- First aid supplies, drinkable water, cloth or "space" blanket
- Jumper cables with instructions
- Work gloves
- Carpet strips, sand, or kitty litter (for traction in snowy, icy, muddy, or sandy conditions)
- Ice scraper and brush, extra clothing, hand warmers, and non-perishable food (for extended breakdowns in cold climates)

Note: The safety recommendations in this newsletter should not be viewed as covering every conceivable situation. It only highlights a few of the more common preventive steps. Other or additional steps may be necessary. Any descriptions of coverage in this newsletter are meant to be general in nature and do not include nor are intended to include all of the actual terms, benefits and limitations found in an insurance policy. Coverage may vary by state. The insurance policy and not this newsletter will form the contract between the insured and the insurance company, and governs in all cases.