

# Managing intruder alarm noise

## What to do if an alarm bothers you

### For how long can an alarm legally sound?

By law,<sup>1</sup> an intruder alarm can only sound for a certain amount of time. If it sounds for longer, the person responsible for the alarm can be fined. The person responsible is:

- for a vehicle alarm – the owner or operator of the vehicle
- for a building alarm – the person occupying the building.

In working out how long the alarm has sounded for, it makes no difference if the noise is continuous or intermittent (e.g. ‘beep – beep – beep’).

An alarm might go off because there has been a break-in or because the alarm is faulty. No matter why the alarm goes off, it’s against the law for it to sound for too long – in most cases. The exception is for vehicles made before 1 March 2009, under some circumstances. This exception is explained below under ‘Vehicles’.

### Vehicles

How long a vehicle alarm can sound for depends on how old the vehicle is. The limit is:

- 45 seconds for vehicles manufactured on or after 1 September 1997
- 90 seconds for vehicles manufactured before 1 September 1997.

### Exception

There is a legal defence if:

- the vehicle was manufactured before 1 March 2009

and

- the alarm went off because
  - a vehicle window or windscreen was broken or removed, or
  - the vehicle was involved in an accident, or
  - someone broke into the vehicle or tried to break into it.

### Buildings

How long a building intruder alarm can sound for depends on when the alarm was installed. The limit is:

- 5 minutes if the alarm was installed on or after 1 December 1997
- 10 minutes if the alarm was installed before 1 December 1997.

### Keep your alarm working properly

You need to keep your alarm working properly. This is especially important if you leave your vehicle or building unattended for long periods.

- Buy a good-quality alarm.
- Test the alarm soon after you buy it.
- For vehicle alarms, make sure you know the right way to disarm and set the alarm so it doesn’t go off unnecessarily.

The alarm system should be installed according to the current Australian Standard for alarm installation.

- For a building intruder alarm, ask to see the security licence of the person installing it. You can verify a NSW security licence on the [public register of licences](#).<sup>2</sup>

- For vehicle alarms, check that the installer is experienced in installing your type of alarm.
- Check that the system and installation are covered by a warranty.

Once the alarm system is properly installed:

- Follow the instructions for how to use and maintain it.
- Don't alter adjustments or sensitivity settings.

To prevent your alarm from disturbing others:

- For back-to-base systems, arrange for the alarm company to turn off the alarm if it sounds for too long.
- If possible, give your council and local police details of a trusted contact person who can enter your premises to turn off a faulty alarm.

## Other ways to protect property

Vehicles can be protected by:

- electronic engine immobilisers – standard equipment on passenger vehicles since July 2001
- satellite tracking systems.

These systems avoid the problems of noisy alarms.

For buildings, continuously monitored back-to-base alarm systems have:

- an alarm that sounds inside the house but doesn't disturb the neighbourhood
- a phone link to a customer care centre that responds to the alarm.

Ask an insurance company or security company about these systems.

## What can I do if a neighbour's alarm keeps sounding?

If an alarm disturbs you, contact the NSW Police Assistance Line on 131 444, your local police station or your local council.

Police officers are not allowed to enter unoccupied premises or vehicles to turn off an alarm.

However, they can accompany council officers, who are authorised to do this. Council officers need a warrant to enter an unoccupied residential building to deal with a faulty alarm.

## Penalties

Both the council and police officers can issue **penalty notices** for alarms that sound for longer than allowed. Penalties for individuals are:

- \$300 if the alarm sounds for up to 4 hours
- \$600 if it sounds for between 4 and 8 hours
- \$900 if it sounds for longer than 8 hours.

These penalties are doubled for corporations.

## Faulty intruder alarms in buildings

The council can issue a **prevention notice** that requires the owner of the faulty alarm to repair or replace it. If the owner doesn't do this, the council can issue a penalty notice (\$4,000 for an individual or \$8,000 for a corporation).

## Faulty vehicle alarms

The council can issue a **vehicle defect notice** that requires the vehicle's owner to repair the faulty alarm.<sup>3</sup> If the owner doesn't do this, the police can issue a penalty notice (\$300 for individuals and \$600 for corporations). The vehicle's registration can also be cancelled, temporarily or permanently.<sup>4</sup>

## Contact details

### Councils

Office of Local Government website:

[www.olg.nsw.gov.au](http://www.olg.nsw.gov.au)

Look under 'For the public'.

### NSW Police

NSW Police Assistance Line: 131 444

Website: [www.police.nsw.gov.au](http://www.police.nsw.gov.au)

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### References

1 Protection of the Environment Operations (Noise Control) Regulation 2017 (the Regulation)

2 [www.police.nsw.gov.au/online\\_services/security\\_licensing\\_and\\_enforcement\\_directorate/security\\_licenses/verify\\_a\\_security\\_licence](http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/online_services/security_licensing_and_enforcement_directorate/security_licenses/verify_a_security_licence)

3 Under clause 59 of the Regulation (see note 1)

4 Under sections 165 and 166 of the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*

### NSW Environment Protection Authority

Email: [info@epa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@epa.nsw.gov.au)

Website: [www.epa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au)

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