

The Handyman

Technology improves your home security options

As the summer vacation season heats up, homeowners' thoughts often turn to home security to make sure they aren't burglarized while they are away. But home break-ins don't just happen when you are on vacation.



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They also happen when you are at work or out for the evening. That's why it is important to take some proactive measures to ensure your home is protected.

According to a 2013 survey conducted by the Freedomia Group (freedoniagroup.com),

the demand for security products is expected to grow at a 6.5 percent pace in the North American market through 2016, and the strongest growth for security equipment will be in the residential sector stimulated by increasingly affordable systems and by a high perceived risk of crime.

While taking basic measures to keep burglars out, like deadbolts on the doors and leaving a radio and lights on when you are gone may deter some intruders, burglars can still find a way into your home if they really want to. That's why more people are going the home security system route.

When it comes to today's home security systems, there are generally three types to choose from: one that is professionally installed by a company and has 24/7 professional monitoring, a system with professional monitoring that you install yourself or a self-monitored system that you install.

The professionally installed and monitored system providers, companies such as ADT Services (adt.com) or Guardian Alarm (guardianalarm.com), can offer you a wide variety of equipment and service options along with 24/7 monitoring options that will notify both you and your local police, fire department or emergency personnel. Keep a watch on multiyear contracts, installation and activation charges along with the monthly fees for monitoring services.

Many of the companies that provide your home telephone, television and

Internet services have entered into the arena, including total home monitoring and automation. AT&T's Digital Life (my-digitallife.att.com) and Comcast's Xfinity Home Secure (comcast.com/home-security) currently offer a variety of home security products in Metro Detroit.

With computer, smartphone and tablet technology, most of these systems can be monitored and adjusted wherever you have Internet or Wi-Fi access.

Then there are the companies that will sell you the equipment, have you install it yourself and then they provide the monitoring capabilities, such as Front Point Security (secure.frontpointsecurity.com) and SimpliSafe (simplisafe.com), to name a few. These systems also have monthly monitoring fees involved, but some, like SimpliSafe, don't require a contract.

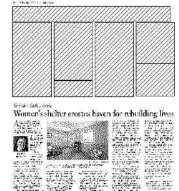
For a basic wired or wireless system that just has a siren, you can buy and install your own. Among the companies that make basic systems include Mace (mace.com), Ideal Security (idealinc.com) and Security Man (securitymaninc.com), to name a few.

If you want a basic, self-installed wireless system that you can monitor via your smartphone, tablet or computer, there are many companies entering this category. Systems on the market now include iSmart Alarm (ismartalarm.com) and Skylink (skylinkhome.com).

While these systems are strictly designed for home security, others enable you to also control and monitor numerous items in your home.

The Iris Home Management System exclusively available from Lowe's (lowes.com) uses a cloud platform and a combination of wireless sensors to enable you to control your thermostat, lighting, door locks, alarm system and cameras from a smartphone or computer. Basic service is free but the Premium control of the Iris system does involve a monthly fee.

Having a security system may save you money on your homeowner's insurance. According to Rick Sovel of Michigan Community Insurance Agency Inc., (248) 465-6200, michigancommunity.com, the largest discount is the monitored burglar and fire alarm discount where the homeowner must have a 24-hour outside ser-



vice that monitors both fire/heat and burglar alarm.

Whether you want a self-installed system or a professionally installed and monitored version, there are so many options today that you can surely find one that will fit your lifestyle and your budget.

If you would like to suggest a question for this column, e-mail askglenn@masterhandyman.com. If you want to talk to Glenn Haege, call his "Handyman Show" on WJR-AM (760) at (866) ASK GLENN, (866) 275-4536, between noon and 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. The "Handyman Show" can be heard on more than 130 radio stations.