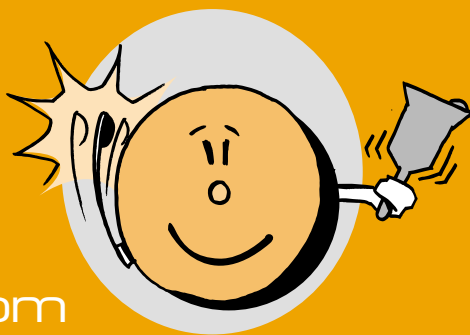




Department of
Environment and
Conservation (NSW)



managing noise from

intruder alarms

our environment

it's a living thing

Managing noise from intruder alarms

This brochure is about ways in which you can avoid having a faulty intruder alarm, and what to do if a neighbour's alarm unduly disturbs you.

Intruder alarm systems are used in cars and buildings to protect against theft. Under the Protection of the Environment Operations (Noise Control) Regulation 2000, alarms are only permitted to sound for a set time. The noise they make often disturbs neighbours and may result in owners being fined.

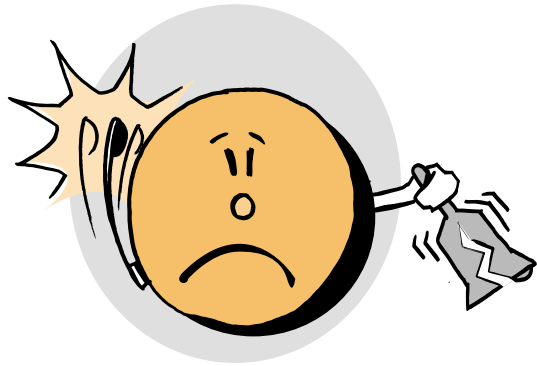
How long can an alarm legally sound?

For vehicles, it is an offence for an intruder alarm to sound for more than:

- > 45 seconds for cars manufactured after 1 September 1997
- > 90 seconds for older cars.

There is no offence when:

- > a vehicle window or windscreen was broken or removed
- > the motor vehicle was involved in an accident
- > the motor vehicle was broken into or an attempt was made to break into it.



For buildings, when noise from the alarm can be heard in any neighbouring residence, it should not sound in total for more than:

- > 5 minutes if installed after 1 December 1997
- > 10 minutes if installed before 1 December 1997.

If it keeps sounding beyond this period, it is probably faulty.

No distinction is made between an alarm ringing because of a break-in or because it is faulty.

The owner or operator of a vehicle or the occupier of the building is responsible for the alarm system, and could be fined if it sounds for longer than the allowed time.

How do I prevent my alarm from becoming faulty?

You should ensure that the alarm is properly maintained. This is particularly relevant when the vehicle or building is left unattended for long periods.

Here are some things you can do:

- > purchase a good quality alarm
- > ensure that detailed instructions are provided about operation and maintenance of the alarm system
- > follow the instructions about proper maintenance of the system
- > ask to see the security licence of the installer; the security industry register is at www.police.nsw.gov.au/sir or you can contact their staff on 1300 362 001
- > check that the system and installation are covered by warranty.

Be aware that the alarm system should be installed according to the Australian Standard for alarm installation. Building intruder alarms should be properly installed in accordance with AS2201.1-1998 *Intruder Alarm Systems – Systems Installed in Client's Premises*. Vehicle intruder alarms should be installed in accordance with AS/NZS 3749.2-1997 *Intruder Alarm Systems – Road Vehicles – Installation and Maintenance*.

Once the alarm system is properly installed, to keep it working properly:

- > use and maintain the alarm in accordance with the instructions
- > avoid altering any adjustments or sensitivity settings
- > for 'back to base' systems, arrange with the alarm company to control extended ringing
- > if possible, advise the council and the Police of a contact person you can trust who can enter the premises to turn off a faulty alarm when you are absent.

Is there an alternative to noisy alarms to protect property?

The National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council's research suggests that an electronic engine immobiliser is the best deterrent against car thieves. The NRMA has also said that immobilisers are the most effective protection against car theft.

Immobilisers do not present the potential noise problems associated with car alarms and are standard equipment on all standard passenger vehicles manufactured since July 2001. New technologies such as satellite tracking systems are also now available.

For buildings, continuously monitored 'back to base' alarm systems have features such as an alarm system that sounds inside

the house that can help deter intruders without disturbing the neighbourhood, and a telephone connection to a customer care centre to ensure a prompt response to any emergency.

Insurance or security companies can provide more information about systems not based on audible alarms, and their appropriateness for various vehicles and homes.

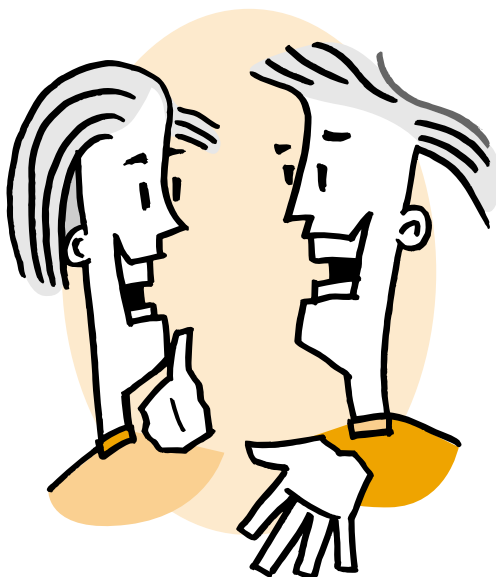
What can I do when neighbours' alarms keep sounding?

Contact the Police to find out if theft is the cause of the sounding alarm. Phone either 131 444 or the number of your local police station. Police officers are not allowed to enter unoccupied premises to stop faulty alarms ringing but can accompany council officers who are authorised to fulfil this function. Council officers require a warrant to enter an unattended residential building to deal with a faulty alarm.

Police and council officers can issue penalty notices for alarms that sound longer than the period. Council officers may also issue notices that require a faulty alarm to be repaired or replaced.

The following section on Penalties has more information.

For faulty car alarms, the Australian Car Alarm Traders Association (ACATA) operates an industry hotline on (02) 9744 5400.



A caller can phone the hotline number to complain about an alarm. They must give details of the location, type of vehicle, registration number and duration of the offence. Complaints from two different people must be received on any alarm situation before any action can be taken.

When hotline personnel receive the second complaint, they send an offence report to the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC). DEC may issue a defect notice. The notice gives the owner 7 days to present the vehicle to a member company of ACATA to have the alarm serviced, repaired, replaced or disconnected.

More information on ACATA is available on their website at: www.users.bigpond.com/acata.

Penalties

The council or Police may issue **penalty notices** for continuously or intermittently sounding vehicle or building alarms.

Penalties for individuals are:

- > \$200 if the alarm sounds for up to 24 hours
- > \$400 if it sounds for between 24 and 48 hours
- > \$600 if it sounds for longer than 48 hours.

The above penalties for individuals are doubled for corporations.

The council may issue a prevention notice for a faulty alarm, requiring the owner to repair or replace it. Where a prevention notice is breached, the council may issue a penalty notice of \$750 to an individual or \$1500 to a corporation.

For faulty car alarm systems, the council or Police can issue the owner of the motor vehicle with a vehicle defect notice under clause 26 of the Protection of the Environment Operations (Noise Control) Regulation 2000, requiring that the alarm system be repaired. If the notice is not obeyed, the vehicle's registration can be cancelled or suspended under section 165 of the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*, and the owner issued with a penalty of \$300 (\$600 for corporations).

