

DOMESTIC CCTV ADVICE

(The information contained in this leaflet is for your GUIDANCE ONLY)

The provision and use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) systems within domestic premises can be one possible solution to crime reduction although it should be considered as the last line of defence. Domestic CCTV tends to be provided from the 'cheaper' end of the market and as such generally provides little or no useful or useable identifiable images. This is primarily due to the lenses being for wide-angle viewing and providing images over a large area, persons therefore appear as very small images within this.

Determining The Need For CCTV

It is essential that a detailed survey of the domestic premises is undertaken to identify the key factors affecting the opportunity for crime or anti-social activity. A CCTV system is not on its own a solution to Crime and or Anti-social activity!

At this stage it is important to consider all available measures that could have a positive effect on the level of crime and anti-social activity and in doing so increase the feel-safe factor for the occupants of the premises. It may be that other less expensive crime prevention measures could be just as effective, depending on the circumstances.

It is also true to say that CCTV can only be effective if it is used in conjunction with other crime prevention measures. CCTV systems are only as good as the reaction or response to what is seen on the screen at the time or in post incident reviewing. Please remember if you record images that you cannot see persons or easily identify them, do not expect that a police officer will be able to either. When setting up cameras identification of persons is the crucial factor.

The development of an operational requirement statement is essential. This document is unique to each system and will be used by a contractor or person setting up the system, for design, performance specification and functionality of the system.

The operational requirement is a statement of problems, not solutions and highlights the areas to be covered by the systems and the times and description of the activities giving cause for concern.

At this stage it is also very important to decide what standard of image is required. This is very much dictated by the use the system will be put to, whether it is intended to monitor, detect, recognise or identify persons. Identification for court purposes will be a head and shoulders image of a person on screen.

Legal Issues

Under the Data Protection Legislation (Data Protection Act 1998) CCTV installations within domestic premises do not require to be registered with the Information Commissioner, formerly the Data Protection Registrar. There is therefore no requirement to keep records of recordings or place signage around the premises where CCTV is being used. However under the Human Rights Act legislation every effort must be made to ensure that collateral intrusion of adjacent premises or public areas is minimised. This may require the camera to be placed and angled in such a way to ensure that adjacent premises do not appear on the 'on screen' image. It should not be considered hugely problematic if this cannot be achieved in entirety.

Recording

Where a digital system is installed, ideally provision should be made to allow downloading that can be used for evidential purposes at court. The disc must contain the relevant video data and a proprietary viewer attachment in order for the data to be viewed.

The following and many other aspects must be carefully considered and complied with prior to instalment or use of a CCTV system on domestic premises.

- Do the entry /exit points to the premises require to be covered by a fixed camera
- Cameras must be installed out of reach to prevent unauthorised tampering
- There should be appropriate lighting at each camera to ensure that useful, useable images are obtained. Ideally white light sources are best.
- All installed cameras should be recorded. If a digital video recorder (DVR) is used, a minimum of 6 images per second setting. The recording device should also be set for the resolution rate at a minimum 2CIF and compression to low.
- The system must be audited and checked regularly to ensure consistent quality recording and that the time/date stamp is on and correct
- Images should be retained for not less than 7 days in order to ensure that effective downloads can be made
- The download should be made to one or more of, Data DVD, Data CD, USB2 compatible pen drive, or PAL compatible DVD (MPEG2 or VOB files)
- If the download is to a CD/DVD or pen drive, a windows compatible playback software file (licence free) in the original recording format must accompany the data
- A reviewing point should be available to enable visual playback from any of the cameras
- A suitable and appropriate maintenance contract should be in place for the system, which should include annual maintenance visits and a fault rectification timetable

FAQ's

Q – I wish to install a CCTV system on my domestic premises. How do I go about it?

A – The primary question you should ask yourself is 'Do I really need CCTV?' then 'How will CCTV assist me or the police in managing or reducing crime or anti-social behaviour at the premises?' If CCTV is definitely your preference formulate an operational requirement (O.R.) which outlines exactly what

the cameras are required to see, how it will be recorded and how the data will be stored and ultimately copied to data disc etc for evidential purposes. If you do not intend to install the CCTV yourself, the O.R. should be provided to 3 or more contractors who will specify and quote for a system. It will be your decision which quote best meets your requirements and it will be advantages to have a contractor 'prove' the system prior to awarding the contract.

Q – I have a CCTV system on my domestic premises. Do I need to register with the Police or Information Commissioner?

A – No. The Information Commissioner has indicated that CCTV systems installed on domestic dwellings do not require to be registered.

Q – What am I allowed to point the cameras at?

A – Anything within the curtilage of your own premises and your car parked on the street. You should not be viewing adjoining properties or premises opposite.

Q – How long should I keep recordings?

A – The Information Commissioner states that 28 days retention of data is required for 'not longer than is necessary'. If you can respond to incident and download the data within 7-14 days this could be considered not longer than is necessary.

Q – Will the police take recordings?

A – Police officers are duty bound to obtain evidence, however, in many cases of home CCTV the quality of recordings and the authenticity of the evidence can be called into question in criminal cases.

Q – Will police officers be able to help me download recordings from my system?

A – It is unlikely. There are hundreds of different CCTV systems available, which are in some cases quite complex.

Q – Can my neighbours complain about my use of CCTV?

A – Yes, however it is a civil matter not criminal so the complaint would have to be through a solicitor about a breach of their right to privacy. You should consult a solicitor if you receive a complaint.