



**Holiday safety tips**  
Don't let your vacation go up in flames

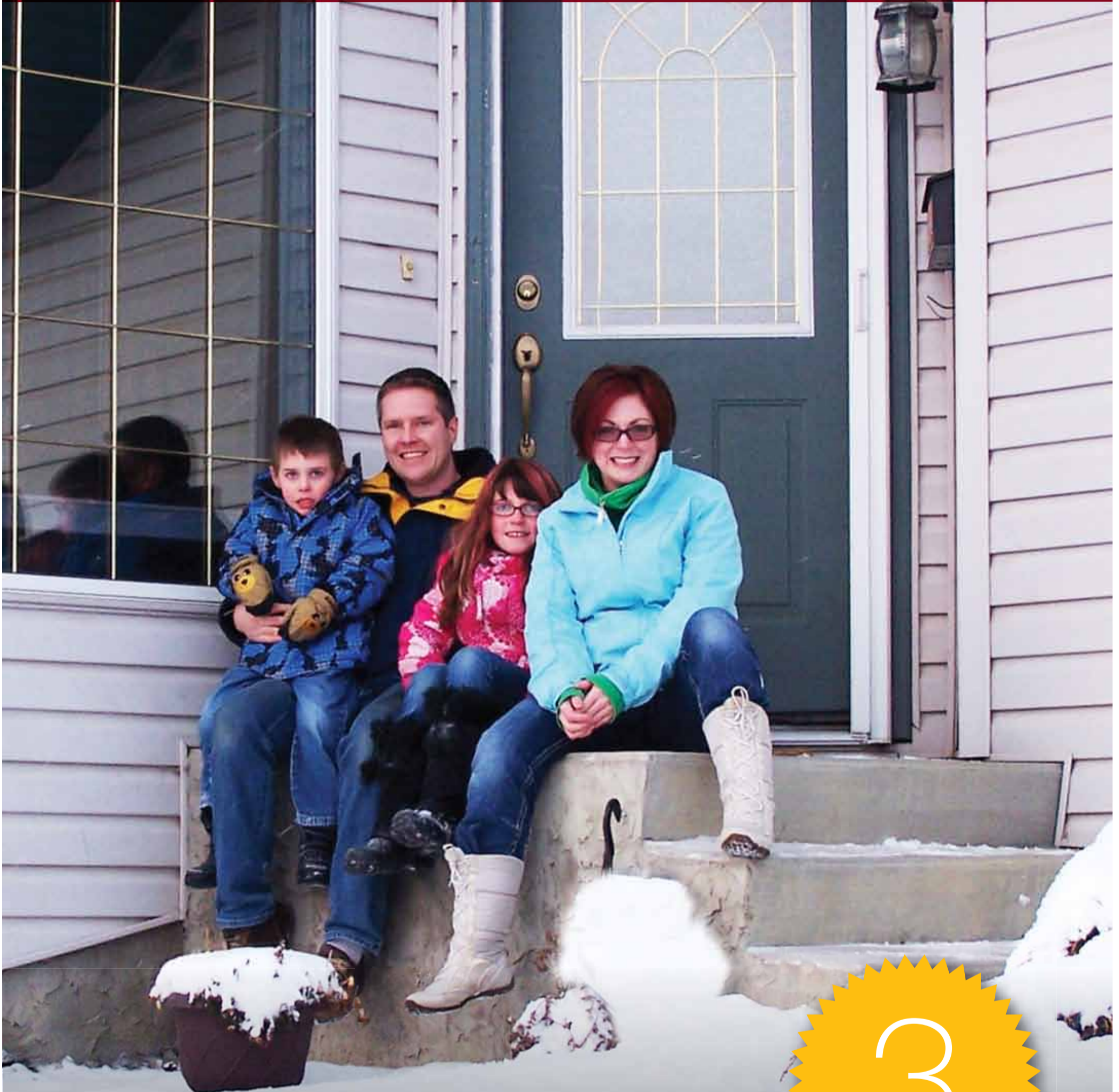


**False alarms**  
What you can do to stop them

**MEDIA PLANET**

December 2010

# HOME SECURITY



## SAVED BY THE BELL



FOR KEEPING YOUR HOME SECURE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

How the Christensens' monitored alarm system **saved** their most treasured possessions

PHOTO: PRIVATE

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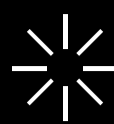
## CHALLENGES



TIP

1

DISPLAY YOUR ALARM COMPANY'S STICKER



WE RECOMMEND



PAGE 4

**Feel Secure**

No matter what needs monitoring in your home, you can create a customized solution.

"Today's alarm systems do more than just protect against intrusion."

**Fire extinguisher ABCDs** p. 5  
Do you know how to use one properly?

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Don't let your plans go up in flames.

The holidays pose an **increased risk** of home invasion. Fortunately, a barrage of security options exist for you to **customize** the kind of coverage you need.

# The Holidays require extra security measures

The holiday season is about spending time with your loved ones. However, it is also unfortunately a prime time for property theft, break-ins and burglars looking for presents and other valuable goods.

To help keep your home safe and secure during the upcoming holiday season, there are some simple, yet important steps that you can take.

## First line of defence

■ **Install a security system:** "In a [U.S.] industry survey of 1,000 public safety officials, 85 percent of police chiefs said security systems decrease the likelihood a home will be burglarized, and almost 90 percent felt security systems increased their chances of apprehending burglars."

■ **Display your alarm company's sticker:** Placing your alarm company's decal in a noticeable area will help to discourage break-ins. Thieves always look for the easiest targets.

■ **Deter break-ins:** Keep gifts and valuables where they can't be seen from the outside. Also, be discreet



"Eighty five percent of police chiefs said security systems decrease the likelihood a home will be burglarized..."  
\*Source: National Burglar Fire Alarm Association, Electronic Security Association

**JF Champagne**  
Executive Director  
CANASA

bringing presents into the house. Expensive items can make your home more attractive to burglars.

■ **Make access difficult:** Keep doors and windows locked. Equip your entry doors with deadbolts and install outdoor motion-sensor lights. Trim shrubbery to eliminate hiding places.

## If you go away

■ **Don't advertise your vacation:** Many people post holiday plans on Facebook or other social media sites. However, updating your status with vacation notices can be an open invite for thieves to pay a visit.

■ **Make sure your house always appears occupied:** Install timers to

internal and external lights, and set TVs and radios to turn on and off on a consistent schedule. Stop your mail service and ask a neighbour to put out your garbage.

■ **Safeguard your home:** Before you leave, turn off appliances, lock doors and windows, and don't forget to turn on your alarm system.

## To reduce the risk of false alarms

■ **Update your call list:** If handing over your keys to a caretaker while you're on vacation, make sure that person is on your alarm monitoring company's "call list." This will allow your caretaker to address issues in your absence, including false alarms.

■ **Give your caretaker your alarm**

**passcode:** Ensure your caretaker has your alarm passcode and the telephone number for your monitoring station. In case of an accidental false alarm, they will be able to notify the monitoring company and possibly eliminate the risk of incurring false alarm fees.

■ **Notify your monitoring station of any absence.** Tell your alarm monitoring station the dates of departure and return for your vacation, so they can modify response procedures.

Security professionals play an important role in your home protection plan. The Canadian Security Association (CANASA) represents more than 1300 security organizations across Canada, including alarm installers, monitoring companies, and consultants. All of our members adhere to a code of ethics and proper standards, so you can be sure your home's safety and security needs will be taken care of by a qualified professional.

To learn more about CANASA and find a security professional in your area, visit [canasa.org](http://canasa.org)

# What to look for in a monitored home security company

Here is a list of things you should consider to narrow your search once you've made the decision to purchase a monitored home security system:

■ **Research your options:** What is their reputation and history? How large is the company? Is it a local company or nationwide? Check with the Better Business Bureau if you're unsure.

■ **How "new" is the home security product you are installing?** Today's home security systems are far superior to those available in past years. Make sure you are getting the most recent product available.

## Does the home security company offer central station monitoring?

A security system is only as good as the company monitoring it. A reputable home security company should provide its own central station monitoring instead of having another company monitor for them.



**Joe O'Connell**  
Vice President Residential Direct Sales  
ADT North America

"The size and layout of your home must be taken into consideration when designing a security system."

■ **Does the home security company's monitoring facility have back-up systems and are those facilities ULC-listed?** Monitoring facilities that have a ULC rating (Underwriters Laboratory rating) have gone the extra step to ensure that they have reliable systems that will

not fail.

■ **Does the home security company's monitoring facility have back-up systems in case of power failures?** Find out if the monitoring facility has gas or electric-powered generators as well as battery back-up to ensure that monitoring continues despite power failures. Monitoring facilities should have at least two types of back-up power supplies

## Spend time thinking about the "amount" of security you need:

The size and layout of your home and property must be taken into consideration when designing a security system. However, the basic elements of a standard system include a key pad, a control panel, a siren, an inside motion detector, at least two door contacts, as well as connection to a central monitoring station.

■ **Secure your home from "hidden" household dangers, too:** Don't forget to equip your home with effective smoke, fire, carbon monoxide and flood detection systems as these are hidden dangers to your home and family. Be sure to also

equip your home with fire extinguishers and develop a fire escape plan and route that is familiar to all household occupants.

■ **Ease-of-use and convenience:** Many homeowners admit that they don't use their home security systems to the full extent because they are inconvenient or "scary" to use. When choosing a home security system, be sure to choose something that can be armed and disarmed easily by all family members.

■ **Make sure the system you install has a battery back-up unit:** A security system is only useful when it's active and working - even when there is a power failure. Make sure the system you install has a battery back-up unit so protection is continuous.

■ **What other benefits does the company offer besides installation and monitoring?** Check to see what other benefits the home security company offers. You could potentially save on your Homeowner's Insurance.

# MEDIA PLANET

HOME SECURITY  
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# PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT

TIP  
**2**  
BE AWARE OF POTENTIAL HAZARDS THAT MAY REQUIRE MONITORING

**Question:** With the various threats that can face your home at any time, how can you ensure your house's—and family's—safety?

**Answer:** In addition to protecting against intruders, integrated security devices can monitor those hidden potential problem spots.

# Feel secure, no matter where you are

**“I remember the day well. We had taken our children tobogganing on the local hill to wear off some steam after having been cooped up in the house during a winter cold snap.**

Coming home, we were talking about having hot chocolate and what we were going to do over the Christmas holidays. As we rounded the corner, my heart sank. There were fire trucks with lights flashing arriving at my house. Rushing toward the house, I could see the smoke swirling inside.

We were lucky that day. A pot left on the stove, which had not been completely turned off, could have caused some serious damage. What saved us were our monitored smoke detectors. When they went off, the monitoring station alerted the fire department, which arrived just in time. Because of that incident, I'm forever thankful that when we got our alarm system installed, we decided to add the



monitored detectors.”

**More than just intruder protection**

Today's alarm systems do more than help protect against intrusion. You can integrate devices such as smoke detectors that alert a monitoring station before costly damage occurs, even when you're not home, as in my case. The National Fire Protection Association states that one home fire is reported every 83 seconds. For that reason, it's critical that you have a smoke detector installed on every floor in your home.

**Hidden threats**

In the chilly Canadian winters, a furnace that shuts off can be dangerous, not only because it could mean chilly temperatures inside, but pipes could freeze and burst. Low temperature sensors can detect when the mercury dips below a certain point in your home, and will send an alert via

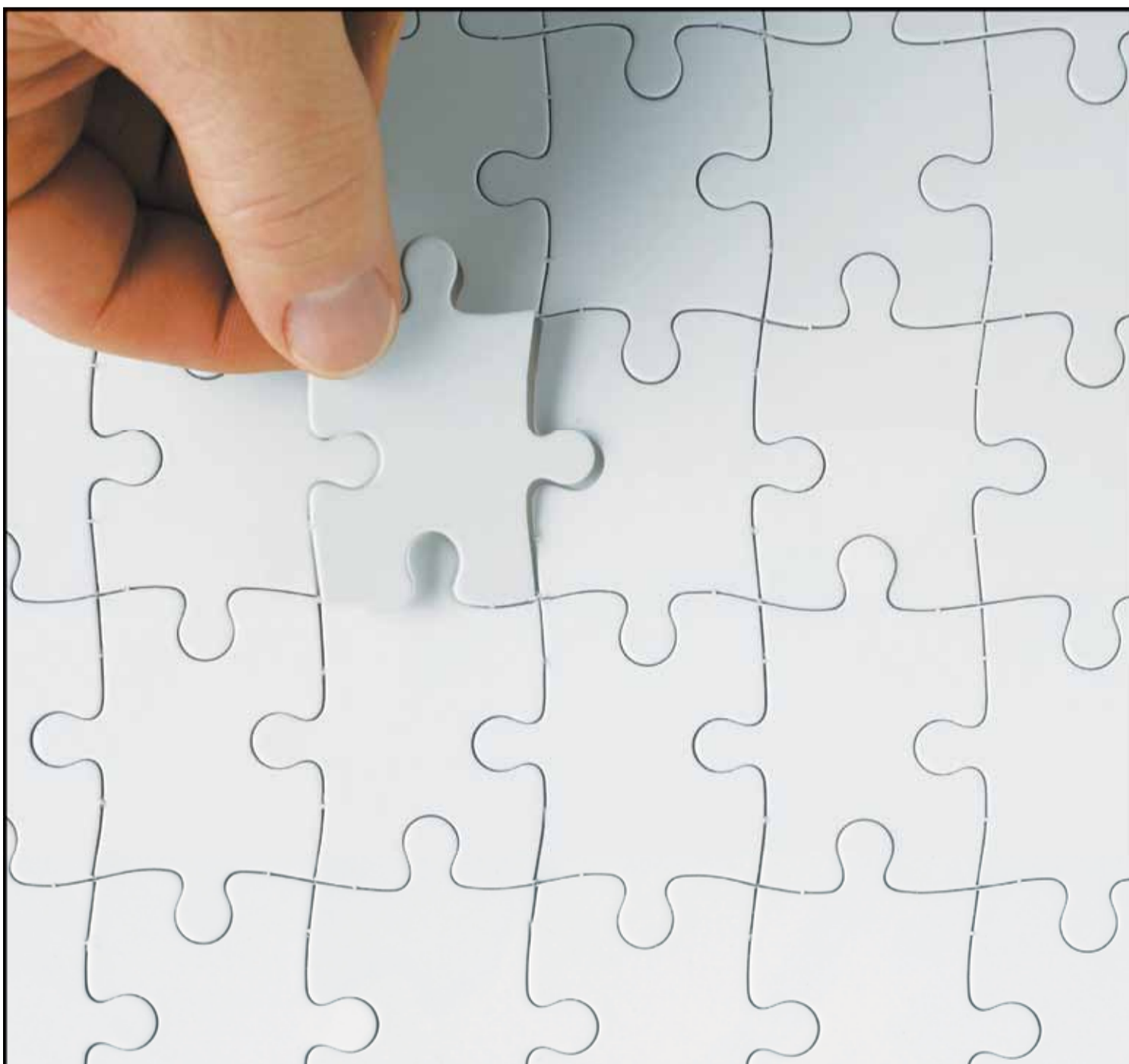
your alarm system to the monitoring station. Water sensors help detect moisture leaks before costly damage occurs. The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation estimates that basement flooding insurance claims amount to about \$140 million a year. That's 30,000 to 40,000 claims a year with an average cost of \$3,000 to \$5,000 each. Receiving an alert when water is accumulating where it shouldn't can help reduce those amounts. Also, if you travel or are away from home a lot, it's important to check with your insurance provider. Many require you to have these types of sensors or have someone checking your house regularly for potentially damaging situations. If you don't, then your insurance may not cover any damage.

**An invisible and deadly force**

They call it the “silent killer” for a reason. Dangerous, odorless, and colourless, carbon monoxide can build up in

your home undetected. At low levels it can cause health issues, particularly for children, the elderly and those with respiratory problems. At higher levels, it's deadly. Health Canada estimates that over 400 people died from carbon monoxide poisoning in the last decade. Victims often don't realize anything has gone wrong. Having a carbon monoxide detector integrated with your alarm system means that your monitoring station is alerted to potential dangers and can notify you or the appropriate emergency personnel.

Not only can these devices help keep your loved ones safe and protect your property—having them can help you save money. Many insurance companies offer additional discounts for having monitored smoke and environmental sensors, on top of the discounts you get for having a monitored security system, meaning you can save as much as 25 percent of your home insurance.



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INSPIRATION



1. The Christensens nearly lost their home to unstable Holiday decorations.  
2. A before shot of the fire culprit: a highly-flammable candle centerpiece.  
3. The Christensens are now big advocates of having a monitored fire alarm in the home.  
PHOTO: PRIVATE

When the Christensens hired an alarm company to **monitor** their home, they thought the company was there to protect them from intruders, not monitor their fire alarm. This service **saved their home.**

# Saved by the bell: How a family avoided tragedy

**HOW WE MADE IT**

**We've heard it all before—that fire alarms save lives and protect property, but for the Christensens, a fire alarm meant the difference between a small fire and an inferno in their home.**

Last Christmas almost went up in flames for the Edmonton, Alberta family. On December 20, 2009, a minor fire started in their home. They could have lost everything, if not for the quick thinking and diligence of their home security services provider.

The episode began at breakfast time when the Christensens lit a candle with highly flammable ornamentation around it that had been made by their young son Aaryn. They placed the burning

candle on a window sill in the dining room of their home.

Pamyla soon left for work, followed a little later by Bruce with the two children. He set the alarm as they left, but did not extinguish the candle, despite Pamyla's warning him to do so. "I felt awful about that pretty soon," he said.

An hour after leaving the house Bruce got a call from a friend who had been contacted by ADT. Bruce had missed a call from ADT on his cell phone and the company had contacted the friend who had been listed as a secondary contact to alert him that there had been multiple alarm triggers from the house.

He rushed home, to find two fire trucks and an ambulance parked outside his house. Hoses snaked through the front door and smoke everywhere..

"The firemen stopped me and confirmed who I was and that the house was empty. I told him that only our family pet was in the house. A few minutes later a fireman in full gear carried our feisty Siamese cat Simon from the basement. He was OK, and so was Simon!"

**Like a candle in the wind**

It is likely that the candle burned down, setting the wooden window frame on fire. It then fell on to a hardwood floor that had some children's toys and papers on it. That the fire didn't get very big—about the size of a small campfire according to Pamyla—was due to the quick arrival of the fire team.

The inner pane of the window had broken and the house was full of smoke with plastic bits in it. Any minute, the outer pane of the win-

dow could have broken and oxygen from outside could have contributed to a much worse situation.

"Another five to 10 minutes and we wouldn't have had a house," Bruce said.

**Costly damage**

The smoke wreaked a lot of damage, and repairs are still ongoing. Still, the Christensens were only out of their home for seven weeks. They had to replace the kids' bed frames, a computer desk and area rugs. Food and plastic containers were discarded, and the dry cleaning bill came to \$23,000. The total cost for repairs and replacing items is currently between \$75,000-\$90,000.

The most important thing was that they did not lose any loved ones, or valuable mementos.

"We had ADT monitor our house so that I could sleep at

night knowing that the family would have some protection from home invasion. We wanted to know beforehand if someone had broken into our home and was waiting inside. I didn't know that ADT monitored our fire alarm until that day," Pamyla said.

Bruce tells nearly everyone he meets they should have a fire alarm at home, and someone monitoring it. He also recommends people make a video recording of their home and contents—in case what happened to him happens to someone else.

DAMIEN LYNCH  
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## Do you know your fire extinguisher ABCD's?

**Many people have a fire extinguisher, but they may not have the slightest idea when it comes to using one.**

Everyone should have at least one fire extinguisher at home, but it's just as important to ensure you have the proper type of fire extinguisher. Fire protection experts recommend that you have three extinguishers in your home: One for the kitchen, one for the basement and one for the garage. If there's a fire, get everyone outside and have someone call the fire department. Only then should you attempt to fight a small fire. If the fire becomes large, get out. Fire extinguishers are designed to put

out small fires, not large ones.

**The ABCD's of fire extinguishers**

Fire extinguishers are divided into four categories, A, B, C, or D, based on different types of fires. The following is a quick guide to help choose the appropriate extinguisher for the right type of fire.

■ Class A extinguishers are for ordinary combustibles materials such as paper, wood, drapes and upholstery.

■ Class B extinguishers are for flammable and combustible liquids such as fuel oil, gasoline, paint, grease in a frying pan, solvents and other flammable liquids.

■ Class C extinguishers are for

electrical equipment such as appliances, wiring, overheated fuse boxes, conductors, and other electrical sources.

■ Class D extinguishers are for metals such as magnesium, potassium and sodium, and are commonly found in a chemical laboratory.

A multi-purpose dry chemical extinguisher labelled ABC puts out most types of fires: wood, paper, cloth, flammable liquids and electrical fires. If you plan on buying more than one, Fire Prevention Canada suggest purchasing a BC for the kitchen, an A for the living room and an ABC for the basement and garage.

**Learn how to PASS**

Before using your fire extinguisher, make sure to read the instructions. Although there are many different types of fire extinguishers, all of them operate in a similar manner.

■ Pull the pin. Some units require the releasing of a lock latch, pressing a puncture lever, inversion or other motion.

■ Aim the extinguisher nozzle (horn) at the base of the fire.

■ Squeeze or press the handle.

■ Sweep from side-to-side at the base of the fire and discharge the contents of the extinguisher.

Extinguishers should be installed near an escape route and be easily accessible in case of an

emergency. They should be maintained on a regular basis, at least once a year. Ask the retailer how to have your extinguisher serviced and inspected.

Refill the extinguisher after ANY use. A partially used extinguisher might as well be empty. Also, ensure that your fire extinguisher is labelled by a nationally recognized testing laboratory.

Courtesy of WEBSITE

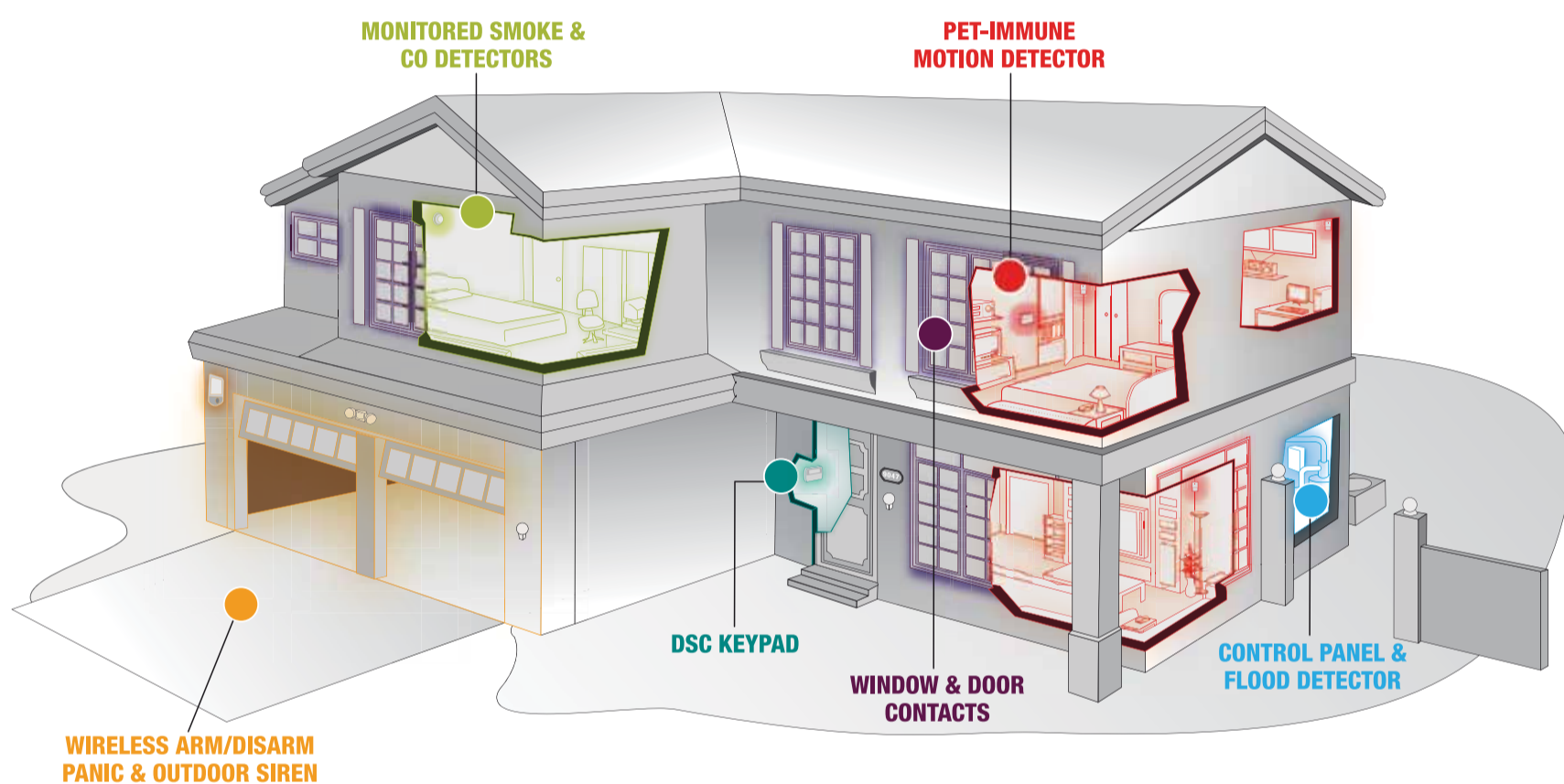


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NEWS

TIP  
**3**  
MAKE SURE YOU UPDATE YOUR ALARM CALL LIST



**Holiday safety tips**

- Home Safety:**
- Make sure to not overload extension cords with holiday decorations.
  - Do not decorate chandeliers with flammable materials. Light bulbs can get hot enough to ignite the flammable material.
  - If you own or rent property, prevent a slip and fall situation, salt/shovel walkways and driveways; more guests visit over the holidays.
  - If you're planning on travelling over the holidays, ask someone to watch your house; install automatic light timers as extra precaution.
  - If you're hosting holiday parties, have taxicab numbers on hand or be prepared to have overnight guests!
  - Never toss wrapping paper or gift boxes in a wood burning fireplace. These materials increase the risk of a chimney fire.

- Christmas tree safety:**
- If purchasing a live tree, make sure it's fresh and well watered. Cut approx. 2 inches off the trunk to help the tree absorb water. Check for freshness by tapping it on the ground - dropping needles, indicate a dry, highly flammable tree. Needles should be hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, they do not break. Remove a real tree within 10 to 14 days; otherwise it can start to dry out and pose a fire hazard.
  - If you plan on purchasing or already own an artificial tree, double check that it comes with a label certifying it's fire resistant. When purchasing an artificial tree, make sure it's 'fire resistant.' Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly. Real and artificial trees should be placed away from any fireplace, radiator or vent - the heat will dry the tree, creating a fire hazard.
  - Check tree lights annually. Replace lights if there are broken/missing bulbs, or if wires are frayed/exposed. Check for overheating.

- Shopping safety:**
- When shopping, close car windows and lock all doors. Keep purchased gifts hidden in the trunk of your car.
  - If you plan to purchase gifts online, make sure the site is secure to protect against identity theft; look for https to verify security.

**For more information regarding how you can better protect the items you care about, please visit [thedominion.ca](http://thedominion.ca).**

# A secure solution for everyone

**SHOWCASE**

**■ Question:** Are you looking for a home security system to provide additional comfort and peace of mind?  
**■ Answer:** A slew of diverse products and technologies are available to suit the various needs of different types of consumers.

**It is no longer only the rich that can afford home security systems.**

Technological advancements are dramatically changing the security industry, offering diverse products that help protect homes against theft, and monitor the activities of children and the frail-aged.

**All the bells and whistles**

The products run the gamut from the most basic security set ups to high-tech integrated systems. Basic technology might include products for intrusion and/or fire protection, carbon monoxide detection, flooding and temperature protection,

monitoring and a guard response service. More advanced emerging technology allows for thermostat and lighting control, and remote camera viewing from anywhere at a very affordable cost.

According to Patrice De Luca, Vice-President of Marketing & Business Development at Reliance Protectron Security Services, upfront costs are not prohibitive—security products can cost anywhere within the range of \$400 and \$800 for the average home. Monthly service charges are additional, between \$25 to \$55 a month.

**Alarming crime statistics**

According to a Statistics Canada July 2010 bulletin, the number of break-ins reported to the police across the country have been declining since peaking in the early 1990s. Still, Canadian police reported more than 205,000 break-ins in 2009, of which six in 10 were residential

There were about 108,000 motor vehicle thefts across Canada in 2009, averaging 300 vehicles stolen each day. However, these figures are only

the tip of the iceberg—many more such crimes remain unreported. Property crime losses range from little or nothing of value to materials costing hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Crime statistics, combined with technological advances, are expected to drive demand for home security systems over the next decade. Competitive pricing will also be a key factor. Today, an estimated 15 percent to 20 percent of Canadian homes have some form of home security, but better technology and lower prices could drive this figure up to 35 percent, predicts De Luca.

**An electronic guardian “angel”**

When home owners travel for their holidays, their homes are left untended for long periods, but the latest technology in home security systems allows owners to monitor their homes from afar through the Internet, iPhone or BlackBerry. The home security system is also linked to a remote monitoring centre that protects the home 24 hours a day.

The system can be used to control the home thermostat remotely or to warn of a heating system failure.

Teenagers may not be too enthralled with this feature, but home security systems can tell parents if their children are at home when they are supposed to be, or if they have friends over for unauthorized visits.

De Luca expects that adult children will also be able to watch over their frail parents without crowding their personal space—over the next 10 to 20 years, home security systems will tip adult children off when their parents are awake and asleep, when they are at home or out.

Ultimately, a home security system can help offer comfort and peace of mind to the home owner. “The new home security systems make it sort of like having a nanny around to look after things while you are out,” says De Luca.

DAMIEN LYNCH  
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## How you can prevent false alarms

**False alarms have been a hot topic lately and for good reason.**

They tax police resources and heighten pressure on authorities to manage first responder dispatches. This can result in changes to alarm by-laws and increased false alarm fines to residents.

By working together, the general public, security professionals and police departments can reduce false alarms.

Consumer error is the number one cause of false dispatches. A false dispatch occurs when an alarm system is set off, police are called, and there is no intruder or emergency situation.

**Here are a few tips on how to make the best use of your security system by reducing false alarms.**

- **Ask for Enhanced Call Verification and provide multiple contacts:** “Enhanced Call Verification” means that your monitoring company will try to get in touch with two or more of your contacts to confirm your alarm’s validity before issuing a dispatch. Communities that require Enhanced Call Verification have seen reductions of unnecessary law enforcement response between 30 and 50 percent.

- **Maintain your “call list”:** Keep your “call list” up to date with current phone numbers for you and your contacts. With the right contact information, monitoring stations can be proactive in determining if police should be dispatched to your home.

- **Schedule annual inspections:** Request annual maintenance inspections to ensure proper performance of your alarm system. Also, don’t forget to replace your back-up battery every three to five years.

- **Properly train caretakers:** Ensure all key holders are trained

in the proper use of your alarm system and know your passcode and monitoring station’s number in case the alarm is accidentally set off. Never give a key to someone who isn’t familiar with the system.

- **Monitor your home’s environment:** After any household changes, such as remodeling, contact your alarm company to ensure they won’t affect your system. Plants or curtains that are too close to drafty areas or a new pet that enters an armed room can trigger an alarm.

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