

HOME SECURITY

Home security system can bring peace of mind if you choose the right option

BY JANA SOELDNER DANGER
Special to South Florida Home

Thinking of putting in a home security system? You're not alone. Interest in home security systems is growing, said Andy Garcia, a safety expert at Safe-home.org, a San Diego-based firm that researches security and safety products and companies. "The smart home revolution has fueled and renewed interest in home security systems," he said.

How to choose the right system?

"The first step is to identify what you want to protect," said Rebecca Edwards, senior security writer and safety expert at Salt Lake City-based Safewise, a company that researches and provides information on a variety of safety-related topics. "Is it people, pets, property or a combination? Budget is also important."

Think about your lifestyle and environment. "Consider whether you own your home or rent, how many points of access and egress there are, your communications and networks, and who occupies your space," Garcia said. "Doing your research before choosing a system is a must."

Think about your ability to respond if there's an issue. "Do you want to just look and see what's going on, or do you want 24/7 monitoring?" said Javier Garcia, senior vice president of marketing for Comcast. "If you see something happening, what are you going to do about it? Do you want to be able to do every-



Courtesy of Safewise

A competent DIYer may be able to install home security features.

thing remotely?"

Maurizio Perjoves of P&O Global Technologies, a security camera company in Fort Lauderdale, recommends that at a minimum, a home should have two cameras, and possibly three: "One to cover the front door, and another to cover where you park your cars," he said. "If the home has water access in the back, you should have a camera there. You want the cameras to be visible, because a larger camera can be intimidating."

On the other hand, it depends on the individual. "The minimum, or necessary level of security is whatever makes you comfortable," Andy Garcia said. "It's a personal preference, and the good news is that there are a lot of systems on the market that offer versatile setups and custom packages."

NOT JUST ALARMS

Today's security systems offer many different functions. "They can provide much more than intruder

protection," Edwards said. "They can help you manage your whole life."

"Technology has evolved so they're no longer just alarm systems," Javier Garcia said. "You can integrate them to turn on lights and adjust the thermostat. Anything that's connected to the Internet can be managed."

But don't forget the budget. "It's tempting to go out and get all kinds of things you don't need," Edwards said. "You don't have to risk financial security to have



Courtesy of Safewise

It can be convenient to be able to operate a security control panel with a smartphone app.

home security."

DIY OR PROFESSIONAL?

Many products today can be installed by a competent do-it-yourselfer. "With wireless technology, professional installation isn't necessarily a must," Andy Garcia said. "Changing technology has given consumers systems that are pretty much plug-and-play, and that lowers the barrier for entry, especially for renters and young people. You can get some really impressive cameras and self-monitoring setups for as little as \$100."

On the other hand, people who consider themselves technologically challenged might want to consider professional installation. "They'll come in and walk you through everything," Edwards said. "They'll set it up, train you how to use it, and identify potential vulnerabilities. They'll also give you an assessment of what they think you need to keep you safe. But the risk is that you might upgrade too much."



Courtesy of P&O Global Technologies

A camera at the front door allows a homeowner to see who comes and goes.

USER-FRIENDLINESS

A homeowner who does choose to install components him- or herself should be sure they're manageable. It's a good idea to have features that will connect to a smart home hub like Alexa or Google Home so they can communicate with each other, Edwards said.

It's also a good idea to have components that can be controlled with an app on a smart phone. "Mobile apps are incredibly useful," Andy Garcia said. "They give you all the power that your home security control panel does while allowing you to manage your system from wherever you are."

But with a piecemeal system, there's a danger of

it becoming too complicated. "It's best to have one app so everything works together," Edwards said. "If you have to go to 10 different apps, it's not user-friendly."

"Grabbing a basic system on a whim isn't the worst decision you could make, but it's potentially limiting," Andy Garcia said. "While you might be able to upgrade later, your options may be limited. Not all systems and brands play nicely with each other."

A homeowner should choose options that fit his or her lifestyle but don't break the budget. Here are some ideas:

SEE HOME, 4C

Q&A

Here's how to build your own bridge through the garden

BY JAMES DULLEY
Creators Syndicate

Dear James: I am planning to sell my house, so I want to improve the landscaping. I think a small decorative bridge would look nice over a gully near the flower gardens. How should I build it, and what material is best? — Ron M.

Dear Ron: Adding a bridge to your garden — or any location in your backyard — can enhance the landscaping and give it a professional look. You might consider moving soil to create a gully in the flower garden itself so the bridge can be integrated into it. Use the dirt to fill in the existing gully.

Another option is to install a pond under the bridge. With all the pond kits available at landscaping stores and home centers, installing a pond is not a major project. The most difficult part is digging the hole for the pond liner, especially if you have hard clay soil.

You really have two viable material options: pressure-treated lumber and vinyl. Using pressure-treated lumber offers the greatest design flexibility, particularly if you plan to build a decorative bridge. Vinyl materials, used for decks, can be used to build a flat bridge with a straight railing.

Since you indicated you would like a decorative



Creators.com Bob Kast

bridge, select lumber as the primary building material. Arched bridges look the best, but building one requires a fairly high level of carpentry skills. Sticking with a flat bridge would be best. Adding a fancy railing will give the bridge a decorative appearance.

Before buying the lumber and getting out the saw, do some planning. Determine how the bridge will be used. If it is strictly decorative, it

will only have to support the weight of a person or two, so its width is not critical.

If the bridge will be used to roll a lawn mower or wheelbarrow over it, then you must consider the bridge's width and its strength. You don't want to build a flimsy bridge and then have it collapse when the new owners roll something heavy over it.

Measure your garden tools and make the bridge at


least 1 foot wider than the widest object you imagine will pass over it. Unless the bridge is extremely short, it would be wise to add vertical center supports on each side. These supports can be recessed from the edges so they are not noticeable.

When building a (strictly) walking bridge, it is acceptable to have a step at both ends. This actually looks more decorative. Obviously, if you are planning to roll items over the bridge, the ends must be flush with the ground. For flush ends, use pavers or natural stone at either end so the lumber does not contact the soil.

With your plan in hand, build the bridge in a manner similar to a long, narrow deck. Keep in mind that the bridge will look much better if it is level along its length and width. Locate level beginning and ending points and stretch level strings between them. You can use a standard carpenter's level to check across the width.

For bridges less than 8 feet long, 2-by-8 joists on 16-inch centers (or less, to space them evenly) should be adequate. For bridges up to 12 feet long, use 2-by-10s, and for bridges up to 18 feet long, use 2-by-12s. Any longer than that you should use an intermediate support beam.

Send your questions to Here's How, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH, 45244 or visit www.dulley.com.



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Miami Single-Family Home Sales, Total Transactions Increase in April

Miami-Dade County existing single-family home sales and total transactions increased year-over-year in April, according to the MIAMI Association of Realtors (MIAMI) and the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) system.

Miami single-family home transactions increased 3.9 percent, from 1,217 to 1,265. Total sales for all properties increased 1.1 percent, from 2,601 to 2,629.

Total Miami Home Sales Rise in April

Total Miami-Dade County Home Sales rose 1.1 percent year-over-year, from 2,601 to 2,629. Miami single-family home transactions increased 3.9 percent, from 1,217 to 1,265. Miami existing condo sales decreased 1.4 percent, from 1,384 to 1,364.

Total sales volume increased to \$1.23 billion last month from \$1.19 billion in April 2018. Single-family home dollar volume increased 6 percent from \$633.3 million to \$671 million. Condo dollar volume decreased 1.3 percent from \$565.4 million to \$557.8 million.

Miami's Cash Buyers Represent Almost Double the National Figure

Miami cash transactions comprised 34.8 percent of April 2019 total closed sales, compared to 38.9 percent last year. Miami cash transactions are almost double the national figure (20 percent).

Miami's high percentage of cash sales reflects South Florida's ability to attract a diverse number of international home buyers, who tend to purchase properties in all cash.

Condominiums comprise a large portion of Miami's cash purchases as 48.8 percent of condo closings were made in cash in March compared to 19.8 percent of single-family home sales.


7.42 Consecutive Years of Price Appreciation in Miami

Miami-Dade County single-family home prices increased 3.2 percent in April 2019, increasing from \$345,000 to \$356,000. Miami single-family home prices have risen for 89 consecutive months, a streak of 7.42 years. Existing condo prices increased 2.8 percent, from \$241,325 to \$248,000. Condo prices have increased or stayed even in 92 of the last 95 months.

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