

Appropriate Use of Duress, Hold-Up and Panic Alarms

Duress, hold-up and panic alarms are designed to allow alarm users to activate the system under specific emergency situations when they are unable to dial 911. These types of alarms generally result in a heightened response, sometimes with lights and sirens, due to a raised likelihood of a criminal event in progress. Therefore, activating these types of alarms in non-emergency situations could result in stiff penalties and fines to the alarm user. It is very important that alarm users understand that activation of these types of alarms in non-emergency or improper situations may place law enforcement officers, alarm users and the general public at increased risk.

What are these types of alarms and when do I use them?

A duress alarm is a **silent** alarm, which is generated when an alarm user enters a designated code into the alarm system keypad. This designated code is different from the regular arm and disarm codes. It alerts the monitoring company that the alarm user is being forced to turn the alarm system off against the user's will.



A Commercial hold-up, panic, or robbery alarm, is a **silent** alarm, which is generated when an alarm user manually activates a device (button, floor pedal, money clip, key fobs and pendants, etc.) that is intended to alert the monitoring company that a robbery is in progress.

A Residential panic alarm is generally an **audible** alarm, which is generated by the manual activation of a device intended to alert the monitoring company that a life threatening or emergency situation is occurring, much like the hold-up alarm but not indicating a robbery in progress.

When **NOT** to use your duress, hold-up or panic alarm:

- When you need fire or medical assistance
- To check to see how long it takes law enforcement officers to respond
- When someone has shoplifted merchandise
- To report a fight in the parking lot
- When an underage person attempts to buy alcohol
- To report that a vehicle has been stolen
- Any other circumstance in which you are not in a life-threatening or emergency situation

When it is appropriate to use your duress, hold-up or panic alarm:

- In emergency situations when you are unable to dial 9-1-1 for law enforcement assistance
- During a robbery or hold-up in progress
- When you are physically threatened



The use of duress alarms is not recommended for the general public. Duress alarms should be reserved for those alarm users, who are at greater risk, because they have custody of large amounts of money or highly valuable goods or for those who can otherwise demonstrate an extreme need for a duress alarm. Effective use of duress alarms requires special training and frequent drills to prevent false activations.

Call 9-1-1 for the appropriate police, fire or medical emergency response. Only use panic buttons if you are unable to dial 9-1-1.