



# Buyer's Guide: Commercial Intruder Alarm Systems

## Guide to SSAIB Approved & Compliant Intruder Alarm Systems

Here is a comprehensive Buyer's Guide for customers considering a SSAIB Approved and Compliant Intruder Alarm System, covering types of signalling, detection grades, detection types, integration with other systems, installation challenges, and a buyer's checklist.

### Overview

An SSAIB-approved intruder alarm system offers certified, insurance-recognised protection for residential, commercial, and industrial premises. SSAIB (Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board) approval ensures the system is installed, maintained, and monitored to rigorous industry standards.

This guide outlines the types of systems available, signalling options, integration capabilities, and installation considerations—helping you ask the right questions, avoid common pitfalls, and make informed decisions.

### Key Considerations Before Buying

What is SSAIB Approval?

SSAIB is a UKAS-accredited certification body. Choosing an SSAIB-certified installer ensures:

- The system meets industry best practices
- Installers are vetted, trained, and insured
- The installation is accepted by police and insurance companies



## System Design Considerations

### 1. Risk Assessment & Grading

A Security Risk Assessment should be carried out to determine:

- Intruder risk level
- Insurance requirements
- System Grade (1 to 4 – see below)

| Grade | Suitable For                 | Description                                     |
|-------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Low-risk homes               | Basic deterrence, opportunistic theft           |
| 2     | Homes/small offices          | Increased threat, limited knowledge by intruder |
| 3     | High-value homes, commercial | Intruders likely to be aware of alarm systems   |
| 4     | High security/commercial     | Sophisticated, planned attacks likely           |

Always confirm grade requirements with your insurance provider.

## Types of Signalling

Signalling refers to how the alarm communicates with you or a monitoring centre when triggered:

### Audible-Only (Bells-Only)

- Sirens activate locally on detection
- No police or ARC notification
- Suitable for lower-risk premises



## Remote Signalling Options

### 1. DualCom / Dual Path

- Uses both IP (internet) and GSM (mobile) networks
- If one path fails, the other ensures signal delivery
- Used in Grade 3+ systems
- Offered by companies like CSL DualCom

### 2. RedCARE (BT)

- Secure signalling over BT's network
- RedCARE Classic, RedCARE GSM, RedCARE Secure/IP
- Continuous line monitoring
- Police response compatible

### 3. Single Path Signalling

- Only one communication method (e.g., GSM or broadband)
- Less secure than dual path
- Lower cost, but not suitable for high-risk premises

## Types of Intruder Detection

| Detector Type                     | Description                               | Common Use           |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| PIR (Passive Infrared)            | Detects body heat                         | Internal rooms       |
| Dual Technology (PIR + Microwave) | Reduces false alarms                      | Warehouses, garages  |
| Door/Window Contacts              | Detects entry point breaches              | All entry points     |
| Glass Break Sensors               | Detects sound/frequency of breaking glass | Ground floor windows |



| Detector Type      | Description                             | Common Use               |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Shock Sensors      | Detects vibration/tampering             | Window frames, safes     |
| Beam Sensors       | Infrared beams detect crossing movement | Perimeter/external areas |
| Pet-Immune Sensors | Avoids small animal movement            | Homes with pets          |

## Wired vs. Wireless Systems

| Feature      | Hard-Wired                   | Wireless                       |
|--------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Reliability  | Very high                    | High with proper setup         |
| Maintenance  | Low (no battery changes)     | Batteries need regular changes |
| Installation | Longer, more disruptive      | Fast, minimal disruption       |
| Aesthetics   | Cabling may need concealment | Clean finish                   |
| Ideal For    | New builds or renovations    | Existing, finished properties  |

## Integration With Other Systems

### CCTV Integration

- View live CCTV when alarm triggers
- Some systems push notifications with video clips
- Allows remote monitoring

### Access Control Integration

- Alarm disarming via door entry fob/card
- Access logs synced with alarm events



- Secure entry management

### **Home Automation**

- Integration with smart lights, heating, or locks
- Scene automation (e.g., lights on when alarm activates)

## **Installation Considerations**

### **Installation Time**

- Wired systems: approximately 120min per device including cable
- Wireless systems: approximately 30mins per device

### **Cable Routes (for wired systems)**

- Through walls, ceilings, under floorboards
- May require surface trunking if retrofitting

### **Possible Disruption**

- Drilling, lifting carpets/floorboards
- Power shutdowns may be needed briefly
- Advise staff or family in advance



## Common Challenges & Pitfalls

| Challenge                       | Solution                                   |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Not meeting insurance specs     | Confirm grade and signalling with insurer  |
| Disruption from cabling         | Consider wireless or hybrid systems        |
| False alarms                    | Use dual-tech sensors, regular maintenance |
| Low battery on wireless devices | Plan for battery checkups every 1-2 years  |
| Poor mobile signal (for GSM)    | Use signal boosters or IP-first signalling |

## Best Practices

- Choose SSAIB or NSI Gold certified installers
- Complete a security risk assessment first
- Verify system grade and signalling with your insurer
- Maintain regular servicing (minimum once a year)
- Ensure keyholders are designated and trained
- Keep maintenance logs for compliance
- Inform your insurance company post-installation

## Key Questions to Ask Your Alarm Provider

1. What grade does my insurance require?
2. Is the system SSAIB certified?
3. Will the alarm have police response capability?
4. What kind of signalling is included?
5. How long will my external bell ring?
6. Can I reset the system myself?



7. Can the detectors be disconnected when the system isn't set?
8. What is the range of the detection?
9. What happens if a member of staff is threatened or attacked when the system is unset?
10. What other systems can the intruder alarm be connected
11. What happens if a cable or detector is damaged?
12. Can it integrate with my CCTV or access system?
13. How much disruption will installation cause?
14. Is the system hard-wired, wireless, or hybrid?
15. What is the maintenance plan and warranty?
16. Are the devices pet-friendly?
17. What app/control options are available?

## **Intruder Alarm System Buyer's Checklist**

| <b>Task / Item</b>                                  | <b>Completed</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Risk assessment carried out                         | YES/NO           |
| Alarm system grade confirmed with insurer           | YES/NO           |
| SSAIB-approved installer selected                   | YES/NO           |
| Wired/wireless system decision made                 | YES/NO           |
| Signalling method (e.g. RedCARE, DualCom) confirmed | YES/NO           |
| Integration with CCTV/access planned                | YES/NO           |
| Site survey completed                               | YES/NO           |
| Installation date scheduled                         | YES/NO           |
| Staff/family informed of disruption                 | YES/NO           |
| Maintenance and service plan arranged               | YES/NO           |
| Training on system usage provided                   | YES/NO           |



## Summary of Key Points

- SSAIB certification ensures installer competence and system quality
- Alarm systems are graded (1-4) based on risk level and insurance requirements
- Signalling can be audible-only, DualCom, or RedCARE
- Systems can be wired, wireless, or hybrid, with different pros and cons
- Integration with CCTV and access control enhances overall security
- Consider installation disruption, especially with wired systems
- Always check insurance compliance and get a maintenance plan