

10 HIDDEN COSTS OF PENDANT ALARM SYSTEMS



Pendant alarm and telecare systems are life-savers. One press of a button sends an alert to a 24/7 monitoring centre. Trained operators then chat to you and check everything's okay. Whichever telecare system you choose, remember to ask suppliers about the sometimes 'hidden charges' listed below. Although these hidden costs are based on our experience in Ireland, it's worth asking about them wherever in the world you reside.

by Telecare.ie 

1 PENDANT BATTERY CHARGES

The battery on your emergency pendant (or wristband) should last around 3-5 years. However, this will depend on the quality and how often it's pressed. Some companies charge every time the battery needs replaced (typically around €45). To avoid any nasty surprises during your contract, always check this out. Also factor it in to the overall cost before you buy. Our sponsor TASK Community Care, provides free battery replacements for all alarm pendants/wristbands they supply and monitor in Ireland & the UK (included in their 10 year socially monitored alarm warranty).



2 YEAR 2 PRICE HIKES

Some telecare companies offer low monitoring rates the first year but hike them up in years two or three. Quality 24/7 monitoring doesn't have to be expensive, so shop around. For instance TASK's fee for around the clock monitoring has been €66 in Ireland since 1991 (UK £52). Yes, that's over twenty years! And they have some of the best call answering rates in the industry, with 99.7% of emergency calls answered within 20 seconds.

3 FAULT REPORTING



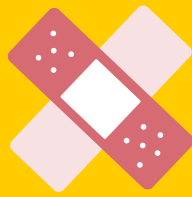
Avoid expensive call-out charges by checking your alarm complies with relevant standards including the EU Telecare Standard 'EN 50134'. If so, it will have minimum requirements on fault reporting - which may not only save your life - but will also save you money in the long term. For instance, **with minimum fault reporting built in to the alarm, monitoring centre operators can figure out what's causing a problem over the phone.** No unnecessary call-out charges and importantly for your safety, you won't have to wait to get things sorted.

4 24-HOUR TECH SUPPORT

What happens if your unit stops working but you can't figure out what's wrong? Always find out if 24 hour technical support is included with the monitoring contract. And remember to check that your alarm complies with the EU Telecare Standard 'EN 50134' so that monitoring centre operators can help solve problems over the telephone. TASK operates a support line 24/7 and their equipment complies with the EN standard.



5 REPAIRS



In addition to checking if any warranty includes the pendant/wristband, make sure it includes repairs for the base-unit too. And for a reasonable period of time. The base-unit is the part of your alarm that's usually in the hallway, which connects to the 24/7 monitoring centre. Many companies consider the base-unit defunct once the internal battery stops working so ask if this is included in the warranty. Also, enquire about any other exclusions, such as lightning damage (extremely common in some areas). TASK includes a 10 year warranty to customers in Ireland and the UK, providing they also use TASK for 24/7 monitoring (includes lightning damage and batteries).

6 FUTURE PROOFED

As you get older your care needs can change. Maybe you'll want to add a few extra telecare devices around your home, such as an automatic fall detector, bed exit alarm or a monitored Carbon Monoxide (CO) detector. **Or perhaps someone else in the same household will need a pendant alarm too.** For this reason, always look for telecare alarms with the capability of being built upon, such as those provided by TASK.



7 MONITORING CHARGES FOR EXTRA TELECARE DEVICES

So you've got a future proofed system, great! Now check how much you'll be charged for the monitoring of each additional telecare device. Costs for 24/7 monitoring of telecare devices can add up. Additional costs vary between companies. To compare like with like, always calculate the total on an annual basis. Or choose TASK to carry out the monitoring for your pendant/wristband alarm, and they will monitor any other linked telecare devices completely FREE.

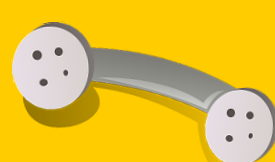


8 CONTRACT TERM

Most telecare providers offer a 12 month agreement, renewable annually. Think carefully before signing a contract for any longer. That way, if you're not satisfied with the service (or find a better deal elsewhere) you can change provider easily after the first year. Depending on the make/model of your equipment, some monitoring centres can take over your 24/7 monitoring by programming your equipment remotely, over the telephone line. Always check this first to avoid call-out charges, as some equipment types may need the base-unit reprogrammed by an installer in order to change monitoring provider.

9 INSTALLATION CHARGE

Most companies do not charge an installation fee in Ireland, as it's generally included in the cost of the pendant alarm. But it's worth checking out all the same. Any up-front costs should be exactly that, up front.



10 LANDLINE OR MOBILE?

If you're thinking you might disconnect your land-line over the next few years, check if your alarm base unit can be adapted to call for help on a mobile network instead (i.e. if it is 'GSM' enabled). Always ask if additional charges will apply to change over. A common charge with GSM alarm units is the cost of a contract SIM card (like the one used in your mobile phone). A modification to your base-unit may also be needed. It could be better opting for a GSM alarm at the outset, if that's the case. However, as these type of alarms are usually more expensive, you'll need to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each carefully. Think about how soon you'll be changing from your home phone-line and also whether or not there is good mobile coverage in your area.