

Long ago, "home security" meant making sure the door was locked when you went out. When home alarm systems came into fashion, the security conscious homeowner used a setup that consisted of motion sensors and gadgets attached to windows and doors. It seemed like a good solution at the time. A problem that surfaced immediately though, was a high incidence of false alarms. These primitive alarms were also ineffective in cases where a burglar could get into and out of a house with valuables in hand before anyone even got there to see them run through the back yard into the distance.

Home Security Goes High Tech

by Alison Macpherson

are a thing of the past because now you can see what's going on in your home, as it happens, from miles away. Not only that, but the activity in and around your house can be instantly recorded and stored in digital video format.

The new era of home security provides an infinitely higher level of reliability, more control over system capabilities and a much broader range of protection for your property and personal safety. False alarms

All of this is done with a setup that includes digital cameras, a digital video recorder (DVR) which is basically a computer based recording system, some software and a high speed internet connection. You can monitor what the cameras are seeing, remotely in "real time" from a desktop or laptop computer, in various ways depending on the specifics of the system you choose. Remote client software can give you the ability to log in and view each camera one by one or several cameras at once on a split screen. At the same time, the DVR is recording footage which can be reviewed later.

At first glance, this might seem like a luxury but the daily uses of such a system are practical for many people. For parents, it allows you to monitor kids in the yard while you are in the house and it can also provide a link between children at home after school, with a parent who is still at work. Checking on elderly family members, watching your home while you're away at the cottage or monitoring the activity of service people who come to your house while you are out are just some of the possibilities. Outdoor cameras have interesting applications for acreage or farm owners who want to monitor livestock, outbuildings or vehicles coming up the driveway.

The cost of a system like this varies widely depending on the quality and number of cameras used, how many days or weeks of recording you want to save and other features such as how many cameras you would like to monitor at one time. It's possible to get started for under \$2,500, with sophisticated systems running several thousand dollars.

When evaluating your needs, of particular interest will be the frames per second (fps) that the system can record and features such as cameras that are weather resistant and vandal resistant or capable of recording in very low lighting conditions. These will determine the quality of image you capture and ultimately, how well the system does the job you need it to do. Individual cameras cost from \$200 to \$1,000 and can be wireless or wired to the recorder. A nice add on to have is a door intercom monitor with a built in microphone, speaker and LCD display that lets you see and hear who is at your door before you open it.

Considering the practical daily uses, even if your home never falls prey to criminals, a high tech home security system can provide everyday convenience and peace of mind along with the underlying benefit of discouraging potential intruders. This dual benefit provides real value with an everyday return on your investment, and no false alarms.