



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2010-01786
Keyword: Crime
Subject: Intruder Alarm Systems

Request and Answer:

Your request for information has now been considered and the decision has been taken not to supply the information you have requested.

Question

I have been viewing FOI information (request no F-2009-03486) that was published by yourselves. I have been viewing the response times and see they fall under two different categories 1. Emergency and 2. Priority.

I have a query regarding ARC monitored intruder alarm systems and which categories (emergency or priority) an ARC reported alarm would fall under. I do know that a hold up alarm would normally fall under the emergency category but my question is in the case of a normal monitored domestic home alarm system. If a confirmed INTRUDER was reported by the ARC would it fall under the emergency or priority category for PSNI response.

Answer

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which:

- (a) states that fact,
- (b) specifies the exemption in question and
- (c) states (if not otherwise apparent) why the exemption applies.

The exemption/s, as well as the factors the Department considered when deciding where the public interest lies, are listed below:

Section 31 (1)(a)– Law Enforcement is a prejudice- based exemption, qualified exemption which means that it is the Public Authority’s responsibility to evidence the harm and the Public Interest Test and this is illustrated below.

HARM TEST

Providing specific information in relation to normal monitored domestic home alarm systems could assist intruders, breaking into homes/premises. Disclosing the significance of response levels i.e emergency/priority category could better inform criminals of alarm activation procedures and aid their criminal pursuits. This could potentially increase the crime rate and heighten the risk to property owners.

PUBLIC INTEREST TEST

Factors Favouring Release – Section 31

Disclosing this information would better inform the public of how alarm systems operate and reassure property owners of how police deal with alarm activations.

Factors Favouring Retention – Section 31

Releasing details of alarm procedures could assist intruders to commit crime. The information could prove useful to criminals and seriously compromise the security of properties.

Decision

Disclosing specific details of alarm procedures could assist criminal elements and increase the risk to property owners. It would not be in the public interest to release information that may be of assistance to anyone involved in criminal activity. The release of information under Freedom of Information is a release into the public domain and not just to the individual requester.

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact me on 028 9070 0164. When contacting the Freedom of Information Team, please quote the reference number listed at the beginning of this letter.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible, or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of Freedom of Information, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE or by emailing foi@psni.pnn.police.uk.

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you were to remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request you may make a complaint, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the PSNI has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. You can write to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out, however the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that PSNI replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ www.psni.police.uk

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.