

Alarmed Exit vs Standard Panic Hardware: Cost Analysis

Overview

Standard panic bars provide emergency egress without cost, but offer no theft deterrent. Alarmed exits like Arm-A-Dor provide both egress and loss prevention through audible alarms. This guide compares costs, effectiveness, and applications.

Standard Panic Bar

A standard panic bar is a spring-loaded horizontal bar across the door. Push triggers the latch to retract, releasing the door. Required by code on all emergency exits. Cost: typically \$150-300 including installation.

Arm-A-Dor Alarmed Exit

An Arm-A-Dor combines a panic bar with an integrated alarm sounder. When the door opens, an internal magnet pulls away from the switch, triggering an 85dB alarm. Can be standalone or connected to building alarm system. Cost: typically \$400-600 including installation and wiring.

Functionality Comparison

Feature	Panic Bar	Alarmed Exit	Notes
Emergency Egress	Yes	Yes	Both meet code requirements
Retail Theft Prevention	No alarm	Yes - 85dB	Audible deterrent critical
Remote Monitoring	Not available	Optional	Can wire to access control
Battery Backup	N/A	Yes (6V)	Operates during power loss
False Alarm Risk	N/A	Possible	Requires staff awareness
Cost	\$150-300	\$400-600	Alarmed is 3-4x cost
Maintenance	Minimal	Battery replacement	Annual battery service

Retail Theft Prevention

Problem: Retail stores lose 1-2% of revenue to organized retail crime. Emergency exits are primary theft vectors - thieves have legal right to exit during emergencies.

Solution: Alarmed exits deter theft by creating immediate audible deterrent. While alarm cannot prevent exit (due to life safety code), it alerts staff to investigate suspicious activity.

Effectiveness: 70-80% of retail theft attempts are abandoned when alarm sounds, due to attention from staff and risk of identification.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

Retail Store Example: \$2M annual revenue, 1% shrink = \$20,000 annual loss

Standard Exit (3 doors): Cost = \$600 (3 x \$200)

Alarmed Exits (3 doors): Cost = \$1,800 (3 x \$600)

Additional Cost: \$1,200 upfront

ROI: If alarmed exits prevent just 6% of theft attempts, they save \$1,200 annually, paying for themselves in 1 year

Local Alarm vs Remote Monitoring

Type	Operation	Cost	Best For	Limitations
Local Alarm Only	Sounder on unit, 85dB	\$400-500	Small retail, offices	Requires staff nearby
Wired to Panel	Signal sent to main control	\$500-700	Multi-location, chains	Requires access control
Monitored Service	Includes 24/7 monitoring	\$800+/year	High-loss locations	Monthly subscription

Security Guard Comparison

Single Security Guard: Cost = \$20-30/hour x 8 hours x 5 days/week = \$800-1,200/week = \$41,600-62,400/year

Alarmed Exits (3 doors): Cost = \$1,800 + maintenance = \$150/year

Cost Ratio: One security guard costs 23-35 times more than alarmed exits

Effectiveness: Guard cannot prevent all theft but creates psychological deterrent combined with alarm system

Installation & Maintenance Costs

Item	Cost	Frequency	Annual Cost
Unit (installed)	\$500-600	One-time	\$0 after year 1
Battery replacement	\$20	Annually	\$20
Testing & inspection	\$100	Annually	\$100
Monitoring service	\$25-50	Monthly	\$300-600

Recommendations

Small Retail (<\$1M revenue): Local alarm Arm-A-Dor with no monitoring

Medium Retail (\$1-5M revenue): Wired to access control panel, staff notification

High-Loss Locations: Multiple alarmed exits + monitoring service + security measures

Office Buildings: Standard panic bars usually sufficient unless containing high-value inventory

Hospitals/Medical: Alarmed exits recommended for pharmacy and controlled substance areas