



# Myths vs. Facts

For nearly a century, UL's Alarm Certificate Program has been a trusted partner of AHJ's, alarm companies, and end users by helping to provide confidence that minimum requirements for the installation, maintenance, and servicing of alarm systems are in compliance with nationally recognized codes and standards.

The following is intended to separate fact from fiction in regards to common misconceptions surrounding the Alarm Certificate Program.



Myth	Fact
Fire Alarm Certification is only available to the big fire alarm companies.	Any alarm company can become UL Listed, regardless of their size, providing they demonstrate Code compliant knowledge, behaviors, and skills by successfully passing an initial UL Listing evaluation. We have many examples of both large and small UL Listed alarm companies throughout North America.
Once a fire alarm certification program is in place, every business is required to have a Certificated fire alarm system.	The AHJ determines which systems are to be certificated. These determinations can be based on Occupancy Classifications, specific hazards, or their local Ordinance.
The local Fire Inspector does everything UL does, I don't need a third party overseeing my work.	The intent of the Fire Alarm Certification Program is to oversee the Alarm Service Company's work, not the AHJs. Qualified UL Auditors not only review UL Certificated alarm system installations for Code compliance, but they also review Certificated alarm systems for all required documentation such as the Record of Completion, As-built Drawings, Battery Calculations, Service Contracts, Test & Inspection Records, etc. UL Certificated Central Station Service systems are also reviewed for the proper Disposition of Signals based on NFPA 72 requirements. These include the transmission of signals to the supervising station, the retransmission of alarms to the fire department, and proper notifications to the subscriber. Our Auditors will also verify that when runners are required to respond to an unrestored event or impairment, that they arrive within the response time required by NFPA 72.
It costs over 10K to become a UL listed fire alarm service company.	Listing costs are dependent upon the fire alarm service company's certification category (e.g. Central Station Service vs. Remote Station Service). Regardless of the category, listing costs are less than half of the mythical 10k.
Following "UL's rules" for fire alarms is far more expensive to both the end user and the alarm company.	UL audits fire alarm systems and service for compliance with NFPA 72 and the manufacturer's published instructions for UL Certificated fire alarm systems. Therefore, if a system (new or existing) was installed in compliance with both NFPA 72 and the manufacturer's published instructions, then there would not be a need to add extra devices or appliances, nor would there be additional services imposed specifically by UL.

For more information, please visit our website at [www.ul.com/alarmservice](http://www.ul.com/alarmservice).

Myth	Fact
<p>Central Station Service requires a runner to go on every alarm, supervisory, or trouble signal received.</p>	<p>NFPA 72 states that a runner is only required when a system or device must be manually reset, or if a trouble signal pertaining solely to matters of fire alarm equipment maintenance is un-restored. If the signal restores before the runner arrives, then the runner may be recalled.</p>
<p>The Certificate itself is very costly to the alarm system subscriber.</p>	<p>UL charges the alarm company, not the subscriber. The cost of the Certificate is approximately 30 cents per day or approximately \$100 per year. Cost markups implemented by the alarm service companies to the subscribers are common and are at the sole discretion of the alarm company.</p>
<p>UL audits are designed to take the place of the Fire Department Inspections.</p>	<p>UL audits fire alarm company competencies' to install, maintain, and service fire alarm systems in compliance with nationally recognized codes and standards. Fire Inspectors perform inspections of buildings and occupancies.</p> <p>Fire inspectors require fire alarm systems to be installed, inspected, tested, and maintained in accordance with fire codes and standards. By auditing the alarm company's ability to install, maintain, and service fire alarm systems, the UL Alarm Certificate program provides assurance to Fire Inspectors that systems comply with NFPA 72. Fire alarm certification is an additional tool that assists AHJ's in maintaining ongoing code compliance.</p>
<p>Existing alarm systems must be brought up to current code in order to be Certificated.</p>	<p>The AHJ determines when fire alarm systems are required to be brought up to the current code. Existing systems can be Certificated to the code and edition of NFPA 72 in force at the time the system was originally installed. Typically, jurisdictions adopting Fire Alarm System Certification or central station service, establish a specified date when all new systems must comply with Certification moving forward.</p>
<p>UL staff audit every certificated system every year.</p>	<p>UL staff audit every Listed Alarm Service Company every year. Audits are completed on a selection of each Listed Alarm Service Company's Certificates and include focus on elements such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• system documentation</li> <li>• signal processing</li> <li>• runner response, and</li> <li>• field installation review</li> </ul> <p>Certificate selection for auditing is based upon staff selection, previous history, geography, and AHJ input.</p>
<p>The entire cost associated with being UL Listed is passed on to the Business Owner.</p>	<p>UL is not involved in pricing between the alarm company and the end user, however we have found that the average cost across the US that an alarm company typically charges to the business owner for a UL Certificated system, in addition to any monitoring fees that would likely already be in place, is about \$21.00 per month.</p>
<p>The Fire Inspector approved my system as compliant, so UL should not note anything as out of compliance.</p>	<p>Fire Inspectors typically do not have the resources to inspect for total system installation compliance and ongoing maintenance, testing, and inspection. UL Fire Alarm System Certification provides a compliance methodology for ongoing code compliance through the initial evaluation and continual auditing of alarm service companies on an annual basis.</p>