



As from October 2001, all CCTV systems covering public areas, e.g. retail premises, must be notified to the Office of the Information Commissioner, together with the purpose for which the system is designed to be used. It is a legal requirement that appropriate CCTV signs are displayed, and that you follow the Codes of Practice for the use of CCTV

For more information see:
www.dataprotection.gov.uk

You can notify them on line of your CCTV system
Or by phone on **01625 545740**

For more information call them on
01625 545745
Or
mail@dataprotection.gov.uk

For more help and advice on CCTV systems contact your local Crime Reduction Officer by calling our central switchboard on **01785 257717** and asking for your local station. Or call our CCTV help line **01785 235330**



CAUGHT IN COURT?

Getting the most
from your CCTV
System



How many times have you watched fuzzy, poor quality images on television of offenders committing crime or disorder and not been able to identify anyone?

More and more businesses are investing in CCTV systems to help prevent and detect crime. But all too often, the images they capture are poor quality and of little evidential value.

If the system has not been maintained properly or low-quality tapes have been used or reused over and over again, or the system was not set up correctly, then poor images will be the result.

In Staffordshire, many of the images taken from CCTV systems are rejected before they reach court because of poor quality.

If you've invested large sums of money in a CCTV system, it's simply a waste not to use it in the most effective way possible. It may also be unlawful.

You can help protect your premises and bring the offender to justice by following a few simple rules as follows when buying, installing and using CCTV.



TOP TIPS FOR TOP PICS

- Make sure cameras are positioned correctly and are in focus. For example, it's no use recording anything if all you can see is the top of someone's head.
- If you have a number of cameras, think about the area they're covering. Do they really need to cover wide open areas which mainly cover shots of a ceiling or wall?
- Think about installing cameras sideways onto your main front door, showing people entering and leaving your premises. No matter how quickly they are moving, everyone has to stop for a split second to open a door-and often a split second is all will need to identify them.
- If it's a fixed camera, is it balanced properly to give good quality images?
- Regularly check the time and date on your system are correct and take account of changes such as British Summer Time.
- Turn off the time and date showing on the video, otherwise you'll see a double display of figures, often showing different times and blocking the screen.
- Arrange a regular maintenance contract to have your CCTV system cleaned and serviced. Including the recording equipment
- In between servicing, carry out regular "spring cleaning" of your CCTV system. E.g., clean your lens and camera and clean the heads in your video.
- Only use good quality video cassettes.
- Change and rotate tapes regularly. You must keep the images for the period you stated when notifying the commissioner and no longer
- Store tapes in an upright position, away from heat and humidity.
- Keep all tapes in a clean, secure area, separate from the video recorder.
- Label all tapes clearly. Tape management systems are available, to help keep your system lawful.
- Have signs clearly displayed around your premises stating CCTV is in use and their purpose.
- If your recording system is digital, make sure you can provide the police with two copies with its own player on CD or DVD

DON'T

- DO NOT** continually reuse the same tapes - the quality of the image will be very poor.
- DO NOT** Let the tapes get dirty.
- DO NOT** Place tapes near a magnetic field, such as loud speakers.
- DO NOT** Leave tapes in the machine.
- DO NOT** Touch the tape itself.
- DO NOT** Buy cheap, inferior tapes.
- DO NOT** Use 240 minute tapes.
- DO NOT** Record in long play (LP).
- DO NOT** Have a viewing angle that's too wide.
- DO NOT** Use tapes more than 12 times.

Here are a few simple rules to ensure CCTV tapes may be suitable to be used in evidence in any court proceedings.

DO

- DO** make sure your system has been notified to the Data Commissioner.
- DO** make a benchmark tape (without recording people) to check that the images are still good in times to come.
- DO** change your tapes at least every day.
- DO** ensure your tapes are kept for the appropriate period of time that you notified to the Commissioners Office.
- DO** use good quality tapes and check them by playing them on a different machine.
- DO** ensure the picture is clear. It needs to be clear enough to identify people and vehicles.
- DO** check the time and date displays are correct.
- DO** check the picture is covering the best area.
- DO** make sure there's enough light for the camera to 'see'.

Remember, if in doubt your CCTV provider, security officer or local police crime reduction officer can help you improve your system.