



Personal Alert Systems Rebate Scheme

Information on Choosing a Personal Alert System

This information sheet should be read in conjunction with the *Terms and Conditions* of the Personal Alert Systems Rebate Scheme, the *Client Information Sheet*, and the *Application for Rebates* form.

What is a monitored system and how does it work?

A monitored system is a personal alert system that connects the user to a monitoring centre through a phone line. The monitoring centre is staffed 24 hours a day, every day of the year by personnel who normally have some medical history of the client and details of how to access their home, if it is secured. These details can be passed onto ambulance, or other emergency services staff, if they are required to provide assistance.

The user activates the system by pressing a button on a remote portable device around their home. This device is often a pendant that is normally worn around the user's neck or on their wrist. Once activated, a signal is sent from the pendant to a base unit, which usually sits near the home phone.

The base unit then responds to the alarm trigger by sending a signal to the monitoring centre, which is able to identify the user. Once the alarm call has been answered by the monitoring centre, staff are able to speak with the user at home, through a speaker on the base unit.

A personalised pre-agreed response is then put into action, once it has been confirmed that the alert has not been accidentally activated.

In addition to the cost of the pendant and base unit, an installation fee may be charged.

As the service is monitored, a monitoring fee is normally charged.

What is an autodialler and how does it work?

An autodialler is a personal alert system that, when activated, dials a series of pre-programmed numbers, usually those of family members, friends or neighbours. These systems normally rely upon the user having a network of people they can call for assistance.

The user activates the system by pressing a button on a remote portable device around their home. This device is often a pendant that is normally worn around the user's neck or on their wrist. Once activated, a signal is usually sent from the pendant to a base unit, which usually sits near the home phone.

The base unit then responds to the alarm trigger by dialling the series of pre-programmed numbers. If the first number dialled is not answered, the unit continues to dial the next number, and so on. The system continues to call each of the programmed numbers until the call is answered. If none of the dialled numbers is answered, the unit usually starts to dial the first number again, until a call is answered.

When one of the dialled numbers is answered, the device indicates to the call recipient that assistance is required. This may be through a pre-recorded message from the user.

In addition, most systems have a feature that requires the recipient to acknowledge the call. This requires the person answering to press a particular button on their telephone to let the system know that the call has been answered by a person, not an answering machine or automated messaging service.

In addition to the cost of the pendant and base unit, an installation fee may be charged.

As this type of service is not monitored, a monitoring fee should not be charged.

What types of systems are approved for the rebate?

Requirements for all personal alert systems

To be approved for a rebate, a personal alert system must:

- enable the user to remain independent and mobile around the home, and
- have a remote activation device (alarm button) that can be worn 24 hours a day, (for example a pendant that is worn around the neck, on the wrist, or attached to a belt), and
- have remote activation device (alarm button) that is water resistant, and
- ensure the call for assistance is answered by a live person, (for example a family member, friend, neighbour or monitoring service), and
- recognise and ignore an answering machine or automated messaging service, and
- have the capability for two-way communication between the user and recipient of the call, and
- operate through a standard telephone line, and
- be compliant with relevant electrical and telecommunications standards, which allow for their use in Australia.

Monitored systems

In addition to the above requirements for all personal alert systems, in order to be approved for a rebate a monitored system must comply with Australian Standard AS 4607-1999 Personal Response Systems, or its latest revision.

Autodiallers

In addition to the above requirements for all personal alert systems, in order to be approved for a rebate an autodialler system must:

- have the capacity to store at least five pre-programmed telephone or mobile numbers, and
- continue dialling the pre-programmed numbers until the call for assistance is answered live.

There is no single Australian Standard that defines the type of equipment, materials and manufacturing, or protocol for the use of autodialler systems.

What type of products and systems are not eligible for a rebate?

The following products and systems are not eligible for a rebate:

- systems that only dial triple-zero (000), or dial triple-zero by default
- autodiallers that stop dialling the pre-programmed numbers after one attempt at dialling each number
- systems that rely on the Internet
- systems that rely on SMS (short message service) text messages to call for assistance
- systems and services that only perform a daily phone check
- systems that rely exclusively on fixed alarm buttons, such as those fixed to a wall or a telephone
- mobile phones, including those with an emergency call button
- intercom systems that allow communication between two rooms or nearby premises
- personal alarms that only emit a high-pitched shriek and/or flashing lights when activated
- rented, leased or hired systems.

Points to consider when choosing a system

The main difference between a monitored system and autodialler is who is alerted by the call for assistance.

An autodialler system is suitable for users who would like to alert friends and family members, rather than a monitoring centre, when they experience a fall or require immediate medical attention. This type of system normally relies upon the user having a network of people they can call for assistance in an emergency.

A monitored system provides immediate connection to a monitoring service. The monitoring centre holds the user's personal details and medical history, and can put in place a personalised pre-agreed response. This type of system is suitable for users who may not have suitable contacts close by who are able to respond in case of an emergency.

Programming triple-zero (000) into your autodialler

Triple Zero (000) is Australia's primary emergency call service number. It should be used to contact police, fire or ambulance services in life threatening or time critical emergency situations.

Although it is possible to program 000 into an autodialler (along with other numbers), it is important to be aware that 000 calls from automated devices, such as autodiallers, cannot be guaranteed a response from the emergency services.

This is due to the fact that the 000 system requires a person, not an automatic message, to make the 000 call, because the emergency services operator must be able to discuss and confirm the details of the emergency with the caller.

Calls to 000 are answered in a two-step process. Firstly, the calls are answered by Telstra, which then refers the caller to the relevant emergency service organisation (police, fire or ambulance) in the relevant Australian state or territory. It is particularly important during the second stage of the call that the caller's details, including their address, can be clearly and accurately provided to the emergency service operator.

To ensure a call for emergency assistance is correctly and promptly attended, the emergency services must have verification that there is in fact a real emergency, the nature of the emergency, and the address of the emergency. Without a validated condition and verified address, a response cannot be guaranteed.

Because of the length of time that it takes for a call from an autodialler to reach the relevant emergency service organisation, part of any pre-recorded message may have already been played by the time it reaches the emergency services operator. This then makes it very difficult to determine the nature of the call, to identify the caller, and most importantly, to ascertain the caller's address, which is essential for an emergency response.

For more information on when and how to call 000, go to the Triple Zero website: www.triplezero.gov.au.

Features to consider when choosing a system

The following are some of the features of personal alert systems that should be considered when purchasing a system:

- Whether you require a monitored system or autodialler.
- The operating distance of the pendant, and whether a signal booster can be purchased. For people who have a large garden, or those living in large homes or houses with double brick walls, a signal booster may be needed to extend the range of the pendant to ensure the signal reaches the base unit.
- How the pendant is worn and whether the pendant is water resistant.
- Whether you are able to press the button, or buttons, on the pendant to activate the system.
- Ongoing maintenance and system checks, and whether this is provided by the supplier or monitoring centre.

- If you require extra pendants.
- If you require a key box to allow access to your home in an emergency.
- If the system has a battery backup in case of a power failure, and the number of hours this covers.
- Warranty/guarantee periods for the system and batteries.
- Whether the system has the capability to override the telephone when it is activated.
- Whether the system complies with relevant Australian Standards. Ask the supplier to show you their certificates.
- The cost of any additional or peripheral equipment, such as:
 - extra pendants
 - a key box
 - a signal booster.

Help with choosing a system

The **Seniors Information Service** has information about personal alert systems, which includes a list of providers in South Australia.

The **Independent Living Centre (ILC)** South Australia is a part of the Department for Families and Communities.

The ILC provides information and advice on equipment to help individuals improve their quality of life and maintain their independence. This service is free of charge and available for all members of the public.

The ILC has an extensive range of monitored systems and autodiallers for the public to browse and trial. Health professionals are available to provide assistance, and can discuss with you the most appropriate system to suit your needs, as well as provide detailed product information and supplier details.

The ILC's website also has additional information on personal alert systems, as well as a product search. Brochures on selecting a system can be downloaded from the website.

Seniors Information Service

76 Waymouth Street
Adelaide SA 5000

Telephone: 8168 8776

SA Country Freecall 1800 636 368

Email: information@seniors.asn.au

Website: www.seniors.asn.au

Independent Living Centre

11 Blacks Road
Gilles Plains SA 5086

Telephone: 8266 5260

1300 885 886 (SA / NT callers only)

Email: ilcsa@dfc.sa.gov.au

Website: www.ilcaustralia.org/home/sa.asp

For more information

Department for Families and Communities

Personal Alert Systems Rebate Scheme
GPO Box 292
Adelaide SA 5001

Telephone: 1300 700 169

E-mail: concessions@dfc.sa.gov.au

Website: www.sa.gov.au/Seniors

In developing this Personal Alert Systems Rebate Scheme, and this Information on Choosing a Personal Alert System document, every effort has been made to ensure that the information reflects the intention of the Scheme and/or represents examples of best known practice. The Crown, the Minister and the Department for Families and Communities will not be liable for any injury, damage or loss sustained by any person in his or her purchase or use of a personal alert system.

The information contained in these resources does not constitute technical, safety, emergency or medical advice.