

Surveillance systems bring peace of mind for little cost

We have seen several marketing surveys that find more than 70 percent of those polled are concerned about personal security and interested in surveillance products. In short, they're looking at you, kid, or they'd like to be.

We've been looking at LaserShield (**LaserShield.net**), which has the appeal of a very simple setup.

What we have is two devices, each about the size of a hardcover book. The recommended installation is to set them on a tabletop or shelf, aimed at a doorway or other spot that would likely be crossed by an intruder. You plug them into electrical and phone outlets, flip the switch and you're done.

The \$200 LaserShield is not a camera but an infrared motion detector.

When it senses motion, it sounds an alarm and can dial into a monitoring service that costs an extra \$20 a month. That service is optional but results in a phone call to a number you specify to check

photographed every second or less. If the images don't match, something is amiss, and an alarm is triggered.

The advantages are that pictures can be transmitted to a Web site for viewing from anywhere in the world and recorded for later examination. The disadvantage is that, unlike the LaserShield system described above, you nearly always have to connect the system to a computer.

LOW-COST SURVEILLANCE

You can set up video surveillance for as little as \$70 using a simple Web cam of the type many people perch on their monitors for video calls. We've been reviewing a new book that describes how to set up such a surveillance system quickly and easily.

It's *PC Mods for the Evil Genius*, by Jim Aspinwall, \$25 from Tab Electronics (**mhprofessional.com**). The only things you need are a Windows XP computer, the aforementioned Web cam, which typically costs around \$30, and a copy of WebCamXP, which is \$40 from **WebCamXP.com**. This is the motion detection and alarm notification software. The software can take snapshots of movement, notify you by e-mail and save the pictures to a Web site.

A USEFUL GADGET

We've always wanted one of these: a universal disk drive adapter. In fact, it's called the USB 2.0 Universal Drive Adapter from **NewerTech.com**. This little \$25 gadget lets you use a drive from an old or discarded computer that no longer works. We always save the disk drives from computers we replace because these drives contain data and old programs we liked but don't have anymore. Those drives can be connected to a

new computer using a device like this one.

The Newer Technology Universal Adapter lets you connect a laptop, desktop, CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drive, and it works with Mac, Windows or Linux. It can handle either the older IDE type drives and the new SATA drives in any size.

BETTER EYESIGHT

According to research at the University of Rochester, N.Y., video games that contain high levels of action can improve your vision.

The tests were done on college students, and the results showed that those who played action games a few hours a day over the course of a month improved their visual acuity by 20 percent. Perception improved not merely at the focus of sight but in peripheral vision as well.

WHATEVER FLOATS

In this case, it's the EGO Waterproof Sound Case, which is \$200 from **LoveMyEgo.com**. Seems expensive, but on the other hand, so is the iPod. The case is made from clear plastic and houses two waterproof speakers flanking a space for the iPod.

The case is 6- by 10-inches and weighs about 2 pounds. It floats.

DRIVE-BY PHISHING

Some Web sites are so malicious that you only have to view them to be attacked. You won't feel a thing.

You'll be whisked to a phony Web site that looks just like the real thing.

A good way to prevent this is to change the default password on your wired or wireless router, something that 50 percent of users don't do. For

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On
Computers



if everything is all right. If you ask, or you don't answer, the operator can then also call local police.

The system can be armed and disarmed by a remote key-chain control or by a telephone call if you're off the premises. The keychain device also has a panic button if you suddenly encounter an intruder. There are no codes to memorize.

NOTE: There are at least a dozen other kinds of surveillance cameras you can buy, and they nearly all come with motion detection software. Such software compares an image of a room or coverage area with a new image



instructions on how to do this,
go to the Web site for your
router.

*NOTE: Readers can search several
years of columns at the "On Comput-
ers" Web site: **www.oncomp.com**.
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