

Review: Piper NV does more than a security system

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Piper NV

I've worked with plenty of cameras designed to watch over your home,

and I used to be happy just to have a view of my yard or the ability to store video clips.

Then connected cameras allowed me to watch the video remotely and to receive notifications of any event triggered by motion detection.

I've also used cameras with two-way audio so you can speak to and hear people on your camera.

Today I have two Nest cameras (Dropcams) at my house to keep an eye on things. The cameras are set up with motion-activated zones that can send a text or email whenever they detect movement on my front porch or in my backyard.

Some people (like my mom) have decided this type of camera might someday be a viable replacement for a monitored security system.

I've been testing the Piper NV from Icontrol Networks, which my mom learned about through an infomercial on TV.

When she asked me whether I'd heard of it, I was pleased to tell her I had one on my desk to review.

I took the Piper NV (\$279, getpiper.com) to her house last weekend, and we tried it out together.

The Piper NV (the NV stands for night vision) can play a few roles in your [home](#).

It's certainly a security monitor - you can watch the live feed and record video - but there's much more going on inside the soup-can-size device.

Icontrol sells the Piper NV for home security. The camera has a

180-degree view so you can set it down in a corner of a room and see almost everything.

The camera itself is stationary, but when you're watching on your phone or tablet, you can pan, tilt or zoom in on the HD video and even save multiple viewing zones from the camera to be viewed at the same time.

The Piper camera does not constantly record video. You can set it to record a video clip every time it senses an event. The clips are about 35 seconds long and are stored for free on cloud servers. Icontrol says you can store up to 1,000 clips.

You set up and interact with Piper from a free smartphone app. As with a traditional alarm system, there are different modes for arming the system.

There are three modes - stay, away and vacation. You can set up different rules for each mode.

When setting up each mode, you'll be asked how you want Piper to react when motion is detected, when loud sounds are detected and when the temperature changes above or below a range of your choosing.

When any of the criteria is met, you'll get a notification - by email, text or phone call. You can also set up other contacts (called your trusted circle) to get the same notifications.

These notifications can take the place of a traditionally monitored alarm system, which contacts the police if an alarm is triggered.

You get the notification, and it's up to you to decide whether to call the police.

Besides the notifications, if an event is triggered, you have the option to record a video clip and sound its built-in 105dB siren (that's very loud).

Piper also has two-way audio, so you can hear what's going on and speak to whoever is near the camera.

I like the two-way voice feature as a way of checking on an elderly parent.

If mom has a Piper and I'm in her trusted circle, I'll get notifications of events at her house. I can log into the system and see, hear and speak to her.

The app lets you fully monitor and configure Piper. The Piper app also helps you monitor indoor and outdoor temperature, humidity, light and sound levels and see a graph showing when motion is detected.

The Piper NV is also a home automation hub that's compatible with Z-Wave-enabled home accessories such as light bulbs, thermostats, deadbolts and sensors.

Z-Wave is a common home automation standard, and you can add your Z-Wave items to your Piper system rules. If you have a door sensor in your security setup, for example, you might want to set the siren to sound when the door opens if the alarm is in away mode.

Also, you can have multiple Piper NV cameras to keep track of different areas in your home.

Piper sells a bundle of three NV cameras and five [home automation](#) accessories of your choosing for \$900. There is no monthly subscription fee.

I like a lot of things about the Piper NV. It does a good job at monitoring motion and temperature and giving quick notifications. I can see how this system could take the place of a home alarm.

But Piper isn't perfect.

I'm quite happy that the field of view is so wide, but I'm afraid it's at the expense of video quality.

As I said earlier, I have two Nest cameras with HD video. While those cameras don't have the Piper's 180-degree field of view, the Nest video is much clearer than the Piper video.

Even though Piper says the [video](#) is HD quality, I'm underwhelmed with the image clarity. It's good but not great.

But I'm completely happy with the features of the Piper NV. I can't think of much more I'd want to add. It does almost everything.

Whether you'd be comfortable replacing your monitored home security system with a Piper is up to you. It would certainly be a worthy addition for anyone who wants to know more about what's going on at their home.

Pros: Easy setup, good notifications, Z-Wave hub.

Cons: Video could be clearer.

Bottom line: This camera does it all - and makes it look easy.

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