

Sump Pump Alarm Quick Guide

A homeowner's reference for what to check first when the alarm goes off, what to leave to a professional, and when to call DGI Waterproofing.

Safety first

Sump pump and basement drainage issues can involve electrical and water risks. If standing water is touching the outlet, breaker box, or any extension cord, shut off power at the breaker panel before going near the pit. If you are unsure, consult a licensed plumber or electrician.

Step 1: Confirm the alarm type

Most sump alarms fall into one of three categories. Identify yours so you know what the alarm is telling you.

Alarm type	What it means
High water alarm	Water in the pit is above the normal pump-on level. Pump is failing to keep up or has failed.
Pump failure alarm	Built-in sensor detects the motor has not run when it should have.
Power loss alarm	AC power to the pump is interrupted. Battery backup is now running the system.

Step 2: The five-minute homeowner check

- 1 **Is the pump plugged in?** Vibration can loosen the outlet over years. Plug it directly into the wall, not a power strip.
- 2 **Is the breaker tripped?** Walk to the panel. Reset the breaker dedicated to the sump pump if it is off.
- 3 **Is the GFCI tripped?** Press the reset button on the outlet itself.
- 4 **Is the float switch stuck?** Look into the pit with a flashlight. The float should rise and fall freely. If it is wedged against the basin wall, hardened debris, or the pump body, gently free it.
- 5 **Is the discharge line frozen or blocked?** In winter, check the exterior outlet for ice. In any season, listen for a pump that hums but moves no water.
- 6 **Is the battery backup engaged?** Look for the green or red status light on the controller. A backup that ran during a power outage may need recharging or a new battery.

Step 3: When to call DGI Waterproofing

- Pit fills faster than the pump can empty it (water keeps rising even with pump running)
- Pump runs constantly for more than 20 minutes without stopping
- Water is leaking around the basin lid, weeping tile, or floor seam
- You hear a grinding, screeching, or rapid clicking noise from the pump
- Pump has run for more than 10 years and is original to the house
- You smell burning electrical insulation or see scorch marks at the outlet

- A storm is forecast and the backup battery has not been tested in 12 months

Step 4: Prevent the next alarm

- Test the pump every three months by pouring a five gallon bucket of water into the pit.
- Vacuum out silt and stones from the bottom of the basin once a year (with pump unplugged).
- Replace the battery in a backup system every three to five years, sooner if it has run during outages.
- Replace the entire pump every 8 to 12 years. Most warranties end at 5 to 7 years.
- Have the discharge line, check valve, and float switch inspected annually by a professional.

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