

Code of practice for

Security screening of personnel employed in a security environment

ICS 13.310

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Committees responsible for this British Standard

The preparation of this British Standard was entrusted to Technical Committee GW/1, Electronic security systems, upon which the following bodies were represented:

- Association of Burglary Insurance Surveyors
- Association of Chief Police Officers of England and Wales
- Association of Security Consultants
- British Retail Consortium
- British Security Industry Association
- British Telecommunications plc
- Consumer Policy Committee of BSI
- Department of the Environment (Security Facilities Executive (SSG))
- Department of the Environment (Building Reserach Establishment)
- Electrical Contractors' Association
- Electrical Installation Equipment Manufacturers' Association (BEAMA Ltd.)
- Electricity Association
- European Association of Security Equipment Manufacturers
- Ex-police in Industry and Commerce
- Fire Brigades' Union
- Home Office Crime Prevention Centre
- Inspectorate of the Security Industry
- International Professional Security Association
- Loss Prevention Council
- Metropolitan Police
- National Approval Council for Security Systems
- Post Office
- Security Industry Training Organization
- Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board
- Tobacco Manufacturers' Association

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Foreword

This British Standard was prepared by Technical Committee GW/1, at the request of users and providers of security services, to provide guidelines for the satisfactory conduct of such services.

This British Standard is based on the following codes of practice:

— BS 7499-1:1991 Annex A — *Vetting for employment by a manned security service*;

— a proposed new NACOSS Code of Practice for Security Screening, based on annex A of BS 7499-1:1991, to replace NACOSS NACP1 (Issue 1) 1990 [1];

and comments received on both documents. It is intended that annex A of BS 7499-1:1991 will be withdrawn and that this code of practice will become the single code of practice for the security industry. It has the specific support and recommendation of the following organizations:

British Security Industry Association

Electrical Contractors' Association

Inspectorate of the Security Industry

National Approval Council for Security Systems

Security Systems and Alarm Inspection Board

When BS 7499-1:1991 is revised, annex A will be deleted and any requirements in annex A not covered in this code of practice will be inserted into the main text of BS 7499-1. An example of this is the current requirement in annex A of BS 7499-1:1991 for a physical fitness check of potential employees. There is no recommendation in this code of practice for a physical fitness check, and the check will become part of the revised BS 7499-1.

As a code of practice, this British Standard takes the form of guidance and recommendations. It should not be quoted as if it were a specification and particular care should be taken to ensure that claims of compliance are not misleading.

A British Standard does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users of British Standards are responsible for their correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard does not of itself confer immunity from legal obligations. Particular attention is drawn to existing legislation concerning health and safety at work, data protection, the rehabilitation of offenders, race relations and equal opportunity.

Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages i and ii, pages 1 to 12, an inside back cover and a back cover.

This standard has been updated (see copyright date) and may have had amendments incorporated. This will be indicated in the amendment table on the inside front cover.

1 Scope

This British Standard gives recommendations for the security screening of personnel to be employed in an environment where the security of people, goods or property is a significant feature of the employing organization's operations.

2 Informative references

This British Standard refers to other publications that provide information or guidance. Editions of these publications current at the time of issue of this standard are listed on the inside back cover, but reference should be made to the latest editions.

3 Definitions

For the purposes of this British Standard, the following definitions apply.

3.1

organization

company, establishment, government or local authority department, or other body employing personnel in an environment where the security of people, goods or property is a significant consideration

3.2

relevant employment

employment which involves, or may involve, the acquisition of, or access to, information or equipment, the improper use of which could involve the organization, any client of the organization, or any third party, in a security risk

NOTE The definition applies to personnel irrespective of whether they are engaged full-time or part-time, or on a permanent or temporary basis.

3.3

screening period

period of not less than 10 years immediately prior to the date of the application for relevant employment or transfer to relevant employment, or back to the date of ceasing full-time secondary education, if this date is more recent

3.4

provisional employment

initial period of employment for a new employee during which security screening is continuing

NOTE Successful completion of security screening is one criterion upon which the decision to grant confirmed employment beyond the period of provisional employment is based.

3.5

ancillary staff

persons involved in ancillary activities such as administration, personnel, building maintenance and cleaning

4 Selection of personnel

4.1 General

The organization should not employ persons whose history indicates that they would be unlikely to resist the opportunities for illicit personal gain, or the possibilities of being compromised, or the opportunities for creating any other improper breach of security which such employment might offer.

Although no system of security screening can provide absolute security, the organization should use every endeavour to ensure that the integrity of its personnel is established and maintained. In some cases, the application of this code of practice may prevent employment or cause dismissal, because the verification procedures cannot be completed satisfactorily. It is emphasized that this should not necessarily be taken as an indication of unsuitability; it may simply not have been possible to obtain the required positive evidence.

The organization should make clear to all personnel who are engaged in the security screening process, and to those with authority to offer provisional or confirmed employment, that high standards should be maintained in view of the special circumstances of the industry in which they are employed.

The organization should carry out security screening in accordance with this code of practice prior to the engagement of persons for relevant employment or to their being transferred to relevant employment from other duties for which they have not previously been subjected to security screening in accordance with this code of practice.

The organization should ensure that security screening in accordance with this code of practice has been carried out on all persons already in relevant employment.

This code of practice should be applied equally to full-time and part-time, and to temporary and permanent employees, and to all levels of seniority, including directors. The full security screening procedure should be carried out in the case of each employee or director regardless of their previous employment, even if that employment was with another organization engaged in the security industry.

Attention is drawn to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 [2] and to the information in annex A.

4.2 Security screening

4.2.1 General

The organization should obtain documentary evidence of background, experience and character for all potential personnel.

4.2.2 *Continuous record of career or history*

The organization should establish by direct reference to former employers, government departments, educational authorities, etc., with confirmation from them in writing, a continuous record of the career or history of the person being screened for the whole of the screening period on a month-to-month, rather than on a year-to-year, basis.

4.2.3 *Character references*

The organization should also obtain at least two written character references from relevant persons with personal knowledge of the person being screened, each of which confirms that nothing is known about the person being screened which would reflect adversely upon their suitability for the proposed employment.

The referee should confirm the period and nature of their relationship with the person subject to the security screening.

NOTE 1 The character references may be included in the references supplied by the parties referred to in 4.2.2.

NOTE 2 Attention is drawn to the fact that, wherever practicable, one of the character references should be from the most recent past employer of the person being screened (but see also the note at the end of 4.2.5 regarding contacting a person's current employer).

NOTE 3 Effective security screening is dependent upon those having knowledge of the person being screened supplying information and references. It is hoped that persons and firms generally will co-operate in supplying information and references in respect of their past employees when requested to do so, unless there are good and substantial reasons for not supplying such information and references.

4.2.4 *Personal file*

A personal file should be established for each person subject to security screening (see clause 8).

4.2.5 *Provision of information*

All applicants for relevant employment and all existing employees transferred to relevant employment from other duties should be required to provide the following.

- a) Details of their education and career history throughout the screening period on a month-to-month basis.
- b) The names of at least two persons, who may or may not be former employers, from whom a character reference may be obtained.
- c) Details of all cautions or convictions for criminal offences, including motoring offences and pending actions.
- d) Details of all bankruptcy proceedings and outstanding court judgements for debt.

e) An acknowledgement that misrepresentation, or failure to disclose material facts, may constitute grounds for immediate dismissal and/or legal action.

f) Assistance in obtaining a continuous record of written evidence confirming that there is nothing in their background which would reflect adversely upon their suitability for the proposed employment.

g) A signed statement authorizing an approach to former employers, government departments, personal referees, etc. for verification of their career and employment record.

NOTE If necessary, applicants may be reassured that a current employer will not be contacted until written permission is obtained. It may be that such permission is withheld until an offer of provisional employment is made and, in such cases, the applicant should be informed that it is a condition of the offer of provisional employment that the offer will be withdrawn if the security screening is not concluded satisfactorily.

4.2.6 *Verification of information*

Verification of the following should be sought and confirmation obtained in writing.

- a) Current place of residence.
- b) Date and place of birth; the birth certificate (not a photocopy) of the person being screened should be seen to verify name, date of birth, etc. For persons who changed their surname (e.g. by marriage or deed-poll), the relevant certificate (not a photocopy) should also be seen. Alternatively, military service documents or a valid full passport can be used to confirm identity.
- c) Date of leaving full-time, secondary education; in the case of applicants who state that they ceased full-time secondary education less than 10 years prior to the application for employment, the written record should confirm the date of leaving. For those who left an educational establishment at the end of a school year (summer term), the period up to 1 November of that year may be considered as part of the school career; for those leaving at other times of year, the period of grace should be limited to two months. If verification is not possible with the educational establishment, the date of leaving should be confirmed by the referees.
- d) Periods of employment; obtained from previous employers, although reference to a current employer should not be made without the applicant's prior written permission.