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Vacant property protection services – Code of practice

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Foreword

Publishing information

This British Standard is published by BSI Standards Limited, under licence from The British Standards Institution, and came into effect on 31 October 2015. It was prepared by Technical Committee GW/3, *Private security management services*. A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its secretary.

Use of this document

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.

Any user claiming compliance with this British Standard is expected to be able to justify any course of action that deviates from its recommendations.

Presentational conventions

The provisions of this standard are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its recommendations are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is “should”.

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

Contractual and legal considerations

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.

Introduction

This code of practice is for security measures and services introduced when a property is at increased risk of criminal attack because it is vacant.

A typical vacant property is a building that has been occupied but is temporarily not in use prior to a new owner or tenant moving in. Many other reasons exist for the need to protect a property. It is assumed that the type of vacant property covered by this code of practice is intended to be vacant for a limited period of time (although this period might in practice be a number of years).

Although the property might already have security equipment or devices (e.g. high security doors) when it is temporarily unoccupied there might be greater risk of arson, burglary, vandalism, etc. simply because criminals are aware that the building is not being protected in the usual way.

This could also be the case when construction work is being undertaken. For example if an extension is being constructed, the fabric of the original building might be removed, thereby creating an easy access point for burglars or squatters.

1 Scope

This British Standard gives recommendations for the provision of security and management services, the provision of manned services (static guarding, mobile patrols, remote monitoring services), physical devices (barriers), electronic systems (alarm and CCTV), and protection by occupation (5.3.2), for the security of vacant properties.

NOTE The nature of this provision might vary considerably according to the type and condition of property. Protection may be given by a combination of methods.

It is applicable to providers of protection services for vacant properties. Such properties include and are not limited to:

- a) public & government [e.g. police, National Health Service (NHS), military barracks, nursing homes];
- b) commercial (warehousing, factories, retail);
- c) residential (private & social);
- d) construction sites;
- e) open land (at risk from travellers);

This British Standard is also applicable to the following types of vacancy:

- a) prior to first occupancy;
- b) refurbishment or redevelopment;
- c) following damage (e.g. fire, flood, or criminal activity);
- d) temporary unoccupancy (e.g. up to 60 to 90 days);
- e) long term unoccupancy;
- f) derelict/awaiting demolition;
- g) properties requiring additional security measures not those intended to be applied on a permanent basis.

This standard does not give recommendations for the execution of maintenance and the physical up-keep of properties.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

BS 7499, *Static site guarding and mobile patrol service – Code of practice*

BS 7858, *Security screening of individuals employed in a security environment – Code of practice*

BS 7984, *Keyholding and response services – Code of practice*

BS EN 50130-5, *Alarm systems – Part 5: Environmental test methods*

3 Terms, definitions and abbreviations

3.1 Terms and definitions

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

3.1.1 agreement

part of the contractual arrangement between the company and the client describing the services and equipment provided for the vacant property protection of their property

NOTE This is different from the agreement between the company and a property guardian.

3.1.2 intruder alarm system

alarm system to detect and indicate the presence, entry or attempted entry of an intruder into supervised premises

[SOURCE: BS EN 50131-1:2006+A1:2009, 3.1.36]

3.1.3 property guardian

person licensed to occupy a property by a company, on behalf of the property owner

3.1.4 property guardian licence

legal agreement between a company and a person allowing them to occupy a property on a non-exclusive basis

3.1.5 protection by occupation

method whereby a company arranges for property guardians to live in the property

3.1.6 vacant property protection

provision of people, services and equipment at a defined building or site to maintain the integrity of that place against human, environmental and natural threats in lieu of normal occupation or use

3.1.7 temporary alarm system

system with the ability to detect and indicate the presence of unauthorized persons or a hazard within a vacant property.

NOTE A temporary alarm system is different from an intruder alarm system as defined in 3.1.2.

3.2 Abbreviations

ADSL	asymmetric digital subscriber line
CCTV	closed circuit television (for surveillance purposes)
GSM	global system for mobile communications
GPRS	general packet radio service
PSTN	public switched telephone network
TAS	temporary alarm system
VPP	vacant property protection

4 General company operations

COMMENTARY ON CLAUSE 4

This clause gives recommendations applicable to the operations of the company but not specific to the protection of individual properties.

4.1 Use of contractors

It is the responsibility of companies employing contractors to ensure that work is carried out in accordance with this standard.

4.2 Staff employment vetting

All staff with access to protected properties or information regarding protected properties, or undertaking activities covered by BS 7984 should be selected and screened in accordance with BS 7858.

If employees are acquired through a takeover, the organization should satisfy itself that the provisions of 4.6 have been fully met.

NOTE 1 Contractors carrying out work at the vacant property that is not related to the provision of protection or security need not be security screened in accordance with BS 7858.

Access to the property should be in accordance with 5.8. The company should ensure that the activities of contractors have not compromised the security provided.

NOTE 2 Property guardians are not contractors.

4.3 Identity cards

All employees operating in public or at the vacant property should be issued with, and instructed to carry at all times whilst on duty, a photographic card confirming their position with the company. The company should ensure the periodic renewal of identity cards for each employee, and the withdrawal and appropriate disposal of identity cards on termination of employment contracts. Each identity card should include the following information:

- a) company name, address and telephone number(s);
- b) employee's name, photograph, and signature;
- c) expiry date, not more than three years from date of issue.

NOTE 1 Legislation or standards might impose additional requirements.

NOTE 2 I.D. cards would normally have a unique identifier, such as a payroll number or employee number.

4.4 Health and safety

4.4.1 General

If the company has a health and safety policy, such policy should document health and safety policy/procedures directly relating to the vacant property protection (VPP) business and should address monitoring of compliance with the policy.

NOTE 1 Attention is drawn to the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 [1] (supplemented by the Management of Health & Safety Regulations of 1999) [2].

Companies should have carried out a full assessment of their obligations as a contractor in the vacant property marketplace and should have provided, or agreed, a written description of the work to be undertaken, together with associated terms and conditions.

NOTE 2 Attention is drawn to the Construction (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1996 [3].

4.4.2 Safety training

Each employee of a company should receive training to enable them to carry out a risk assessment for their personal safety at site locations as might be deemed necessary and commensurate with good working practice.

Where appropriate, employees should receive basic training in first aid and the use of fire extinguishers.

4.4.3 Hazardous materials and asbestos

All stored hazardous materials should be managed and documented (e.g. by removal, secured in a cage or clearly marked and identified [see 5.2 for the risk assessment process]).

For any properties with asbestos present, the company should ensure that no risk exists to the persons entering the property from the asbestos (i.e. that a current asbestos survey confirms that the asbestos is adequately contained).

NOTE Attention is drawn to the Control of Asbestos Regulations (CAR) [4].

4.4.4 Safety equipment and personal protective equipment

NOTE The Personal Protective Equipment Regulations [5] state that operatives are provided with, and wear, when appropriate, protective BS 5426 approved equipment, for example:

- a) protective footwear;*
- b) hard hat/bumper cap;*
- c) high visibility jacket;*
- d) other equipment depending on risk assessment (e.g. torches/mobile communication devices).*

The Health and Safety Management Regulations [1] state that representatives of companies are to be given the appropriate information and training concerning the health and safety risks that such equipment should avoid or limit.

For the purposes of a risk assessment, attention is drawn to the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2002 [5] (S.I. 2002 No 1144).

4.4.5 Loneworker operations

NOTE A lone worker is defined by the HSE as "an employee who performs an activity that is intended to be carried out in isolation without close or direct supervision". Employers have a duty of care to lone workers.

The company should have a lone worker policy in place with the intention of managing the risk to lone workers. Lone working should be decreased to a minimum or, if this is not possible, then risk mitigation techniques should be put in place.

4.4.6 Employee health

The company should have a procedure to ensure that employees are in a suitable physical condition to perform their work.

4.5 Plant and equipment

4.5.1 General

NOTE There are three categories of plant and equipment:

- a) *that owned by the client as part of the property to be protected but which is not in use during the period of protection (e.g. manufacturing machinery, air conditioning systems);*
- b) *that owned by the client as part of the property but which is used either to maintain the building and services or as part of the security (e.g. intruder alarm system, sprinkler system);*
- c) *that owned by the company and used as part of the vacant property protection or in readiness as part of threat mitigation plans (e.g. temporary alarm system, portable generator, and emergency pumps).*

Only employees with appropriate training and where applicable, with necessary licenses or permits, should carry out the operation, adjustment, installation or removal of plant and equipment.

4.5.2 Plant and equipment owned by the client

Property owned by the client should only be operated, adjusted, installed, removed or switched on/off by the company as stated in the agreement.

The company should obtain proof from the client that plant and equipment has been checked and serviced at regular intervals in accordance with manufacturer recommendations and legislation before the equipment is used.

Plant and equipment owned by the client should not be removed from site without the client's permission.

4.5.3 Plant and equipment owned by the company

All plant and equipment owned by the company should be checked and serviced at regular intervals in accordance with manufacturer recommendations. Records should be kept of checks and services.

4.6 Employee training

Prior to commencing duties employees should receive training. The training given to employees should include:

- a) an understanding of the vacant property protective business;
- b) health and safety requirements (see 4.4);
- c) installation and removal techniques (as appropriate);
- d) guarding/patrol techniques;
- e) risk assessment (see 5.2);
- f) awareness of company procedures;
- g) client care;