

BS 9518:2021



BSI Standards Publication

Processing of alarm signals by an alarm receiving centre — Code of practice

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Published by BSI Standards Limited 2021

ISBN 978 0 539 12876 5

ICS 13.320

The following BSI references relate to the work on this document:

Committee reference GW/1/11

Draft for comment 21/30411818 DC

Amendments/corrigenda issued since publication

Date	Text affected

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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 July 2021. It was prepared by Subcommittee GW/1/11, *Remote centres*, under the authority of Technical Committee GW/1, *Electronic security systems*. A list of organizations represented on these committees can be obtained on request to the committee manager.

Supersession

This British Standard supersedes [BS 8591:2014](#), which will be withdrawn on 31 July 2022.

Relationship with other publications

This British Standard has been produced following the publication of [BS EN 50518:2019](#) and is intended to complement that standard by providing UK-specific recommendations for the processing of alarm signals.

The UK has produced standards for the planning, construction, facilities and operation of manned and unmanned remote centres since the 1990s.

The first of these was [BS 5979](#) (*Remote centres receiving signals from fire and security systems – Code of practice*), which gave recommendations for the planning, construction and facilities of manned and unmanned remote centres, and for the operation of alarm receiving centres (ARCs) receiving signals from security systems including intruder and hold-up alarm systems (I&HAS). Following the publication of [BS EN 50518](#), parts 1–3 in 2013, which provided requirements for planning, construction, facilities and for the operation of ARCs receiving signals from I&HAS, [BS 5979:2007](#) was withdrawn.

[BS 8591](#) (*Remote centres receiving signals from alarm systems – Code of practice*) was produced in 2014 following the publication of [BS EN 50518](#) in 2013 to provide recommendations for the planning, construction and facilities of manned and unmanned remote centres, and for the operation of ARCs receiving signals from security systems other than I&HAS. The publication of [BS EN 50518:2019](#) has prompted the development of BS 9518 and the withdrawal in due course of [BS 8591](#).

ARCs certificated to [BS 5979](#) or [BS 8591](#) at the date when that British Standard was withdrawn are presently able to maintain certification to [BS 5979](#) or [BS 8591](#) as appropriate, subject to the terms of the certification scheme.

[BS 5979:2007](#) and [BS 8591:2014](#) both contained UK procedural and performance recommendations for the processing of signals from alarm systems. These recommendations have been reviewed and updated during the development of BS 9518, with specific changes to procedures to reflect changes in the expectations of UK Emergency Services organizations. As a result of this review and update, there might be conflicts between the procedural and performance recommendations given in BS 9518 and the withdrawn standards ([BS 5979](#) and [BS 8591](#)); where such conflict exists, the recommendations in BS 9518 supersede those in [BS 5979](#) or [BS 8591](#).

Certification schemes for ARCs to [BS EN 50518](#) may be extended to include certification to BS 9518.

Information about this document

This British Standard covers the alarm handling procedures for ARCs receiving signals from I&HAS, fire alarm systems, social alarm systems, VSS and lone worker devices.

This standard was written to retain those sections of [BS 8591](#) not in conflict with [BS EN 50518](#) and in addition to include alarm handling procedures for alarm types covered in other British Standards, i.e. [BS 8243](#), [BS 8418](#) and [BS 8484](#).

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Where websites and webpages have been cited, they are provided for ease of reference and are correct at the time of publication. The location of a webpage or website, or its contents, cannot be guaranteed.

Use of this document

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

Users may substitute any of the recommendations in this British Standard with practices of equivalent or better outcome. 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.

Where words have alternative spellings, the preferred spelling of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary is used (e.g. “organization” rather than “organisation”).

The word “should” is used to express recommendations of this standard. The word “may” is used in the text to express permissibility, e.g. as an alternative to the primary recommendation of the Clause. The word “can” is used to express possibility, e.g. a consequence of an action or an event.

Notes and commentaries are provided throughout the text of this standard. Notes give references and additional information that are important but do not form part of the recommendations. Commentaries give background information.

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1 Scope

This British Standard gives recommendations for the processing of signals by an alarm receiving centre (ARC) from alarm systems, such as but not limited to fire detection and fire alarm systems, fixed firefighting systems, intrusion and holdup alarm systems, video surveillance systems, social alarms systems, lone worker, and combinations of such systems.

NOTE [BS EN 50518:2019](#) provides guidance on planning, construction, systems, management processes, leadership, governance, management and staffing of an alarm receiving centre. [BS 5979](#) and [BS 8591](#) also provide guidance.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes provisions of this document.¹⁾ For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

[BS 7858](#), *Screening of individuals working in a secure environment – Code of practice*

BS EN 50131-1, *Alarm systems – Intrusion and hold-up systems – Part 1: System requirements*

[BS EN 50134-7:2017](#), *Alarm systems – Social alarm systems – Part 7: Application guidelines*

[BS EN 50518:2019](#), *Monitoring and Alarm Receiving Centre*

BS EN 62676-4:2015, *Video surveillance systems for use in security applications – Part 4: Application guidelines*

3 Terms, definitions and abbreviated terms

3.1 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this British Standard, the terms and definitions given in BS EN 50131-1 and the following apply.

3.1.1 alarm company

organization that provides installation and/or maintenance services for alarm systems

3.1.2 alarm condition

condition of an alarm system, or part thereof, that results from the response of the system to the presence of a hazard

[SOURCE: BS EN 50518:2019, 3.1.2]

3.1.3 alarm filtering

procedure whereby signalled alarm conditions are intentionally delayed and their status reviewed for the purpose of preventing unnecessary calls to the relevant emergency service or nominated contact by cancelling certain alarm conditions, where such cancellation is authorized by the user or responsible/authorized person

NOTE Such filtering is not usually applied to signals from fire alarm systems in residential care premises.

¹⁾ Documents that are referred to solely in an informative manner are listed in the Bibliography.

3.1.4 alarm management system (AMS)

system which stores, organizes, controls, manages and allows retrieval of client data and is interfaced to alarm receiving equipment for automatic annunciation of messages for each alarm system

[SOURCE: BS EN 50518:2019, 3.1.4]

3.1.5 alarm message

message that indicates that an alarm condition has occurred, or which provides supplementary information concerning a previously reported alarm message

3.1.6 alarm receiving centre (ARC)

continuously manned remote centre to which information concerning the status of one or more alarm systems is reported

[SOURCE: BS EN 50518:2019, 3.1.5]

NOTE For the avoidance of doubt, alarms from systems in accordance with [BS 8418](#) which were formerly handled at a Remote Video Response Centre (RVRC) may also be handled at an ARC that operates in conformity to this British Standard.

3.1.7 alarm signal

signal which, upon being received at an ARC, identifies a signalled alarm condition

3.1.8 client

person or organization with whom the ARC has entered into a contract to provide alarm monitoring services

NOTE In [BS 8484](#), this is known as the "supplier".

3.1.9 confirmed alarm

signalled alarm condition which the ARC identifies as indicating that a genuine alarm has occurred

NOTE This determination might be because:

- a) the alarm signal indicates that local filtering within the alarm system (AS) has identified a high probability of a genuine alarm, e.g. as a result of two independent events occurring in sequence; or*
- b) filtering actions taken at the ARC (e.g. listening in, viewing video, receipt of two or more independent alarm signals from the supervised premises or user confirmation) to identify that the signal is not a false alert.*

3.1.10 customer

person or organization utilizing the services of the client

NOTE The customer can also be the client.

3.1.11 detection device

device designed to generate an alarm message in response to the sensing of an abnormal condition indicating the presence of a hazard

[SOURCE: BS EN 50518:2019, 3.1.12, modified]

3.1.12 dwelling

unit of residential accommodation occupied (whether or not as a sole or main residence):

- a) by a single person or by people living together as a family;
- b) by not more than six residents living together as a single household, including a household where care is provided for residents;

- c) by persons who do not live together as a family, but who live in self-contained single-family flats, maisonettes or bedsits within the unit; or
- d) as a shared house

NOTE The definitions in c) and d) relate only to some types of house in multiple occupation and specifically exclude hostel type accommodation. They can, however, include houses with long-term lodgers.

3.1.13 escalation instructions

documented instructions available to the operator on receipt of an activation message/call and giving details concerning use of response services

3.1.14 false alarm

signalled alarm condition that is incorrectly identified as a genuine alarm and has been notified to the relevant emergency service

3.1.15 false alert

signalled alarm condition that (without having been extended to the relevant emergency service) is regarded by the ARC as cancelled, such cancellation having been authorized by the customer

NOTE 1 Such authorization can be either:

- a) on a case-by-case basis by use of suitable code words or numbers in accordance with a defined alarm filtering routine; or
- b) by prior written agreement.

NOTE 2 Communication whereby the customer/user causes (i) a mis-operation signal or (ii) an unset signal to be sent to the ARC affirming that the signalled alarm condition is to be filtered out and not extended to the relevant emergency service are examples of cancellation authorized by the customer [see NOTE 1a)].

3.1.16 fire signal

signal intended to indicate the occurrence of a fire

[SOURCE: BS 5839-1:2017, 3.26]

3.1.17 hold up device (HD)

device which, when manually operated, causes an alarm message to be generated

[SOURCE: BS EN 50518:2019, 3.1.18]

3.1.18 genuine alarm

alarm condition which has resulted from:

- a) an attack, or attempts at such, on the supervised premises, the alarm equipment or the line carrying the alarm signal;
- b) actions by the emergency services in the execution of their duties;
- c) a hold-up alarm (HUA)/lone worker service signal made with good intent; or
- d) a confirmed social or fire alarm signal

3.1.19 lone worker (LW)

individual who works by themselves, without close or direct supervision

NOTE 1 Examples of other terms used within the industry for LW include mobile worker or remote worker.

NOTE 2 Guidance on managing the risks of working alone is given in the HSE guidance document, INDG73 [1].

3.1.20 lone worker application (LWA)

dedicated application (software) running on a non-dedicated device(s) able to transmit an activation message/call and to provide communications

NOTE For example, a non-dedicated device can be a mobile device or phone.

3.1.21 lone worker device (LWD)

dedicated electronic device, able to transmit an activation message/call and to provide communications

3.1.22 lone worker service (LWS)

combination of an LWD/LWA, monitoring, training and management information provided by a client to a customer, enabling a response to an LW's activation message/call

3.1.23 mis-operation signal

signal that is unambiguously identifiable at the ARC as indicating that the alarm system has mis-operated

NOTE The designation of a particular type of signal as a mis-operation signal is a matter for agreement between the alarm company and the ARC, with the concurrence of the customer.

3.1.24 pre-activation message/call

information sent from an LWD/LWA to an ARC providing the operator with details about planned LW location, identity, nature of the task and any potential risk applicable at that point in time

NOTE 1 Collectively, these details might result from an LW's dynamic risk assessment.

NOTE 2 Examples of other terms used within the security industry for pre-activation message/call include memo, amber alert and pre-alert.

3.1.25 residential premises

dwellings and buildings used as a specialized grouped living environment

3.1.26 set

status of an alarm system that determines whether certain signals are notified

3.1.27 signalled alarm condition

state of monitoring equipment at an ARC (or other remote location) that indicates that an alarm condition has occurred

NOTE Once signalled at the ARC as an alarm condition, the event is regarded as a signalled alarm condition even if subsequently filtered out by the ARC personnel as being a false alert not requiring relevant emergency service response.

3.1.28 social alarm system

system providing 24 h facilities for alarm triggering, identification, signal transmission, alarm reception, two-way speech communication, reassurance and assistance, for use by persons considered to be at risk

[SOURCE: BS EN 50134-3:2012, 3.1]

3.1.29 specialized grouped living environment

accommodation that provides self-contained, independent living for occupants who are wholly or mainly limited to a specific section of population and who are likely to require additional measures