
code of practice for
physical protection
in vacant property

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Code of practice for the inspection, installation, maintenance and removal of physical protection in vacant property

Introduction

At any one time there are a considerable number of vacant properties throughout the country. Without adequate protection these properties can be subject to misuse and either deliberate or unintentional damage. The provision of good physical protection, fitted to windows and doors, can help minimise and often prevent misuse and damage to these properties.

This code of practice, which has been developed by members of the Physical Security Equipment Section of the British Security Industry Association in consultation with end users, represents a standard of good practice for the installation of window and door protective systems. End-users have welcomed the code and many of their proposals have been incorporated.

The code of practice provides advice to users and specifiers as to the best practice and recommended minimum criteria for window and door protective systems fitted to void properties.

1. Scope

This code of practice covers the customer charter, property inspection, and installation, maintenance and removal of window and door protective systems.

The code of practice gives recommendations for the property inspection, and installation, maintenance and removal of window and door protective systems. These recommendations are specific to the protective systems themselves and to the manner in which they should be fitted on vacant properties to provide adequate protection.

Compliance with this code of practice does not confer immunity from relevant statutory and legal requirements, nor does it necessarily satisfy all the requirements that might be specified by an insurance company or individual customer.

2. Definitions

For the purposes of this code of practice, the following definitions apply:

2.1 Company/member

An organisation who is a member of the BSIA and who is prepared to supply, install, maintain and remove protective systems.

2.2 Damage report

A specific report of an unusual incident in connection with the operation, installation or removal of a protective system i.e. a forced entry.

2.3 Refit

Refitting of a system or part thereof carried out in response to a confirmed request by the customer to reinstate the system after access has been provided to approved persons.

2.4 Re-secure

Emergency refitting of a system or part thereof carried out in response to the development of a fault or an incident.

2.5 Survey report

Document detailing the proposed services to be supplied by the member to the customer for a single installation or multiple installations, and removals on an ongoing basis.

2.6 Vacant (or Vacant property)

Property that is empty and may require securing to minimise the possibility of arson, theft, vandalism or misuse.

2.7 Vacant protection equipment

Equipment and fittings used to secure a vacant property.

3. Customer charter

3.1 Health and Safety

Members must have a written health and safety policy, which complies with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (supplemented by the Management of Health & Safety Regulations of 1999). Members must also document health and safety policy/procedures directly relating to the vacant property protection business and should be able to demonstrate that monitoring of compliance is regularly undertaken. This will include:

3.1.1 Risk assessment

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

Each employee of a member shall receive appropriate training to enable him to carry out specific risk assessments at site locations as may be deemed necessary and commensurate with good working practice.

3.1.2 Manual handling

Members shall give to employees full written guidance and training into aspects of the Manual Handling Operation Regulations and shall provide a method of statement to monitor compliance.

3.1.3 Safety equipment and personal protective equipment

Operatives will be provided with, and must wear when appropriate, the following protective BS EN 5426 approved equipment.

Members' representatives will be given the appropriate information and training concerning the health and safety risks that such equipment will avoid or limit.

- a. arm shields
- b. sturdy boots with reinforced toes
- c. hard hat
- d. gloves
- e. face shield

3.1.4 Ladders

Ladders must comply with the requirements of the Construction (Working Places) Regulation 1996 and use only ladders classified as Class 1. A register of ladders shall be maintained and made available for inspection on demand.

3.1.5 Tools

Under no circumstances should mains-powered electrical equipment be used on any customer site. Suitable re-chargeable battery or generator powered drills, hand-lamps and sundry equipment must be used.

3.1.6 Vermin infestations

The presence of rats, mice, cockroaches, fleas and other vermin infestation, or the remains of such vermin or animal excreta in any work place, must be reported immediately to a manager of the member company. Employees must withdraw from the area concerned and no work may commence or continue until suitable arrangements have been made for the elimination and safe removal of the infestation, and any necessary fumigation has taken place or a safe method of work, including the provision of suitable protective clothing and equipment, has been determined.

3.1.7 Discharged syringes/human excreta/hazardous material

No attempt shall be made to handle or remove objects contaminated with body fluids, such as discarded syringes, needles, broken glass and/or other items that might penetrate the skin or be hazardous to health. Any such incident must be immediately reported to a manager of the member company. Employees shall withdraw from the area concerned and no work may commence or continue until suitable arrangements have been made for the elimination and safe removal of potentially infected objects or material or a safe method of work, including the provision of suitable protective clothing and equipment, has been determined.

3.2 ISO 9001:2000 registration

BSIA members will hold a valid Certificate of Accreditation under ISO 9001:2000, issued by a Certification Body accredited by UKAS for the supply, installation and removal of vacant property protective system.

The scope of registration of a company should cover the full installation and removal methods of the protective system. It should incorporate health and safety, training, working methods, regular work inspection and the management of local depots.

3.3 Insurance

Each member shall carry at least:

- a. employers liability cover for up to £10,000,000 per event
- b. third party indemnity cover for up to £5,000,000 per event
- c. third party indemnity motor vehicle cover

3.4 Training

On joining a company, all employees must be given local induction training, which should include:

- a. an understanding of the vacant property protective business
- b. health and safety requirements (first aid)
- c. installation and removal techniques
- d. risk assessment
- e. QA awareness
- f. customer care

In-house training should provide a specific understanding of how to fulfil the job function. Where more specialised training is required such training will be provided by an approved supplier (e.g. fork lift truck training). Training records and future training plans will be maintained for all members of staff. Refresher training for existing members of staff should be considered.

3.5 Vetting of staff

All staff who have access to protected properties should be vetted in accordance with BS 7858, with the following exceptions:

- a. The screening period will cover the previous 5 years.
- b. The conditions for commencement of provisional employment (e.g. that it cannot commence until 5 years of satisfactorily screening has been carried out) need not be applied.

All members of staff should complete a screening form, which should be independently checked for information supplied by the employee. In addition to the requirements of BS 7858, the screening form should encompass:

- a. a traceable historical record of residence within the UK
- b. details of formal documentation issued e.g. passport, driving licence etc.
- c. financial background
- d. efficacy declaration
- e. medical history

3.6 Company identity

3.6.1 Vehicles

Vehicles should display company livery, which is clearly visible.

- a. All permanent company vehicles, whether leased or purchased, will carry the member company logo, the appropriate ISO 9001:2000 accreditation mark and the BSIA membership logo. A contact telephone number must also be evident.
- b. In exceptional circumstances and only at the customer's written request, unmarked vehicles will be acceptable.
- c. All company vehicles will display load carrying capacity standards, which are to be adhered to.

3.6.2 Clothing

Staff should wear suitable clothing, which clearly identifies the company name and logo.

3.6.3 Identity cards

All employees 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. Each identity card should include the following information:

- a. Company name, address and telephone number(s)
- b. Employee's name, photograph, signature and employee number
- c. Expiry date, not more than 3 years from date of issue

There should be formal arrangements for the withdrawal or cancellation of the identity card from an employee when leaving the company's employment.

Note: See BS 7858 British standard code of practice for security screening of personnel employed in a security environment.

4. Customer liability

Members shall ensure that customers receive terms and conditions, which clearly state:

- a. Once the customer has ownership of a vacant property protective system and means of access, he shall be responsible for the safety and security of the system.
- b. The customer shall at all times hold the member indemnified against any and all losses occasioned by the unauthorised access or removal of a protective system from a property.
- c. The customer shall be liable for the return of the protective system at the end of the hire period in a condition commensurate with the time fitted.
- d. The customer shall grant reasonable access for the member to inspect and check the equipment.

Note: The client should be advised to seek specific guidance from their insurer and to submit the written proposals to the insurer for prior approval.

General guidance on protection measures for empty buildings is in preparation in the relevant insurance industry committees and this is expected soon. See Appendix A other documents.

5. Property inspection

The company shall agree a periodic programme of inspection with the customer and scheduled inspections shall be recorded and provided as a method of confirmation that security system integrity is maintained.

Note: Depending upon the number of items involved, this may include an agreed sampling procedure.

6. Installation

6.1 Pre installation

Members' representatives must thoroughly check to ensure that the property is unoccupied before fitting physical protection. This is especially important where elderly, deaf or infirm persons may be present. When equipment is to be fitted and access is not available, the member's representatives will ensure that the property has been checked beforehand and will record the name of the person who checked the property.

The member's representative must check that there are no personal effects or belongings on site. Where there are, a list shall be provided to the members' representative who will confirm by site inspection that the list is correct. Alternatively, the representative is to be accompanied by the customer or his delegated representative. If any other situation exists, the member's representative must refer the matter to his immediate superior before continuing.

When applicable, appropriate steps shall be taken to ensure that the client's premises are not left in a hazardous condition.

Equipment and materials are to be selected and sited for fitting in accordance with the survey report or customer specification. The member's representatives must be satisfied that it meets with the company's recommendations and will meet the criteria of the customer.

Subject to any specific contractual requirement, the protective system shall be fitted to all openings at ground floor level and below. They shall also be fitted at upper levels where access is possible i.e. where they could be reasonably be expected to be reached by a potential intruder:

- a) Standing on surrounding ground/external staircases, etc;
- b) Standing on the roof of a vehicle that could readily be driven alongside the building and parked below it, e.g. an upper floor window;
- c) Climbing via adjacent single storey roof areas or ledges, e.g. bay windows, porches or pediments, or otherwise by climbing up or along adjacent soil/drainage pipes, walls or trees, etc.

and where specified by the customer.

Where protective systems are fitted there should be no visible gaps at ground floor level and below and there shall be no more than a 4cm gap on the remaining openings.

6.2 Doors

Security doors shall be fitted to a vacant property to allow authorised access. Such doors will be fixed securely to the structure of the building using a method of direct fixing, clamping or a combination of both.

The door shall be fitted to cover the complete access and as far as possible the frame. It shall be fitted so as to minimise the possibility of unauthorised removal. It shall include a locking system, which uses at least 200 codes or differs.

6.3 Screens

Where openings such as sliding sash windows are protected, rigid fixing is to be preferred. The screen/panel shall be fitted externally and secured internally. This is the recommended fitting at the ground floor level.

Where hinged or pivotal windows are installed, a flexible fixing may be used. The screen/panel should be fitted externally and secured internally by passing fire retardant straps or coated cable through openings. This method should be avoided at ground floor level or accessible openings.

Note: Where a screen in excess of 500 mm x 1000 mm is being fitted to an upper floor window, additional help will be required together with a secure method of lifting the screen to its eventual position. Note that all screens require a hoisting method irrespective of size and weight.

6.4 General

The door/screen shall be secured in at least four positions (unless otherwise agreed with the customer)

If, in the opinion of the member's representative, a property is not adequately protected by the specified equipment and additional equipment is required, the client shall be notified.

On completion of work, any dangerous materials left by the member's representatives, such as broken glass, must be cleared away and disposed of. Representatives shall report any damage which occurs to the customer's property whilst they are on site.

7. Maintenance

- a. On installation, equipment should be free of all graffiti and be of a uniform colour.
- b. Any graffiti applied after the fitting of a system should be removed as soon as practicable. Anti-social and racial graffiti should be removed within 24 hours of discovery or notification.
- c. Door locking mechanisms should be regularly maintained by the member i.e. kept clean and lubricated at regular intervals whilst ensuring that residue will not stain clothing.
- d. Regular checks should be carried out to identify equipment which has been tampered with. When discovered, replacement of faulty or damaged equipment must be carried out within a period agreed with the customer (usually within one working day).
- e. Customer's should be notified in writing of any breaches or unauthorised entries, giving details of apparent method of entry and damage caused.
- f. A removal and refit service should be made available to permit contractors to work on site. The customer should be made aware that any interference to the protective system by a third party would invalidate the integrity of the system.
- g. A remedial service should be available to restore the system should there be an unauthorised breach reported to the customer. The service should be available on a same day service if advised before 1530 hours or by midday the next day if later. The contractor may also provide an out of hours service at additional cost.

8. Removals/refits/re-secures

All equipment removed shall be taken away from the site. The client shall be informed of any damage or deficiencies and given the opportunity to carry out an inspection.

Refits and re-secures shall be undertaken so that the protection is at least equal to that which was originally fitted. Where this is not possible, the client shall be informed of any deficiencies and given the opportunity to carry out an inspection.

The member shall maintain records on the reasons for any refit or re-secure.

9. Records & confidentiality

The maintenance of confidentiality and secure storage of data is of paramount importance. Steps should be taken to ensure the safe custody of all keys, equipment relating to installations, and personnel records.

Employees shall be required to enter into an undertaking to keep confidential any information relating to the member's business and their customers' businesses as part of their employment contract.

Appendix A: List of references

Regulations

Management of Health & Safety Regulations of 1999 Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
Construction (Working Places) Regulation 1996
The manual handling operations regulations 1992

Safety Equipment

BS EN 5426:1993

Security Screening of Personnel

BS 7858:2006

Other Documents

The Insurers' Fire Research Strategy Funding Scheme ('InFiReS') and the Insurers' Property Crime Research Group ('IPCRes') have two documents in preparation which are expected to be published before the end of 2008. These are likely to be entitled:

- Guidance for the protection of empty buildings
- Guidance for the selection and use of electronic security systems in empty buildings

The first of these will identify a wide range of risk issues that concern insurers and potential measures that should be considered.