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# Guidance for customers and specifiers of Vacant Property Protection

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## Introduction

This guidance is intended to assist those seeking a way of protecting vacant property and primarily considers protection against crime although other hazards, such as fire, are also covered. Security measures and services are often introduced when a property is at increased risk of criminal attack because of a change of circumstances in its occupancy. Some property owners may choose to do this for themselves but this is not normally recommended. It is usual to employ the services of a company.

The exact way in which a property is protected is a matter for a case by case assessment and decisions need to be taken. This guide will help property owners with the choices to be made and may lead them to consider more cost effective ways or ways that give other benefits that they may not have thought of.

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 considered by this guidance is intended to be vacant for a limited period of time (although this period may in practice be a number of years).

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

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

The guidance could apply to many types of vacancy including:

- Prior to first occupancy
- Refurbishment / Development
- Following damage (e.g. fire / flood / criminal activity)
- Temporary Vacancy (e.g. up to 60 – 90 days)
- Long Term Vacancy
- Derelict / Awaiting Demolition

The BSIA were instrumental in the creation of British Standard BS 8584 “Vacant Property Protection Services – Code of Practice” which was first published in October 2015. That standard is intended for companies offering protection services (as explained in this guide) but does not detail the options available for protection as given in this guidance. In addition to specifiers and customers of vacant property the guidance in this document could therefore help providers of services.

# 1 Scope

These guidelines cover the variety of options available for the protection of vacant property. Such options include manned guarding, monitoring or patrols, physical barriers, materials or structures, electronic devices and in particular could include “protection by occupation” (commonly known as “guardians”).

This guidance is descriptive rather than prescriptive. It describes options that are available and is intended to assist those making a choice about which measures may be appropriate.

These guidelines are intended to cover additional security measures not those intended to be applied on a permanent basis.

*NOTE: For example an intruder alarm system installed for permanent use will have different characteristics to a temporary system used in a vacant property.*

The guide is intended to be read by customers and specifiers and considers:

- What should a customer look for?
- What alternatives are there and why choose one over another?
- Give reference to any standards (or any that don't apply)
- Specific precautions (e.g. health and safety)
- Best practice (e.g. alarm position)

## 2 Referenced Documents

### 2.1 Referenced Standards

Published by or available from British Standards:

BS EN 50131-1	Alarm systems. Intrusion and hold-up systems. System requirements
BS 8584	Vacant Property Protection Services – Code of Practice
BS 7858	Security screening of individuals employed in a security environment. Code of practice.
BS 7984	Keyholding and response services. General recommendations for keyholding and response services
BS EN 62676 Series	Video surveillance systems for use in security applications.
PAS 24	Enhanced security performance requirements for doorsets and windows in the UK. Doorsets and windows intended to offer a level of security suitable for dwellings and other buildings exposed to comparable risk.
BS 5979	Remote centres receiving signals from fire and security systems. Code of practice.
BS 8591	Remote centres receiving signals from alarm systems. Code of practice.

Certisecure, Warrington Certification

STS 201 Enhanced security requirements for doorsets and door assemblies for dwellings to satisfy the requirements of PAS23 and PAS24

STS 202 Requirements for burglary resistance of construction products including hinged, pivoted, folding or sliding doorsets, windows, curtain walling, security grilles, garage doors and shutters.

Loss Prevention Certification Board, BRE Global

LPS 1175 Requirements and testing procedures for the LPCB approval and listing of intruder resistant building components, strongpoints, security enclosures and free-standing barriers

## 2.2 Regulations

The following regulations are mentioned by this document or may be relevant. Be aware that regulations may be changed at any time and that relevant laws may vary. This list is indicative and regulations will vary between countries.

- Management of Health & Safety Regulations
- Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations
- Management of Health & Safety at Work (Amendment) Regulations
- Health and Safety at Work Act
- Construction (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulation
- Personal Protective Equipment Regulations
- The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act
- Occupiers Liability Act
- Defective Premises Act
- Control of Asbestos Regulations
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order
- The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations
- The Licensing and Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation and Other Houses (Miscellaneous Provisions)(Amendment)(England) Regulations
- Private Security Industry Act
- The Limitation Act
- Prescription and Limitation (Scotland) Act
- The Limitation (Northern Ireland) Order
- The Protection from Eviction Act

## 3 Definitions and Abbreviations

### 3.1 Terms and Definitions

For the purposes of these guidelines, the following terms and definitions apply:

## Vacant Property Protection

The provision of 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.

*NOTE: The intention of vacant property protection is not necessarily to maintain the value of the property and does not include maintenance and physical up-keep of a building. It is intended to replace the monitoring of the property that would be performed by those when the property is not vacant. The level of security provided may be higher than that of an occupied building to compensate for increased threats because of its vacant status.*

### 3.2 Abbreviations

ARC	Alarm Receiving Centre
BS	British Standard
IAS	Intruder Alarm System
I&HAS	Intruder and Hold-up Alarm System
HAS	Hold-up alarm System
SIA	Security Industry Authority
UKAS	United Kingdom Accreditation Service
URN	Unique Reference Number
VPP	Vacant Property Protection
VSS	Video Surveillance System

## 4 Vacant Property and Public Liability

It is important to note that because of various pieces of legislation a large number of people will be owed a duty of care regarding any property including vacant properties. This includes: employees, agency workers, visitors, contractors, sub-contractors, volunteers, those on work experience, apprentices, members of the public and trespassers. Fines and in some cases prison sentences can apply for failing in that duty and in some cases apply to individuals as well as organisations.

The Occupiers Liability Act 1984 determines whether any duty is owed by a person as occupier of premises, or those having control over the premises, to persons other than his visitors in respect of any risk of their suffering injury on the premises. This adds to the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 which details the liability of occupiers for injury or damage resulting to persons or goods lawfully on any land or other property from dangers due to the state of the property or to things done or omitted to be done there. So with the introduction of the 1984 act it includes persons not lawfully on the premises. The “occupier” owes a duty if they are aware of the danger or have reasonable grounds to believe it exists and the “other person” is in or may come into the vicinity of the danger whether the “other” has lawful authority for being in that vicinity or not. The acts cover conditions when the “occupier” may reasonably be expected to offer some protection.

The Vacant Property Protection Company also owes a duty to every employee under the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations.

## 5 BS 8584 and Finding a Company

### 5.1 What standards should a company meet?

If you are looking for a company to protect your vacant property you should seek one that adheres to BS 8584. If this can be independently verified, by auditing, then you will have more confidence that this is the case.

BSIA recommend that companies should hold a valid Certificate of Accreditation under ISO 9001 issued by a Certification Body accredited by UKAS. The scope of certification should include activities appropriate to the protection of vacant properties.

### 5.2 What is BS 8584?

The BSIA were instrumental in the creation of British Standard BS 8584 “Vacant Property Protection Services – Code of Practice” which was first published in October 2015.

BS 8584 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, for the security of vacant properties. It is applicable to providers of protection services for vacant properties. It does not give recommendations for the execution of maintenance and the physical up-keep of properties.

In other words BS 8584 is a Code of Practice for the companies that provide the services. It does not give details about how individual properties are protected.

### 5.3 What does a company have to do to meet BS 8584?

The following information summarises some of the things a company meeting BS 8584 must do. For the full details refer to BS 8584.

#### 5.3.1 General Company Operations

- a) Companies must ensure that contractors working for them do the work in accordance to BS 8584
- b) Companies should employ fit and proper persons vetted in accordance with BS 7858 - *Security screening of individuals employed in a security environment – Code of practice.*
- c) Employees of the company should carry identity cards.
- d) Employees should be adequately trained with regard to health and safety and wear appropriate personal protective equipment. As appropriate this should include first aid and use of fire extinguishers.
- e) Hazardous materials should be dealt with properly.
- f) Companies should consider their employees’ health, wellbeing and safety when working alone. Employees should receive proper training for their activities.
- g) Companies should have sufficient insurance including cover.
- h) Companies should ensure the safe custody of all keys, documentation and equipment relating to installations.

- i) The company should undertake or agree with the customer the undertaking of a survey as part of a risk management approach.
- j) Companies should ensure that clients receive terms and conditions, which clearly state:
  - a. The frequency of visits.
  - b. That surveys, when required, meet the client and insurers requirement or conditions.
  - c. Any special requirements
  - d. Actions to be taken in the event of issues being found as a result of an inspection.
  - e. Where, under the terms of the agreement, a client hires equipment from the company the ownership of this equipment should be clearly identified together with the conditions relating to its return. Any necessary insurance arrangements should be specified.
  - f. Insurance held by the company that would operate in connection with the contract

It is vital that any agreement and contract between the property owner (“the client”) and a company providing vacant property security is given careful consideration especially to ensure that it is clear who is responsible for actions to be carried out. This consideration should include whether the vacant property protection is covered under the terms of the customer’s insurance.

### **5.3.2 Use of Equipment**

BS 8584 requires that equipment provided by the company be looked-after and used properly and that any plant or equipment owned by the property owner is only used according to agreements with the owner and remains on site (unless permission is given to remove it).

## **5.4 What else should a specifier look for in a vacant property protection company?**

### **5.4.1 Additional Recommendations**

In addition to the BS 8584 Code of Practice, BSIA recommend companies should have a written health and safety policy, which complies with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act (supplemented by the Management of Health & Safety Regulations).

### **5.4.2 Generic Accreditations – What do they mean?**

There are a number of accreditations that companies providing many types of service (not specific to security) may hold. The following list mentions some of these and provides further information.

**EXOR** - Operating predominantly in public sector procurement throughout the UK; there are currently 25,000 subcontractors subscribing to Exor and its sister health and safety accreditation service Safecontractor, certification and verification services.

**Constructionline** – A Government run health and safety accreditation scheme. Accreditation assures that companies and individuals meet health and safety standards.

**CHAS** – The Contractors Health and Safety Assessment Scheme. Assessing suppliers health and safety competence. Being CHAS approved means a supplier's compliance is accepted by all CHAS buyers.

**Contractor Plus** – A web based database of contractors who have been rigorously vetted to ensure their health and safety standards are of the highest quality. The system, developed in partnership with Lambert Smith Hampton allows surveyors to search on line for reputable contractors and filter the search by contractor service or location.

**Safe Contractor** – A contractor safety accreditation scheme as part of the same network as Constructionline

**Achilles Verified** – A Provider of supplier pre-qualification systems and accreditations as well as supplier risk management systems.

**Altius** - A vendor accreditation for businesses.

## **5.5 What else applies to the people protecting a vacant property?**

### **5.5.1 Licences**

In accordance with the Private Security Industry Act licenses issued by the Security Industry Authority (SIA) are required for keyholding services, monitoring of public space surveillance (CCTV), security guarding and some other services. Refer to <http://www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk> for details.

*Note 1: Not all company employees will need licences; it depends on their job and/or the task they are performing.*

*Note 2: In BS 8584 there is reference to a property guardian licence. This is a legal agreement between a company and a person allowing them to occupy a property on a non-exclusive basis. This is not the same as a SIA licence and should not be confused with it.*

## **5.6 What is a company expected to do under BS 8584**

The following outlines the activities given in the Code of Practice. For full details refer to BS 8584.

### **5.6.1 Initial Risk Assessment**

A survey or inspection of the site should be made. This would include a check on the presence of existing security features and making a record of the condition of the premises and equipment.

An assessment of the risks should be made and the appropriate risk mitigation measures agreed with the client. This guide will help in those decisions.

The survey or inspection does not have to be carried out by the company (e.g. a consultant could be employed) in this case it is essential that the agreement states exactly what security provisions the client has requested.

It is vital that the agreement and contract is checked carefully, especially to ensure that it is clear who is responsible for actions to be carried out.

## **5.7 Commencing Protection**

### **5.7.1 Create an Inventory**

The property owner should ensure that any property that is left onsite is included on an inventory to identify ownership.

### **5.7.2 Inform interested parties**

Several parties may wish or need to know that a property is vacant. In some cases the knowledge of another party can assist in the protection. Although informing these parties is the responsibility of the building owner a company contracted to provide security may offer to carry out these actions. The example parties to be considered are:

- a. The insurer of the property (together with a check on their policies and conditions). It is important that adequate records of correspondence with the insurer are maintained.
- b. The local fire services - Ensure fire services are aware of water supply locations, sprinkler systems, etc. Ensure fire service has details of keyholders.
- c. The local police service - Ensure the police have details of keyholders (if the local police retain this information).

In addition to BS 8584 recommendations, BSIA recommend that consideration is given to informing:

- d. The owners of adjacent properties (providing contact details of who they should contact in the event of a problem). It is also useful for the company providing protection to have contact details for the owners or tenants of adjacent properties. Neighbours can be very useful in reporting unauthorised entry.
- e. Local authorities, if applicable.

### **5.7.3 Commence access management**

This section describes the initial actions when the contracted company begins their activities. There are specific recommendations for access to the property when protection by occupation is in place (See 7.8).

It is important that clear instructions and systems are put in place to manage access to the site as soon as possible. This activity is normally carried out by the company providing protection. When it is not possible to control who has access then liability for any security issues cannot be determined. Therefore, although the owner may wish to have unrestricted control, it is normal for the contracted company to manage that access. There should be a documented agreement regarding who has the authority to allow access.

An audit trail should be kept detailing who allowed access and to whom it was given.

All keys to the property should be accounted for. If this is not possible then consideration should be given to changing locks or adding new locks.

When other systems are used to control access (e.g. an electronic access control system) then appropriate measures should be taken (e.g. temporary or permanent removal of permissions to individuals).

#### **5.7.4 Utilities**

A decision must be made regarding whether utilities (water, gas, electricity, etc.) should be left on or disconnected. There are many factors to take into account including:

- a) Protection by occupation or guards
- b) The expected period of vacancy
- c) Anticipated use (e.g. need for power during viewings)
- d) Sprinkler systems
- e) Heating to maintain the building's condition
- f) Need to maintain electrical equipment on site (including alarm systems, pumps, etc.)

Utilities may be required in some parts of a building but not all and decisions can be taken about whether they should be partially disconnected.

Meter readings should be taken as appropriate.

#### **5.7.5 Letterboxes**

Letterboxes, if not required, can be sealed to prevent a build-up of post and unsolicited advertising which can be a fire risk. If they are sealed alternative arrangements should be made for delivery of mail. This could be a separate external secure mail box.

*NOTE: Letterboxes are frequently used by arsonists using the unsolicited mail as tinder. Uncollected mail advertises that the property is not in regular use.*

#### **5.7.6 Property Clearance**

As appropriate and taking into account the future use of the property owners should take simple actions that may assist in reducing threats to the property. Some companies providing vacant property protection will offer such clearance services.

Examples are:

- a. Remove all combustible materials and hazardous items.
- b. Remove any building contents that might attract thieves.

### **5.8 Inspections and Checks**

BS 8584 says that companies should agree a periodic programme of inspection and that inspections should be recorded and provided to customers. It should be available to customers within 24 hours of the inspection.

In addition to regular inspections it may be worthwhile agreeing extra inspections following periods of bad weather.

BS 8584 says that the agreement should tell the customer what the inspection includes.

The customer should also ensure that the agreement makes clear what happens if the inspection discovers a problem or how a security breach is handled.

## **5.9 Other actions when a property is vacant**

### **5.9.1 Tidy-up and External Appearance**

Consider the visual appearance of the property and whether this would attract criminals/ squatters, etc. Properties that appear uncared for attract criminals. Mowing of lawns, removal of graffiti, repair of windows and similar activities will be of benefit.

## **6 Threats to Vacant Properties**

When considering what forms of protection are required the following threats should be remembered. The likelihood of each will vary with each case and the suitability of one method of protection will vary from property to property. One thing that should be considered is that it may be possible to protect against several threats with a single method of protection. Threats include:

- a) theft (of contents, equipment and building fabric, e.g. metal theft);
- b) structural damage/vandalism (including damage to windows and difficult to repair architectural features);
- c) damage and vandalism to equipment, plant and machinery
- d) fire/arson;
- e) illegal/unauthorized occupation of the building or site (e.g. squatting);
- f) misuse (trading, parties, drug related);
- g) fly-tipping;
- h) environmental damage (including flooding, wind, spillages) both directly and as a consequence of other criminal activity;
- i) water ingress;
- j) health and safety related problems (e.g. possible risk to employees/visitors);
- k) liability to third parties (e.g. injuries to people entering site);
- l) animal infestation;
- m) threats to adjacent property;
- n) threats to occupied parts of a site (e.g. during renovation/construction).

## **7 Mitigation Methods**

### **7.1 On-going Appearance**

The major difference between a vacant property and other properties is that it is not in use. A property in continuous use has an appearance of use whereas a vacant property looks disused and therefore vulnerable and open to misuse or attack. Any simple actions that can be performed to show that the property is still watched over and cared for will act to dissuade criminals to some extent.

In the case of protection by occupation the property has some appearance of use but property guardians would not be expected to carry out property maintenance beyond basic tidying.

Recommended actions include:

- a) Clearing of litter
- b) Collection of mail (if letterbox not sealed)
- c) Mowing of lawns and other garden care
- d) Upkeep of paintwork
- e) Removal of graffiti
- f) Prompt repair of damage (e.g. windows, fences)
- g) Ensuring closure of gates and barriers

Decorative measures can be applied to properties and walls to discourage graffiti.

The planting of bushes, particularly prickly types, can help with appearance whilst also deterring entry into the property.

Where appropriate anti-climb paint can be applied.

## **7.2 Signage**

When measures have been put in place to protect vacant property it is a useful deterrent against criminal activity to place warning signs around the property. Such signs show the building is protected and can also provide contact details for concerned individuals to call if they witness unusual behaviour.

When a video surveillance system (VSS) is deployed signs indicating its presence must be shown in accordance with the Information Commissioner's Code of Practice for CCTV.

Consideration should be given to signs warning about Hazards, for example building hazards, unsafe roofs and structures. Remember that an empty property may attract those seeking an adventure and that the property owner/occupier may be liable .

## **7.3 Outer boundary**

### **7.3.1 General**

The perimeter of the property, i.e. the boundary with adjacent public or private spaces, may already have some form of protection, such as fences or walls, or it may be open. Existing protection should be checked and perhaps enhanced. Where no protection exists a decision should be made regarding the extent to which temporary or permanent security measures should be added.

Well demarcated boundaries help to deter criminals and trespassers from entering a property but in some cases temporary measures can encourage an appearance of decline in the property.

Consideration should be given to reducing the cost of new perimeter protection by constructing a temporary inner perimeter within the grounds to give greater protection to buildings whilst allowing an outer area to have reduced protection.

Large open spaces, including car parks, can attract certain types of criminal and nuisance behaviour. This may potentially include illegal occupation by travellers, dumping of waste or use by antisocial drivers. Illegal car parks may also be a problem.

Solutions could include:

- a) Permanent boundary protection (walls, fences, ditches, embankments)
- b) Temporary boundary protection (fences, embankments, concrete blocks)
- c) Gates
- d) Renting of the land for temporary use (e.g. as a car park) – subject to necessary planning consent.
- e) Perimeter intruder detection (e.g. electronic sensors)
- f) Video Surveillance

### **7.3.2 Temporary Fences**

There are many options for temporary fencing and consideration should be given to the nature of the requirement and the duration of the application. In particular, the height of the fence required, whether it needs to obscure a building site from public view or if it is to deter trespassers or prevent intruders. Other options to consider include vehicle and pedestrian access, stabilisers and reinforced footings to withstand wind damage and vandalism, and climbing deterrents.

### **7.3.3 Perimeter Intruder detection**

Perimeter intruder detection should only be used when there is a defined boundary, such as a fence or wall. When perimeter detection is not an existing method of securing the property then a temporary system could be considered but they can suffer from frequent unwanted detections (e.g. animals) and can be a costly method.

### **7.3.4 Video Surveillance**

Video Surveillance is ideally combined with detectors and remote monitoring so that a prompt response can be made if criminal activity is suspected. The likelihood of false alarms can be reduced if the boundary surrounding the area under surveillance restricts access. The code of practice for installation and remote monitoring of detector activated CCTV systems is BS 8418.

## **7.4 Pre-existing or New Permanent Building Protection**

### **7.4.1 General**

All existing protection within the building whether for security or fire protection should be considered for suitability for continued use during the period of vacancy. In some cases it may be cost effective to consider the installation of new permanent protection especially if this will enhance the property. If new protection is to be fitted it is recommended that latest best-practice is used and regulations followed that such that it remains suitable following re-occupation.

### **7.4.2 Fire Detection and Extinguishers**

For unoccupied properties the customer should seek specific guidance in the form of

an independent fire risk assessment and advice from their insurer. If it is decided to leave extinguishers on site then they must be maintained. There is a risk that extinguishers left on site in an unoccupied property will be misused by vandals and trespassers and cause significant damage.

Protection by Occupation is significantly different and requirements are more onerous and covered by a number of legal provisions. The use of a reputable vacant property protection company is essential to ensure these matters are dealt with properly.

### **7.4.3 Sprinkler Systems**

In the case of an existing sprinkler system specialist advice should be sought regarding whether they should be decommissioned or maintained. General advice cannot be given as systems vary considerably. The customer should seek specific guidance from their insurer and, if necessary, submit the written proposals to the insurer for prior approval.

### **7.4.4 Door Locks**

Existing door locks may not be suitable either because they do not provide sufficient security or because they do not comply with fire regulations if protection by occupation is used.

Replacement of locks is also recommended to ensure that unaccounted for keys are not a cause for concern.

### **7.4.5 Doors**

Consideration should be given to the quality and attack resistance of existing doors. Although fire doors typically have no external handles and have the appearance of being secure, this is not necessarily the case and they are often a point of vulnerability.

For certain doors (e.g. rear doors, fire doors, etc.) it may be beneficial to permanently replace with security doors or improve the security. Test standards exist for security doors to cover a range of risk assessments. Examples are LPS 1175, PAS 24, STS 201 and STS 202.

Although most doors, particularly main entrance doors, can be replaced it is more likely that future users of the building may have particular requirements that do not match any short term choice (see 7.5.6 for temporary arrangements).

### **7.4.6 Intruder Detection (Permanent)**

It may be possible to make use of an existing intruder alarm system (IAS), possibly with design changes, or to pre-emptively install a new IAS that will continue to be used following the end of the vacant period of the property. In some cases a permanent type of IAS may be appropriate during the vacant property protection.

If a risk assessment indicates that people on site may be at risk of attack a "PA" ("Panic Alarm"/"Personal Attack Alarm") system may be incorporated. According to the standards these are known as "hold-up alarm systems" (HAS). When combined the system is known as an intruder and hold-up alarm system (I&HAS). Further details about these systems and the monitoring of them can be found in Annex A.

Monitoring of permanent alarms is usually by an Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC). After processing the ARC can call either a keyholder or the police. See 7.6

Transmission of alarms to an ARC can be achieved using a variety of methods (by phone line, broadband, mobile phone network, etc.). It is often recommended that two alternative methods are provided but in the case of a vacant property the choice of method may be restricted (e.g. the phone has been disconnected).

*Note: To achieve police response the premises must have a "URN" (see Annex A). If the URN is lost then it is possible that the alarm system will need to be replaced.*

#### **7.4.7 Video Surveillance (Permanent)**

As with intruder alarm systems existing VSS or new permanent VSS systems can be installed. There are three basic modes of VSS operation which can be used separately or in combination:

1. Monitored on site

Systems that do not include recording are not recommended for vacant property protection. On site monitoring is not typically relevant.

2. Recorded (on or off site)

3. Remotely monitored

Typically remotely monitored systems are used in combination with detectors. The detectors alert the monitoring organisation (at a Remote Video Receiving Centre – which is similar to an Alarm Receiving Centre) and they then observe the images sent to them.

Video surveillance can be used on sites with protection by occupation to cover unoccupied and lobby areas.

The use of a surveillance camera requires an electrical supply – battery powered systems have a limited operating time.

See Annex A for more information.

### **7.5 Temporary Protection**

#### **7.5.1 General**

Subject to any specific contractual requirement, consideration should be given to additional protection or monitoring of all openings at ground floor level and other levels where access is possible i.e. where it could be reasonably expected that a potential intruder may reach openings such as by:

- 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 client.
- d) Using ladders

An appropriate review of all security measures will need to be made if using protection by occupation. For example bars on windows, whether existing or new and temporary, could cause issues relating to health and safety.

### **7.5.2 Steel security doors**

Attempted break-ins through doors are commonplace and a standard door, even with multiple locks fitted, is no match for a determined intruder. A temporary steel door can be installed quickly using fittings located internally, causing no damage to the existing frame, and is designed specifically to provide permanent resistance to high-impact assault and/or repeated attempts at intrusion. They come in 2 options, key operated or keyless/coded doors of strong galvanised and painted steel construction. Keyless operation eliminates third-party key holding, simplifies key management and costly lock changes and provides convenient and easy access. They should have internal locking for extra safety and an easy exit system to allow rapid exit in emergency and prevents accidental lock in.

### **7.5.3 Keyboxes**

Careful consideration should be given to the use, quality and placement of these. The use of these makes the auditing and controlling of access challenging but in some cases this could be overcome if an independent alarm system is also used.

### **7.5.4 Screens and shutters**

The vast array of property types means that the options for screens can be limited in some cases. There is not a one-size-fits all type. Various materials are available including zinc coated steel sheet (minimum 1.5mm thick), perforated steel sheet and transparent polymer. Perforated zinc coated steel sheet is often preferred because it allows some light, ventilation (to prevent mould growth) and eliminates rust staining to the building's fabric.

Boarding (wood, chipboard, and similar) is not typically recommended. Heavyweight options may be suitable in some cases.

Screens should be securely attached with steel security screws or secure internal fittings. Screens should fit well, in a manner that reduces the ability to prise them off, e.g. fitting tightly in a reveal.

### **7.5.5 Lighting**

Consider use of overnight movement-activated, timed or light level activated lighting both internally and externally.

The provision of internal lighting can be useful and a lack of this may restrict the ability of patrols to check the property. The use of existing internal lighting may not be possible if insurers require isolation of the electricity supply. Battery and solar powered, energy efficient lighting options are available.

### **7.5.6 Temporary Alarm Systems**

Most vacant properties are not serviced or powered. As a result, where installed, existing alarm systems may be rendered inoperable. Temporary intruder alarms provide a proven and effective means by which to monitor such properties.

The alarms must be a monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, battery powered with support for GSM (mobile network) communications and specifically designed for use on vacant commercial and residential properties where no mains power or telephone line is available.

The alarm should be configured to detect movement and smoke and, upon detection, send relevant information to an alarm receiving or monitoring centre (ARC). The ARC must operate in accordance with BS 5979 or BS 8591. The system should allow for wireless movement detectors to be installed throughout the building and, when triggered, activate a siren. The alarm unit should simultaneously signal the 24/7 ARC via the mobile GSM network and a response triggered in accordance with the agreed protocol, typically a security team will attend site.

Some systems now include the ability to provide video verification. This can be useful if the sensors are installed externally. In the event of an activation a video clip is captured which allows the monitoring centre to quickly verify if there is an actual intruder or something more benign, such as a cat. When considering video verification care should be taken to note the difference between this and CCTV.

The alarm should provide regular heartbeats (or polling) confirming operational status at least once every 24 hours.

### **7.5.7 Temporary VSS Solutions**

Temporary VSS solutions whether located on a vehicle, mounted on a tower or affixed to the building or perimeter fence can provide valuable information for the detection of intruders and monitoring activity on site.

Given the nature of vacant property, deploying VSS can present significant challenges and additional consideration needs to be given to the site layout, placement of cameras, lighting and what happens if cameras are moved. Guidance on fixed surveillance camera systems previously mentioned in section 7.4.7 will provide the details required, however, consideration needs to be given for the dynamic nature of many vacant sites and proper protocols agreed to accommodate changes.

In addition, consideration needs to be made for power source - mains are preferable as surveillance cameras typically have high power consumption and this may not be available on site. Batteries will need changing or charging/fuelling and Solar/Wind power is dependent on suitable weather conditions.

Maintenance of cameras, for example cleaning and removal of cobwebs, should be carried out regularly together with checks that site changes do not impact on the use of the camera or suggest a better location.

## **7.6 Response and Keyholders**

There should be an agreement about how alarms and identified security breaches are dealt with. In any event it is essential that there is a nominated keyholder. Their job is to attend the premises following an alarm either to meet with guards or the police. The keyholding function may be undertaken by a guarding company or the vacant property protection company or by others. Companies providing keyholding services should comply with BS 7984, (Keyholding and response services – code of practice)

## **7.7 Guarding**

### **7.7.1 Security Patrols (Guarding)**

Mobile security patrolling of vacant property can be useful, typically in conjunction with a range of further measures. The deterrent value of mobile security patrols is limited to the available time that an officer can be present at the vacant property; patrols will be more likely to offer a useful retrospective report on activities (both lawful and unlawful)

that have already occurred. But the deterrent value of a patrol regime can be preserved through careful consideration and variation of specified patrol patterns and timings.

Large differences in quality and capability of firms offering this technically challenging service exist. This guidance recommends customers and specifiers instruct reputable firms able to clearly demonstrate the necessary industry affiliations and accreditations including membership of the BSIA, accreditation to relevant ISO and British Standards, and membership of the ACS scheme of the Security Industry Authority.

Best service and value are more likely to be delivered by firms that meet all of the above standards and require their mobile patrol officers to be fully screened, vetted and SIA licensed. Customers should also consider whether the service they are purchasing is to be self-delivered or sub-contracted; both can deliver quality and value, but it is essential that in the case of subcontracting processes in place to ensure reliability and deliverability to the same level of accreditation.

### **7.7.2 Static Guarding**

The recommendations in 7.7.1 are essential for customers and specifiers of static guarding given the huge disparity in quality and reliability of suppliers, particularly if they are not accredited to these standards.

Static guarding is frequently procured with budget the main consideration of note. While value for money is a key consideration, deliverability must be the overriding criteria of assessing whether static guarding is worth putting in place. Service delivery and standards are the principal factors affected by cheap services.

Customers and specifiers should be aware that insurers may require that static guarding instructions are performed only by firms who are ACS approved or BSIA affiliated, while it is a legal requirement that officers conducting security guarding duties hold valid and current SIA licenses.

Before specifying static security guarding duties on vacant properties many property specific variables must first be considered, limiting the value of this guidance passing general comment. But conducting an appropriate and objective review of current physical and systems measures prior to specifying a static guarding service is essential. A quality supplier will always put significant effort into ensuring that static guarding is properly integrated with these is likely to deliver best results, and be effective at limiting security breaches.

There are significant factors that may render a static guarding service unviable, which would include Health & Safety concerns, such as the presence of hazardous materials, or a lack of appropriate welfare or facilities to support manned occupation of an asset. Frequently, suppliers of other vacant property protection measures will be able to make the necessary enhancements to a property to facilitate a static guarding service if required, for example to meet insurance requirements.

### **7.7.3 Traveller / Squatter Removal**

Preventing access by travellers or squatters is preferable to solving a difficult or protracted legal situation. The use of vacant property for revenue (asset stripping or use for illegal dumping) has become increasingly common.

The presence of travellers and/or squatters in a previously secured vacant property can be emotive; this may be due to a security breach, or it may be due to criminal activity by the occupying party. This emphasises the need to previously thoroughly evaluate security needs rather than costs, but upon arriving in the unwanted position of having an asset trespassed or squatted it is important to suspend preconceptions and fully

appraise the situation before acting. This would include talking to the uninvited individuals occupying the property.

It will be helpful to gather and collate any available evidence of how the occupation has come to pass, and to understand the basic legal position affecting the scenario. Such detail will be specific to the scenario unfolding at the property, and subject to great scenario-specific variation which will dictate the correct approach.

If unable to negotiate a removal, professional services will be required to process a traveller and squatter removal. This is typically a multi-phased operation that passes through legal, serving, processing and evicting phases before a re-securing one concludes the removal. Attention should be paid to the use of a reputable Certificated Enforcement Agent (formerly a bailiff). Depending on the legal process used government employed County Court Bailiffs, or private High Court Enforcement Officers may attend to your eviction. The experience and effectiveness of the processing of the eviction is often decisive, and it can be a false economy to select the lowest common price denominator.

Thought should also be given to the correct approach to secure the property once removal has been achieved; surprisingly frequently suppliers of removal services experience customers making the same mistakes several times. It is sensible to significantly amplify the levels of security measures that were in place prior to the occupation, and then review and revise these down over time, assessing risk and threat for each saving achieved.

Travellers and squatters frequently return to previously known or occupied properties; having undergone the substantial time and expense of a removal it is important not to leave the property vulnerable to repeat attacks. The legal process may also include a time limit beyond which individuals previously evicted may return without breaking the terms of a prior proceeding. Customers should be aware of these limits, as those seeking to reoccupy can be very familiar with this area of law.

## 7.8 Guardians

Protection by occupation, the term used in the standard for protection using guardians is a suitable and appropriate method if the following conditions apply:

- Sufficient duration of vacancy remains – at least 4 weeks
- Building must be not mothballed
- Where welfare facilities are readily available or easy to install
- When the building is in a good state of repair with no hazardous materials (including asbestos)
- When natural light (windows) are present

It is recommended that the occupation occurs in areas that are more vulnerable to entry (i.e. to increase protection) but do not put occupant in danger (e.g. limit the occupancy in line with fire regulations).

For protection by occupation the property guardian should occupy the property under a property guardian licence which is a legal agreement with the supplier of the vacant property protection. The property guardian licence agreement falls under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 and therefore requires a minimum of 4 weeks' notice to vacate the property.

Standard terms and conditions need to be confirmed prior to using protection by occupation which includes which party will be liable for health and safety standards and expenditure.

Facilities for lighting, heating, water, cooking and fire safety should be operational and utilities need to be in use.

Standard checks need to be in place to vet the property guardians, which may involve a DBS check, 2 years of references, credit history, and employment history. A system should be in place for property inspections, compliance checks and to ensure property guardian conduct is satisfactory.

Due to the short term nature of protection by occupation and the standard of property to protect it would not be recommended for the property guardian to have pets or dependents.

In some cases there may be restrictions placed on whether the guardians can invite or allow other persons into the property, particularly overnight stays.

Typically the owner of the property and their representatives retain access to the building at all times including when the guardians are in occupation.

See section 5 for information about the expected activities and duties of a company providing vacant property protection.

# Annex A – Additional Information about Permanent Intruder Alarms and Video Surveillance Systems

## A.1 Intruder and Hold-up Alarms

See Clause 7.4.6

Intruder alarms (IAS) protect against burglaries. A hold-up alarm (HAS) is used by a person in distress when they are under attack (a panic alarm). Combined these are known as intruder and hold-up alarm systems (I&HAS).

In the UK the standards applicable to IAS, HAS and I&HAS are determined by a scheme document published by British Standards called PD 6662. This lists the applicable standards for all components and the installation, monitoring and maintenance of the systems. The primary standard that is the basis for requirements is EN 50131-1 (*Alarm systems — Intrusion and hold-up systems — System requirements*). The EN 50131 series of standards incorporates a concept of “security grading” with four grades (1-4, with 1 have the weakest requirements). In practical terms only grades 2 and 3 are relevant. Insurance companies may wish to specify the grade of system and requirements related to the transmission of alarms to an “alarm receiving centre” (ARC).

ARCs carry out the function of monitoring alarms and after processing calling either a keyholder or the police. In any event it is essential that there is a nominated keyholder. Their job is to attend the premises following an alarm either to meet with guards or the police. The keyholding function may be undertaken by a guarding company or the vacant property protection company or by others. Access management procedures mentioned elsewhere in this guide need to be considered. Companies providing keyholding services should comply with BS 7984, (*Keyholding and response services – code of practice*)

When it is expected that the police will be asked to attend by the ARC then a police issued Unique Reference Number (URN) must be obtained. To obtain this the alarm system must have been installed by and covered by a maintenance contract with a company audited by a UKAS inspected certification body. Two such bodies exist: National Security Inspectorate (NSI) and the Security Systems and Alarm Inspection Board (SSAIB). Care must be taken to maintain a URN once issued. If a vacant property does not have continuation of the maintenance of the IAS then the URN may be withdrawn and a new certificate may need to be obtained. In some circumstances this might mean updating the IAS to meet new requirements.

Police response is dependent on the system meeting the requirements of the NPCC Security Systems Policy (officially: Guidelines on Police Requirements and Response to Security Systems). This highlights that if more than two false alarms occur during a 12 month period then the police will withdraw response. It is therefore important to minimise false alarms. To help with this a process of alarm confirmation is included. If a single detector is activated the ARC will not call the police but (if contracted to do so) will contact the keyholder or a private security company.

Transmission of alarms to an ARC can be achieved using a variety of methods (by phone line, broadband, mobile phone network, etc.). It is often recommended that two alternative methods are provided but in the case of a vacant property the choice of method may be restricted (e.g. the phone has been disconnected).

There are a number of considerations for the use of an alarm. In particular the fabric of the building should be in good condition to avoid movement that will cause a false alarm. When an existing alarm system is employed consideration should be given as to whether the arrangements for entering and leaving the building when it was occupied remain valid when vacant (i.e. would the main entrance continue to be used or would a side entrance be more suitable). This would affect the operation of the alarm system.

If a new (permanent) IAS is to be installed consideration could be given to the use of wireless systems. These allow detectors and other peripheral components to connect to the control panel using radio frequencies. They can therefore be installed more easily and moved if necessary. It is essential to ensure that the radio signals reach their destination. Some materials (e.g. stone, steel reinforced concrete, large metal objects) can significantly reduce the range of operation but moving devices can often solve reception issues.

## **A.2 Video Surveillance**

See Clause 7.4.7

As with intruder alarm systems existing VSS or new permanent VSS can be installed. The series of standards that are applicable are BS EN 62676. Especially where VSS is used to monitor public spaces the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's Code of Practice should be used.

The BSIA publish guidance and advice for VSS including Forms 109 and 120 covering design and installation and maintenance respectively.

Systems that do not include recording are not recommended for vacant property protection. On site monitoring is not typically relevant.

NOTE: An example of existing on site monitoring continuing to be used might apply in the case of properties such as high street shops which have monitors above the exit to demonstrate to potential shoplifters that they are being watched. If the monitors are made visible from outside the property they can show that security is in place and demonstrate that the property is empty and has nothing of value inside.

Typically remotely monitored systems are used in combination with detectors as described in BS 8418 (*Installation and remote monitoring of detector-activated CCTV systems – Code of practice*). In this case detectors alert the monitoring organisation (at a Remote Video Receiving Centre – which is similar to an Alarm Receiving Centre) and they then observe the images sent to them. In a similar manner to the ARC response described for VSS a decision needs to be made about keyholders and police response. Police requirements for URNs, etc. are also similar to intruder alarms.

This document was created by the Vacant Property Protection Section of the British Security Industry Association (BSIA).

The British Security Industry Association is the trade association for the private security industry in the UK. Our members provide over 70% of UK security products and services and adhere to strict quality standards.

The BSIA's Vacant Property Protection (VPP) section consists of companies focusing on security measures and services introduced when a property is at increased risk of criminal attack because of a change of circumstances in its occupancy.

Vacant properties are at heightened risk from fire, deterioration and criminal activity. Without adequate protection, these risks can lead to an increase in insurance premiums, significant financial loss and damage to reputation. Owners and managers of vacant property also have a 'duty of care' to anyone entering the building, whether authorised or not. Therefore, if property is likely to be vacant for any period of time, property owners or managers should seek the services of professional security companies.

Member companies of the VPP section can provide a variety of products and services to provide an appropriate level of protection for vacant property.

BSIA membership will raise your company profile and ensure that your business is at the heart of influencing the future of the security industry. You will become part of a unique group of high quality and professional companies which are well-respected and well-represented to government, end users, specifiers, standards and legislative bodies. For more information contact the BSIA.



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