



BSI Standards Publication

Fire detection and fire alarm systems for buildings

Part 6: Code of practice for the design, installation,
commissioning and maintenance of fire detection and fire
alarm systems in domestic premises

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Foreword

Publishing information

This part of BS 5839 is published by BSI Standards Limited, under licence from The British Standards Institution, and came into effect on 30 April 2019. It was prepared by Technical Committee FSH/12/1, *Installation and servicing*, under the authority of Technical Committee FSH/12, *Fire detection and alarm systems*. A list of organizations represented on these committees can be obtained on request to their secretary.

Supersession

This part of BS 5839 supersedes BS 5839-6:2013, which is withdrawn.

Relationship with other publications

BS 5839 is published in the following parts:

- Part 1: *Code of practice for design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of systems in non-domestic premises*;
- Part 3: *Specification for automatic release mechanisms for certain fire protection equipment*;
- Part 6: *Code of practice for the design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of fire detection and fire alarm systems in domestic premises*;
- Part 8: *Code of practice for the design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of voice alarm systems*;
- Part 9: *Code of practice for the design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of emergency voice communication systems*.

Information about this document

This is a full revision of the standard, and introduces the following principal changes:

- removal of Grade B and Grade E;
- subdivision of Grade D and Grade F into Grade D1/Grade D2 and Grade F1/Grade F2, respectively;
- revision of [Table 1](#);
- updating of guidance to take into account the publication of BS 5839-1:2017 and other standards published since the last full revision of BS 5839-6;
- new table on testing and servicing by grade;
- new recommendation to prevent blocking or delaying of fire alarm signals transmitted via social alarm systems in sheltered housing to an alarm receiving centre;
- increase in the recommended standard of protection in sheltered housing flats from Category LD2 to Category LD1;
- new recommendations for fire detection in supported housing;
- new recommendation that communal fire alarm systems should not normally be installed in purpose-built blocks of flats;
- revised and expanded recommendations for Grade C.

In the United Kingdom, around 80% of all fire deaths and injuries occur in domestic premises, over 300 deaths and around 9 000 injuries per annum. Many of those who die are the most vulnerable in the community, namely elderly and socially deprived people. The installation of a fire detection and fire alarm system in premises can substantially reduce the risk of death or serious injury from fire. Indeed, the overall downward trend in annual fire deaths in domestic premises since smoke alarms in domestic premises were first given recognition in BS 5839-1 in 1988 is almost certainly attributable in part to the increasing use of smoke alarms.

The level of deaths and injuries remains, however, above a level that society regards as acceptable. It has been estimated that, in premises without smoke detectors, a substantial proportion of the fatalities from fire could be avoided if smoke detectors were installed. The fatality rate in fires in premises in which there is no working smoke detector is between two and three times the fatality rate in fires in premises in which a smoke detector is present and functions correctly.

The installation of automatic fire detectors is required in new houses, flats and maisonettes in order to satisfy building regulations ([1] to [4]). In existing houses in multiple occupation, the installation of an automatic fire detection and fire alarm system is normally required by the relevant enforcing authorities. This gives rise to the need for a suitable code of practice, as BS 5839-1 does not contain recommendations on domestic smoke alarms, nor does it address the specific design requirements for fire detection and fire alarm systems in domestic premises.

The guidance in this standard is intended for architects and other building professionals, enforcing authorities, designers and installers of fire detection and fire alarm systems and others responsible for implementing fire precautions in domestic premises.

In the case of purpose-built flats, the degree of compartmentation between occupancies is normally sufficient to ensure that fire is contained in the dwelling of origin for a prolonged period. During this time, other occupants can remain in reasonable safety within their own dwellings. Accordingly, this part of BS 5839 does not provide recommendations for fire detection systems that incorporate detectors in the communal areas or ancillary accommodation (e.g. plant rooms) within purpose-built flats. Such systems are normally undesirable and can even lead to risk to occupants. Nevertheless, if the provision of a fire detection and fire alarm system in these areas can be justified, the recommendations in BS 9991 and BS 5839-1 can be followed.

Fire detection is commonly provided in blocks of flats for the purpose of operating smoke control systems, in which case BS 7273-6 (in preparation) is appropriate. As the fire detectors in these cases are not intended to provide a warning to residents, and are not expected to trigger fire alarm sounders, this fire detection is outside the scope of this part of BS 5839.

Guidance on evacuation strategies and associated detection and warning systems for purpose-built blocks of flats is given in BS 9991, Approved Document B [5] and the LGA guide *Fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats* [6]. Guidance on fire detection and fire alarm systems in sheltered housing and supported housing is given in the NFCC document *Fire safety in specialised housing* [7].

Following the major loss of life in a fire at Grenfell Tower in London in 2017, temporary fire alarm systems have been installed in blocks of flats, in which cladding does not satisfy the requirements of building regulations in relation to fire spread over external walls. These systems are intended only as a temporary measure, pending removal of the cladding. It is not intended that they will remain as a permanent facility for evacuation of residents; such temporary systems are, therefore, outside the scope of this part of BS 5839.

Communal fire alarm systems are sometimes appropriate in houses that have been converted into self-contained flats. Whether this is the case depends on the legislation in the relevant part of the UK and/or measures such as compartmentation and means of escape. In this connection, attention is

drawn to the Housing Act 2004 [8] in England and Wales, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 [9] and the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 [10] in Northern Ireland.

It has been assumed in the drafting of this part of BS 5839 that the execution of its provisions will be entrusted to appropriately qualified and competent people.

Use of this document

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.

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

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.

1 Scope

This part of BS 5839 gives recommendations for the planning, design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of fire detection and fire alarm systems in domestic premises that are:

- a) designed to accommodate a single family;
- b) houses in multiple occupation comprising a number of self-contained units, each designed to accommodate a single person or family;
- c) sheltered housing, including both the dwelling units and the common areas;
- d) supported housing.

The recommendations apply to both new and existing domestic premises.

Recommendations for routine attention are also given.

The systems covered in this part of BS 5839 range from those comprising a single self-contained smoke alarm to systems of the type described in BS 5839-1. The recommendations of this part of BS 5839 may also be applied to the fire detection components of combined domestic fire and intruder alarm systems or fire and social alarm systems.

This part of BS 5839 applies to forms of domestic premises, including bungalows, multi-storey houses, individual flats and maisonettes, mobile homes, holiday homes, sheltered housing, mansions, shared houses and houses divided into several self-contained single-family dwelling units. It does not apply to hostels, caravans or boats (other than permanently moored boats used solely as residential premises), or to the communal parts of blocks of flats or maisonettes. It does not apply to any premises used for purposes other than as domestic premises (e.g. small shops, factories or similar premises used solely as places of work).

This part of BS 5839 applies to premises used for self-catering holidays if occupied by not more than ten persons, and premises with short-term paying guests in the home of a resident operator with not more than eight guests. It is limited to premises in which guest accommodation is not located below a ground floor or above a first floor, and in which no storey is greater than 200 m² in area. For larger premises, the recommendations of BS 5839-1 apply.

This part of BS 5839 is intended for use by architects and other building professionals, enforcing authorities, installers and others responsible for implementing fire precautions in domestic premises. It is not intended for occupiers, for whom advice is published by the Government¹. However, recommendations are given for simple systems that may be installed by non-specialists.

The recommendations refer principally to fire detection and fire alarm systems installed for the purpose of life safety. However, recommendations are given for systems that are also intended to protect property.

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. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

[BS 5446-2](#), *Fire detection and fire alarm devices for dwellings — Part 2: Specification for heat alarms*

¹ The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (in England and Wales), Scottish Government and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Northern Ireland).

[BS 5446-3](#), *Fire detection and fire alarm devices for dwellings — Part 3: Specification for smoke alarm kits for deaf and hard of hearing people*

[BS 5839-1:2017](#), *Fire detection and fire alarm systems for buildings — Part 1: Code of practice for design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of systems in non-domestic premises*

[BS 7671](#), *Requirements for electrical installations — IET Wiring Regulations*

[BS 8591](#), *Remote centres receiving signals from alarm systems — Code of practice*

BS EN 54-2, *Fire detection and fire alarm systems — Part 2: Control and indicating equipment*

BS EN 54-4, *Fire detection and fire alarm systems — Part 4: Power supply equipment*

BS EN 54-5, *Fire detection and fire alarm systems — Part 5: Heat detectors — Point detectors*

BS EN 54-7, *Fire detection and fire alarm systems — Part 7: Smoke detectors — Point detectors using scattered light, transmitted light or ionization*

BS EN 54-10, *Fire detection and fire alarm systems — Part 10: Flame detectors — Point detectors*

BS EN 54-11, *Fire detection and fire alarm systems — Part 11: Manual call points*

BS EN 54-12, *Fire detection and fire alarm systems — Part 12: Smoke detectors – Line detectors using an optical light beam*

BS EN 54-26, *Fire detection and fire alarm systems — Part 26: Carbon monoxide detectors — Point detectors*

BS EN 54-29, *Fire detection and fire alarm systems — Part 29: Multi-sensor fire detectors — Point detectors using a combination of smoke and heat sensors*

BS EN 54-30, *Fire detection and fire alarm systems — Part 30: Multi-sensor fire detectors — Point detectors using a combination of carbon monoxide and heat sensors*

BS EN 14604, *Smoke alarm devices*

BS EN ISO 13943, *Fire safety — Vocabulary*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this part of BS 5839, the terms and definitions in BS 5839-1:2017 and BS EN ISO 13943 and the following apply.

3.1 addressable system

system in which signals from detectors, manual call points or any other devices are individually identified at the control and indicating equipment

NOTE Most addressable systems are of the analogue type, in which a signal from each detector representing the value of the sensed phenomenon is individually processed, usually at the control equipment, with a view to enabling more than two output states to be given, representing normal, fire and at least one other abnormal condition. The purpose of analysis of the signal from each detector is often identification of conditions that are not representative of fire but that can result in a false alarm from a simple non-analogue (“two state”) system.

3.2 alarm receiving centre (ARC)

continuously manned premises, remote from those in which the fire detection and fire alarm system is fitted, where the information concerning the state of the fire alarm system is displayed and/or recorded, so that the fire and rescue service can be summoned

3.3 aspirating smoke detection system

smoke detection system in which a sample of the atmosphere in the protected space is drawn by a fan or pump into a detector which may be remote from the protected space

3.4 audibility

property of a sound which allows it to be heard among other sounds

NOTE Audibility depends upon the relative loudness and frequency content of the sound in comparison with other sounds which are present at the same time.

3.5 automatic fire detection and fire alarm system

system (other than a single self-contained smoke or fire alarm) in which an alarm of fire can be initiated automatically

3.6 circuit

assembly of fire alarm components supplied from the same control equipment and protected against overcurrent by the same protective device(s) or current limitation arrangements

3.7 circulation area

area or space (including a stairway) used mainly as a means of access between a room and an exit from the building or compartment

NOTE This is also known as a circulation space.

3.8 commissioning

process by which it is determined that the installed system meets the defined requirements

3.9 competent person

person with the relevant current training and experience, and with access to the requisite tools, equipment and information, and capable of carrying out a defined task

NOTE For electrical installation and testing work, this is equivalent to the term "skilled person" as defined in BS 7671.

3.10 control and indicating equipment (CIE)

component or components of a fire detection and fire alarm system through which other components can be supplied with power and which:

- a) are used:
 - 1) to receive signals from the connected detectors, manual call points or any other devices (e.g. input/output units);
 - 2) to determine whether these signals correspond to a fire alarm condition;
 - 3) to indicate any such fire alarm condition audibly and visually;
 - 4) to indicate the location of the danger;
 - 5) possibly to record any of this information;
- b) are used to monitor the correct functioning of the system and give audible and visible warning of any faults (e.g. short circuit, open circuit, or fault in the power supply);
- c) if required, are able to pass on the fire alarms signal:
 - 1) to audible or visible fire alarm devices or to a voice alarm system;
 - 2) to the fire alarm routing function to an alarm receiving centre (ARC);

- 3) to the control function for fire protection equipment or systems;
- 4) to other systems or equipment, such as a mimic panel

3.11 designer

person or organization taking responsibility for design

3.12 detector

part of a fire detection and fire alarm system that contains at least one sensor which constantly, or at frequent intervals, monitors at least one physical and/or chemical phenomenon associated with fire, and that provides at least one corresponding signal to the CIE

NOTE This definition is intended to include heat alarms, smoke alarms and multi-sensor fire alarms (see [3.29](#), [3.56](#) and [3.43](#) respectively).

3.13 dispersed social alarm (telecare) system

system that provides facilities for social alarm initiation, signal transmission, alarm reception, reassurance and assistance for use by older and other persons considered to be living at risk within a single private dwelling, using a private phone line or IP connection to an ARC

3.14 domestic premises

dwellings (see [3.15](#)) and buildings used as sheltered housing (see [3.54](#))

3.15 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; or
- b) by not more than six residents living together as a single household, including a household where care is provided for residents; or
- 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 (HMO) and specifically exclude hostel type accommodation, for which BS 5839-1 is more appropriate. They can, however, include houses with long-term lodgers.

3.16 false alarm

fire alarm signal resulting from a cause(s) other than fire

NOTE False alarms may be subdivided into four categories:

- a) unwanted alarms, in which a system has responded, either as designed or as the technology can reasonably be expected to respond, to any of the following:
 - 1) a fire-like phenomenon or environmental influence (e.g. smoke from a nearby bonfire, dust or insects, processes that produce smoke or flame, or environmental effects that can render certain types of detector unstable, such as rapid air flow);
 - 2) accidental damage;
 - 3) inappropriate human action (e.g. operation of a system for test or maintenance purposes without prior warning to building occupants and/or an ARC);
- b) equipment false alarms, in which the false alarm has resulted from a fault in the system;

- c) *malicious false alarms, in which a person operates a manual call point or causes a fire detector to initiate a fire alarm signal, whilst knowing that there is no fire;*
- d) *false alarms with good intent, in which a person operates a manual call point or otherwise initiates a fire alarm signal in the belief that there is a fire, when no fire actually exists.*

3.17 final circuit

circuit connected to current-using equipment

3.18 final voltage

<of a battery> voltage at which the cell manufacturer considers the cells to be fully discharged at the specified discharge current

3.19 fire alarm device

component of a fire detection and fire alarm system, not incorporated in the control and indicating equipment, which is used to give a warning of fire

NOTE For example, a fire alarm sounder or visual alarm device.

3.20 fire alarm signal

signal intended to indicate the occurrence of a fire

3.21 fire alarm sounder

audible fire alarm device

3.22 fire detection and fire alarm system

system that comprises a means for automatically detecting one of the characteristic phenomena of fire and a means for providing a warning to occupants

NOTE This definition is intended to include fire detection and fire alarm systems that comprise one or more smoke alarms, as well as systems that comprise separate detectors, alarm sounders and control equipment.

3.23 fire detection zone

subdivision of the protected premises such that the occurrence of a fire within it will be indicated by a fire detection and fire alarm system separately from an indication of fire in any other subdivision

NOTE A fire detection zone is separately indicated to assist in location of the fire, evacuation of the building and firefighting.

3.24 fire engineering solution

application of science and engineering to the achievement of one or more fire safety objectives in such a way that the objectives are achieved without following, in full, prescriptive recommendations of a recognized code of practice

3.25 fire risk

combination of the probability of fire occurring and the magnitude of the consequences of fire

3.26 flame detector

automatic fire detector which responds to the radiation emitted by the flames from a fire

3.27 flat

dwelling, forming part of a larger building, that has all its rooms on one level or not more than half a storey height apart

3.28 habitable room

any room in a dwelling other than a kitchen, utility room, bathroom, dressing room or WC

3.29 heat alarm

device containing within one housing all the components, except possibly the energy source, necessary for detecting heat and for giving an audible alarm

3.30 heat detector

automatic fire detector which responds to an increase in temperature

3.31 house in multiple occupation (HMO)

house that is occupied by persons who do not form a single household

3.32 installation

work of fixing and interconnecting the components and elements of a system

NOTE Installation may be carried out by one or more parties.

3.33 installer

person or organization having responsibility for all or part of the process of installation

3.34 line detector

detector which responds to the phenomenon sensed in the vicinity of a continuous line

3.35 maintenance

work of inspection, servicing and repair necessary in order to maintain the efficient operation of the installed system

3.36 maisonette

dwelling, forming part of a larger building, which includes rooms on two or more levels that are more than half a storey height apart

3.37 manual call point

component of a fire detection and fire alarm system which is used for the manual initiation of an alarm

3.38 maximum alarm load

maximum load imposed on a fire alarm system power supply under fire conditions, comprising the power required for simultaneous operation of all fire alarm devices, fire alarm signals from all automatic fire detectors and manual call points in the building, any power drawn by other systems and equipment in the alarm condition and any power required for transmission of fire alarm signals to an ARC (if a facility for this is provided)

3.39 mimic diagram

topographic representation of the protected premises and their subdivisions, using light-emitting indicators for each subdivision such that the indications of the fire detection and fire alarm system can be rapidly related to the layout of the premises

3.40 mixed system

arrangement whereby two different grades of fire detection and fire alarm system are provided within the same premises for the purpose of satisfying two different fire safety objectives

NOTE Interlinking of these systems is not precluded.

3.41 mobile home

transportable unit of living accommodation that does not meet the requirements for construction and use of road vehicles

3.42 monitored wiring

wiring in which an open circuit will result in a fault warning (but not an alarm of fire), while a short circuit will result either in a fault warning or an alarm of fire

NOTE BS 5839-1:2017 recommends that an open circuit or a short circuit both result in a fault warning but not an alarm of fire; for some systems, this part of BS 5839 recommends compliance with BS 5839-1:2017.

3.43 multi-sensor fire alarm

device containing within one housing, sensors that monitor more than one physical and/or chemical phenomenon associated with fire in conjunction with the means of giving an audible alarm

3.44 multi-sensor fire detector

fire detector that monitors more than one physical and/or chemical phenomenon associated with fire

3.45 normal supply

supply from which the fire detection and fire alarm system is expected to obtain its power under normal conditions

NOTE The normal supply is usually derived from the public electricity supply system.

3.46 point detector

detector which responds to a phenomenon sensed in the vicinity of a fixed point

3.47 principal habitable room

habitable room (see [3.28](#)) that is normally the most frequently used room for general daytime living purposes

3.48 protection

presence of one or more automatic fire detector(s) able to initiate actions needed for the safety of life or property in the event of a fire

3.49 purchaser

person or organization taking primary responsibility for acceptance of and payment for the installed system

3.50 radio-linked system

fire detection and fire alarm system in which some or all of the interconnections between components are made by radio links

3.51 repair

non-routine work necessary to restore the efficient operation of the installed system

3.52 servicing

routine process of work on the system carried out at predetermined intervals

NOTE For example, testing and cleaning.

3.53 shared house

type of house in multiple occupation, normally let to an identifiable group, such as students, work colleagues or friends, in which there is a significant degree of social interaction

3.54 sheltered housing

block or group of dwellings, with each dwelling incorporating its own cooking and sanitary facilities, designed specifically for persons who might require assistance, e.g. elderly people, and where some form of assistance is available at all times

NOTE 1 This does not imply that assistance need be provided on the premises.

NOTE 2 Sheltered housing often includes amenities common to all occupiers, such as lounges and guest rooms, all of which are within the scope of this part of BS 5839.

3.55 smoke

particulate and aerosol products of combustion, whether this be of the smouldering or open flame type

3.56 smoke alarm

device containing within one housing all the components, except possibly the energy source, necessary for detecting smoke and for giving an audible alarm

3.57 smoke detector

automatic fire detector sensitive to particulate products of combustion and/or pyrolysis suspended in the atmosphere (aerosols)

3.58 social alarm system

system that provides facilities for alarm initiation, signal transmission, alarm reception, reassurance and assistance, for use by older people or other people who might require assistance

NOTE Other terms, such as telecare systems, community alarm or personal alarm systems, are also sometimes used.

3.59 standby supply

electricity supply, commonly from a rechargeable battery, which is automatically connected to the fire alarm system when the normal supply fails

3.60 storey

part of a building comprising all the rooms that are on the same level including any gallery having an area of more than half that of the space into which it projects, unless it is accessible only for maintenance or repair

3.61 supported housing

housing (excluding sheltered housing) designed for vulnerable people with common characteristics, living as part of a community with support that is normally, but not necessarily, provided on a 24 h basis

NOTE This includes housing for groups of people with learning or physical disabilities and mental health issues.

3.62 tamper-proof battery

battery that is not designed to be removed

NOTE For example, cells soldered to a printed circuit board.

3.63 telecare-enabled fire detection and fire alarm system

fire detection and fire alarm system that is interfaced with a social alarm system (3.58), such that there is a facility for signal transmission, alarm reception, reassurance and, where necessary, assistance (e.g. summoning of the fire and rescue service)

3.64 user

person or organization having control of the building (or part of the building) in which the fire detection and fire alarm system is installed

3.65 variation

intentional departure from a specific recommendation of this part of BS 5839

NOTE 1 Since this part of BS 5839 is a code of practice, its contents take the form of recommendations, rather than requirements. Accordingly, variations might be appropriate in certain circumstances.

NOTE 2 Variations do not include errors in design, installation or commissioning.

NOTE 3 In many cases, variations will need the agreement of interested third parties, such as the authority enforcing fire safety legislation or the fire insurer.

3.66 visual alarm device

device which generates a flashing light to signal to the occupants of a building that a fire condition exists

3.67 voice alarm system

sound distribution system that provides means for automatically broadcasting audible speech messages and warning signals

NOTE Voice alarm systems commonly include a facility for transmission of live voice messages, as well as automatically generated messages.

4 Fire risk assessment

4.1 Commentary

A fire detection and fire alarm system, although it can do nothing to reduce the incidence of fire, can help to lessen the resultant loss in terms of injury to occupants or damage to property. However, the system needs to take into account the ability of the persons it is designed to protect to react to the warning and to make use of the time for escape that it is intended to give them, and needs to be regarded as just one component of a properly engineered approach to fire safety.

In order to maximize the cost–benefit of a fire detection and fire alarm system, it is essential that the system design be appropriate to the fire risk. Accordingly, the design of any fire detection and fire alarm system installed in accordance with this part of BS 5839 needs to be based on a good understanding of fire risk in domestic premises.

A high fire risk demands high reliability in the early detection of fire and warning of occupants, regardless of where the fire starts, and high reliability on the part of the system to operate correctly when required; a low fire risk might not justify the cost, complexity and extent of such a system. For example, at one extreme, the single occupant of an existing small bungalow might be adequately

protected very simply if the occupier installs one battery-powered smoke alarm, whereas the risk to which the families in a six-storey house in multiple occupation (HMO) are exposed would warrant a more complex and comprehensive system.

It is therefore essential that the design of the system, particularly in respect of factors such as the number and siting of detectors and the form of power supply, takes into account the following probabilities:

- a) the probability of fire occurring;
- b) the probability of injury or death of occupants if fire occurs;
- c) the probability of the system operating correctly at the time of a fire;
- d) the probability of early detection and warning of occupants in the event of fire.

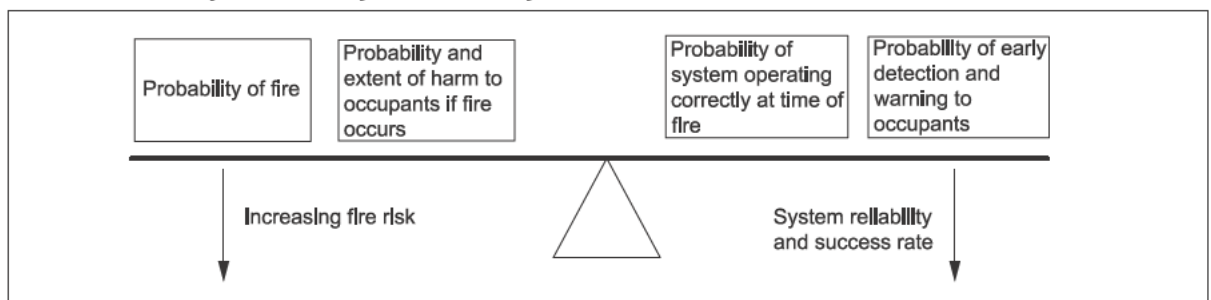
NOTE 1 The combination of items a) and b) may be regarded as the fire risk (see 3.25).

NOTE 2 Item c) may be regarded as the system reliability.

NOTE 3 Item d) may be regarded as a form of success rate for the system.

It is important that system design ensures that there is an appropriate balance between the fire risk and the system reliability and success rate (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 — Balance between fire risk and system reliability and success rate



The factors that are relevant to consider in a qualitative assessment of fire risk are discussed in Annex A; the implications of the various factors on system design are also described. Clause 9 contains recommendations on the grades and categories of system (see Clause 7 and Clause 8) that are considered generally appropriate for generic types of domestic premises covered by this part of BS 5839. The highest level of protection is afforded by detection in all rooms, other than those of negligible fire risk, such as bathrooms and toilets.

Although this part of BS 5839 advocates that, where practicable, the actual design of a fire detection and fire alarm system be based on a fire risk assessment, it is considered that the level of fire risk in domestic premises covered by this part of BS 5839 is unlikely ever to be sufficiently low to obviate the need for some form of fire detection and fire alarm system.

4.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) A fire detection and fire alarm system, meeting the recommendations given in this part of BS 5839, should be installed in all domestic premises and dwelling units described in Clause 1, whether new or existing.

NOTE 1 The recommendation for retrospective installation of a fire detection and fire alarm system in existing premises relates primarily to premises in which there is no, or no appropriate, fire detection and fire alarm system. It is not specifically recommended that an existing fire detection and fire alarm system installed in accordance with previous editions of BS 5839-6 be upgraded to meet the recommendations of this current version of BS 5839-6.

- b) Final design of a fire detection and fire alarm system for any particular domestic premises should, where reasonably practicable, be based on a form of fire risk assessment, particularly if it is proposed to deviate from the recommendations given in [Clause 9](#) or if there are risk factors additional to those encountered in typical examples of the types of premises defined in [Clause 9](#).

NOTE 2 The attention of anyone carrying out a fire risk assessment to determine appropriate system design is drawn to the information contained in [Annex A](#), which is likely to be of value in any such risk assessment and in determining the basic principles for system design, particularly the appropriate grade and category of system (see [Clause 7](#) and [Clause 8](#)).

- c) In many situations, occupant characteristics and other relevant factors are not known to the designer or specifier (e.g. in the case of new domestic premises or upgrading the fire detection and fire alarm systems within a block of flats by the housing provider). In such cases, design should follow the recommendations given in [Clause 9](#).

NOTE 3 At the stage at which approval of system design is granted under building regulations ([1] to [4]), occupant characteristics and other relevant factors are generally unknown.

5 System components

5.1 Commentary

The reliability of whatever form of fire detection and fire alarm system is installed to perform its functions on demand is, to a significant degree, governed by the reliability of individual components. In general, it is advisable that all components, such as manual call points, detectors, CIE (if incorporated in the system) and fire alarm devices, conform to relevant British Standards, and have undergone type testing to these standards. It is advisable to use components having certification under a recognized product certification scheme (comprising third-party certification of product conformity against a relevant standard, based on testing and continuing surveillance, together with assessment of the manufacturer's quality assurance system against BS EN ISO 9000).

Where there is no relevant British, European or International Standard, it is advisable that care is taken to ensure, as far as possible, that the components are fit for their purpose. Third-party approval against an appropriate test standard can provide assurance of this.

Conformity of an individual component to a recognized standard does not necessarily ensure that it will operate satisfactorily in conjunction with another component that conforms to the relevant standard for that component. It is essential that compatibility between components is taken into account by the designer of the system.

5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) Smoke alarms should conform to BS EN 14604.
- b) Heat alarms should conform to BS 5446-2.
- c) Multi-sensor fire detectors should conform to BS EN 54-29, BS EN 54-30, or BS EN 14604 and BS 5446-2.
- d) Smoke alarm systems intended to warn people who are Deaf or hard of hearing in the event of fire should conform to BS 5446-3.
- e) Manual call points should conform to BS EN 54-11 for Type A ("single action") manual call points [see also [18.2d](#)].
- f) Point smoke detectors should conform to BS EN 54-7.

- g) Point heat detectors should conform to BS EN 54-5 for Class A1 or A2 detectors.
- h) Carbon monoxide fire detectors should conform to BS EN 54-26.
- i) Beam type smoke detectors should conform to BS EN 54-12.
- j) CIE for Grade C systems should conform to either BS EN 54-2, or [Annex B](#) in the present part of BS 5839.

NOTE CIE for Grade C systems may also be incorporated into intruder alarm or social alarm systems meeting the recommendations in [6.2](#), [12.2](#), [15.3](#) and [17.4](#).

- k) Audible fire alarm devices for Grade C systems should produce a frequency of not greater than 3 500 Hz.
- l) Where flame detectors are to be installed, they should conform to BS EN 54-10.

6 Monitoring of circuits

6.1 Commentary

In many simple systems that incorporate interconnecting wiring for the supply of power to detectors, or for the interconnection of smoke alarms and heat alarms, the wiring is unmonitored. However, monitoring of wiring reduces the amount of time for which a system is likely to be disabled before a fault in the wiring is discovered. If the risk to life from fire is high, or the wiring is likely to be subject to mechanical damage or damage by rodents, systems that incorporate monitored wiring are of benefit.

Similarly, in simple systems, monitoring of the state of power supplies is not generally warranted. In more complex systems, which tend to be used in premises in which the risk to life is greater, the additional complexity associated with monitoring of power supplies is likely to be justified.

Following a number of fatal fires, it was found that occupiers of the premises of fire origin had tampered with or disabled the smoke alarm, precluding their early warning of fire. It is possible to obtain smoke alarms with the facility for remote indication of tampering or disablement (whether long-distance remote monitoring or local monitoring, such as at a central position in a block of flats). Where residents are particularly vulnerable from fire, the provision of such facilities might be of value.

6.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) In Grade A systems, monitoring of power supplies and circuits external to CIE should meet the recommendations given in BS 5839-1:2017, [12.2.1](#).
- b) In Grade C systems, an open or short circuit fault in any circuit, external to CIE, serving manual call points (if present), fire detectors or fire alarm devices should result in a fault warning at the CIE (see [Clause 17](#)), or in a fire alarm signal in the premises, within 100 s of the occurrence of the fault.

NOTE 1 It is preferable that an open or short circuit fault results in a fault warning rather than a fire warning.

- c) In Grade C systems, failure or disconnection of the normal supply (see [3.45](#)) should result in a visual indication at the CIE (see [Clause 17](#)) within 30 min of the occurrence of the fault or disconnection. The indication may take the form of either of the following:
 - 1) a normally illuminated indicator is extinguished; or
 - 2) a fault indicator is illuminated.

NOTE 2 This part of BS 5839 contains no recommendations for monitoring of wiring or power supplies in Grade D or Grade F systems. However, BS EN 14604 requires that mains-powered smoke alarms (which are used in Grade D systems) incorporate a green mains-on indicator, which is continuously illuminated when mains power is present. BS 5446-2 makes the same requirement for heat alarms.

7 Grades of system

7.1 Commentary

This part of BS 5839 covers many types of fire detection and fire alarm system, which differ widely in complexity, reliability and level of self-monitoring (see Clause 6). Some of the simpler forms of system are not suitable for premises in which the fire risk is judged to be high, while expenditure on the most complex systems might be inappropriate for low-risk premises (see Clause 4).

For the purpose of specifying a fire detection and fire alarm system and the associated engineering design parameters, this part of BS 5839 groups systems into eight grades. Some of the recommendations of this part of BS 5839 apply to all grades of system, while other recommendations apply only to particular grades.

The grades are defined as follows.

- *Grade A: A fire detection and fire alarm system, which incorporates CIE conforming to BS EN 54-2 and power supply equipment conforming to BS EN 54-4, and which is designed and installed in accordance with all the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017, Section 1 to Section 4 inclusive, except those in the following clauses, for which the corresponding clauses of this part of BS 5839 need to be substituted.*

Clause/subclause of BS 5839-1:2017	Corresponding clause/subclause of BS 5839-6
16 (Audible alarm signals)	13 (Audible fire alarm devices and audibility)
18 (Fire alarm warnings for people who are Deaf and hard of hearing)	14 (Fire alarm warnings for people who are Deaf and hard of hearing)
20 (Manual call points)	18 (Manual call points)
25.4e (Capacity of standby batteries)	15.2c (Capacity of standby batteries)
27 (Radio-linked systems)	21 (Radio-linked systems)

- *Grade B: Not currently defined.*
- *Grade C: A system of fire detectors and alarm sounders (which may be combined in the form of smoke alarms) connected to a common power supply, comprising the normal mains and a standby supply, with central control equipment.*
- *Grade D1: A system of one or more mains-powered detectors (see 3.12), each with a tamper-proof standby supply consisting of a battery or batteries (see 3.62).*
- *Grade D2: A system of one or more mains-powered detectors (see 3.12), each with an integral standby supply consisting of a user-replaceable battery or batteries.*
- *Grade E: Not currently defined.*
- *Grade F1: A system of one or more battery-powered detectors (see 3.12) powered by a tamper-proof primary battery or batteries (see 3.62).*
- *Grade F2: A system of one or more battery-powered detectors (see 3.12) powered by a user-replaceable primary battery or batteries.*

In the case of Grade D and Grade F systems, where more than one smoke alarm is installed, the smoke alarms normally need to be interlinked [see 13.2c)]. Any heat alarms also need to be interlinked with the smoke alarms.

Guidance documents supporting legislation, and written requirements produced by enforcing authorities, often specify only a minimum level of system engineering, rather than a particular form of system. These grades are defined in such a way that a requirement for one grade of system can be satisfied by the installation of a higher grade of system; for example, if the fire risk justified the installation of a Grade D system, it would be acceptable to install a Grade A or Grade C system.

Because of the wide range of systems covered by the recommendations of this part of BS 5839, the specification of requirements for a system by a purchaser, user, enforcing authority or insurer, or the description of a system by a designer or installer, by reference to this part of BS 5839, without a reference to system grade, will have little meaning.

[Annex C](#) provides further information on each grade of system, including the advantages and disadvantages of each grade.

7.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) If any party is instructed to design a fire detection and fire alarm system for premises (e.g. by means of a purchase specification), the instruction should include a clear reference to the grade of system required.

NOTE 1 Any statutory requirements imposed by enforcing authorities, and any requirements imposed by property insurers, for a fire detection and fire alarm system for premises are expected to state the grade of system required.

- b) The relevant system certificate (see [Clause 23](#)) should clearly state the grade of system that has been designed or installed.

NOTE 2 In the case of a Grade A system, there is a separate design certificate, which indicates the grade of system that has been designed (see [Annex D](#)). In other grades of system, a single certificate is normally issued, indicating the grade of system that has been designed, installed and commissioned (see [Clause 23](#) and [Annex E](#)).

8 Categories of system

8.1 Commentary

8.1.1 General

Fire detection and fire alarm systems are usually installed in premises to protect life. However, the level of protection afforded to occupants needs to be related to the fire risk (see [Clause 4](#)). The appropriate level can therefore vary considerably. For the purposes of this part of BS 5839, systems are classified as follows, according to the level of protection that they afford.

- a) *Category LD: a fire detection and fire alarm system intended for the protection of life;*

NOTE 1 The designation "LD" is used to distinguish these systems, which are intended only for domestic premises, from Category L systems as defined in BS 5839-1:2017, which are intended for the protection of life in non-domestic premises. Category LD systems are subdivided into:

- *Category LD1: a system installed throughout the premises, incorporating detectors in all circulation areas that form part of the escape routes from the premises, and in all rooms and areas, other than those with negligible sources of ignition, such as toilets, bathrooms and shower rooms;*
- *Category LD2: a system incorporating detectors in all circulation areas that form part of the escape routes from the premises, and in all specified rooms or areas that present a high fire risk to occupants, including any kitchen and the principal habitable room (see [Clause 4](#));*

- *Category LD3: a system incorporating detectors in all circulation areas that form part of the escape routes from the premises.*
- b) *Category PD: a fire detection and fire alarm system intended for the protection of property.*

NOTE 2 The designation "PD" is used to distinguish these systems, which are intended only for domestic premises, from Category P systems as defined in BS 5839-1:2017, which are intended for the protection of property in non-domestic premises. Category PD systems are subdivided into:

- *Category PD1: a system installed throughout the premises, incorporating detectors in all rooms and areas in which fire might start, other than toilets, bathrooms and shower rooms;*
- *Category PD2: a system incorporating detectors only in defined rooms or areas of the premises in which the risk of fire to property is judged to warrant their provision.*

A system is rarely installed solely for the protection of property. Accordingly, Category PD systems will normally be designed to meet the recommendations given in this part of BS 5839 for a Category LD system, thereby constituting a combined Category LD and Category PD system.

Because of the wide range of systems covered by the recommendations of this part of BS 5839, the specification of requirements for a system by a purchaser, user, enforcing authority or insurer, or the description of a system by a designer or installer, by reference to this part of BS 5839, without a reference to system category, will have little meaning.

8.1.2 Systems for the protection of life (Category LD)

All domestic premises need to be provided with an appropriate fire detection and fire alarm system. The greatest benefit to life safety is given by a full-coverage system (Category LD1). Such a system gives the earliest practicable warning of fire to occupants, wherever ignition occurs.

However, a good level of protection can normally be obtained from a Category LD2 system, in which detection is only provided at points where the fire risk is high or where combustion products would present a significant hazard to life. A Category LD2 system might, for instance, have detectors only in the circulation areas of premises, the living room and the kitchen; other areas might be left without detector coverage. The areas protected by a Category LD2 system include escape routes, i.e. those areas that would be protected by a Category LD3 system.

A Category LD3 system is intended only to protect circulation areas that would be used as escape routes, by giving a warning if smoke is detected in these areas, so that occupants can escape before heat or smoke make this impossible. A Category LD3 system cannot be expected, with any degree of reliability, to protect people who might be involved with the fire at ignition or in its early stages. This category of system might not therefore prevent the death or serious injury of occupants in the room where the fire originates; it is intended only to ensure escape for those not immediately involved. If no detector is installed in the room in which fire starts, the time available for evacuation of other areas once fire is detected in the circulation area might be quite short. In a large family house adapted to provide accommodation for several households in separate self-contained units (an HMO), a fire in one dwelling unit can be a hazard to occupants of other units. In this case, the fire detection and fire alarm system normally needs to extend across the boundaries between occupancies or be interconnected with systems in other occupancies. In practice, it is often appropriate for there to be a single integrated fire detection and fire alarm system that will alert all occupants before a fire in any premises threatens the communal escape routes, and that will provide early warning of any fire that starts in these escape routes. This objective is additional to that of enabling occupants of the premises in which fire starts to escape before their escape routes become impassable owing to heat or smoke (see also [9.1.6](#)).

In the case of purpose-built flats or sheltered housing, the degree of compartmentation between occupancies is normally sufficient to ensure that fire is contained in the premises of origin for a prolonged period. During this time, other occupants can remain in reasonable safety within their own

premises. Accordingly, this part of BS 5839 does not provide recommendations for fire detection and fire alarm systems that incorporate detectors in the communal areas or ancillary accommodation (e.g. plant rooms) within general needs purpose-built flats. However, recommendations are provided for common parts and communal facilities in sheltered housing, unless, architecturally and in terms of facilities, the premises are no different from a general needs block of flats.

8.1.3 Systems for the protection of property (Category PD)

A fire can start virtually anywhere in domestic premises, although the probability of fire varies significantly from one room to another. If the fire is not detected at an early stage, it can grow until it becomes difficult or impossible to extinguish. The highest level of property protection is therefore given by a Category PD1 system (giving full coverage of all parts of the premises). In a large house of high value, or with contents of high value, such a system is generally the only category acceptable to fire insurers. The system normally has a facility for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to an ARC (see Clause 20).

A lower level of protection, still giving a useful reduction in fire risk, can sometimes be obtained by the installation of fire detectors only in those parts of the building in which there is significant potential for ignition. A Category PD2 system provides partial cover of this nature.

8.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) If any party is instructed to design a fire detection and fire alarm system for premises (e.g. by means of a purchase specification), the instruction should include a clear reference to the category of system required.

NOTE 1 Any statutory requirements imposed by enforcing authorities, and any requirements imposed by property insurers, for a fire detection and fire alarm system for premises are expected to state the category of system required.

- b) If a fire detection and fire alarm system is intended to protect both life and property, and specific recommendations for the two categories of system differ, then the system should meet the recommendations for each of the categories.

NOTE 2 For example, a system whose sole purpose is to provide full-coverage property protection (Category PD1) need only have a small number of sounders, but if it is also used to provide coverage of the circulation areas for life safety (Category LD3), the number of sounders needs to be sufficient to give warning throughout the premises.

NOTE 3 The combined system is described as a Category X/Y system (e.g. LD2/PD2 or LD3/PD2).

- c) Any requirement for a Category LD2 system should be supplemented by information regarding the rooms in which fire detectors are to be installed (over and above the fire detectors in the circulation areas required to satisfy the recommendations of this part of BS 5839 for a Category LD3 system). Similarly, any requirement for a Category PD2 system should be supplemented by information regarding the areas of the premises that are to be protected by automatic fire detectors.

- d) The relevant system certificate (see Clause 23) should clearly state the category of system that has been designed and should, in the case of a Category LD2 or Category PD2 system, provide a brief description of the areas of the premises that are protected by fire detectors.

NOTE 4 In the case of a Grade A system, there is a separate design certificate, which indicates the category of system that has been designed (see Annex D). In other grades of system, a single certificate is normally issued, indicating the category of system that has been designed, installed and commissioned (see Clause 23 and Annex E).

9 Choice of system

9.1 Commentary

9.1.1 Grade of system

System grade relates to the engineering aspects of the fire detection and fire alarm system. Higher grades of system tend to provide a greater level of control and monitoring of the system, or greater reliability and availability to perform correctly in the event of fire. The grade of system that needs to be installed depends on the nature of the premises, the level of fire risk and the characteristics of the likely occupants.

Grade F2 systems, comprising one or more battery-powered smoke alarms, are the least reliable in the long term because of the need for battery replacement. Reliability can be enhanced by the use of a Grade F1 system (see [7.1](#)). For new dwellings, a Grade D system (in which the normal supply for each smoke alarm is derived from the mains electricity supply and a standby supply is provided) or higher is justified.

However, because of their low cost and ease of installation, Grade F systems (comprising battery-powered smoke alarms) might be suitable for installation in existing premises [see [13.2c](#)]. Their reliability can be improved by use of batteries that have a long anticipated life and that cannot be removed by the user. Nevertheless, Grade F systems are generally not appropriate in premises in which the fire risk to occupants is high, nor where there cannot be a reasonable certainty that, when the premises are occupied, batteries will be replaced within a short time (typically no more than 5 days) of a battery fault warning indication. Otherwise, a system in which the normal supply is derived from the mains needs to be used (e.g. a Grade D system).

Where there is a need for readily accessible control of the fire detection and fire alarm system, a Grade C system or higher might be provided. Where the fire risk calls for a high standard of system monitoring and availability, or if premises are very large or are subdivided into a significant number of dwelling units (e.g. in an HMO or sheltered housing), a Grade A system is required.

If the purpose of the system is property protection, fire insurers might require a Grade A system. However, for smaller properties, a Grade C system might be sufficient.

9.1.2 Category of system

System category relates to the level of protection afforded to occupants. The category of system that is appropriate depends primarily on the fire risk (see [Clause 4](#)). All dwellings need to be protected to at least the standard afforded by a Category LD3 system. However, for new housing, other than flats in sheltered housing, a Category LD2 system is appropriate. If the risk to occupants from fire in any part of the premises is deemed to be high, a Category LD2 or Category LD1 system is always appropriate. For example, a Category LD1 system needs to be provided in sheltered housing flats and if the occupants have an impairment or disability that could delay their escape from fire. If it is intended to protect reliably any occupant (regardless of impairment/disability or age) in the room where a fire originates, a suitable Category LD2, or a Category LD1, system needs to be provided. For the highest level of protection of all occupants who might occupy the dwelling over the lifetime of the fire detection and fire alarm system, a Category LD1 system would be appropriate.

In an HMO divided into a number of separate units of accommodation, there might not be the same degree of compartmentation as in purpose-built blocks of flats. As it is impossible to control occupants' activities, and there is no overall supervision of the entire premises, it is essential that all occupants are warned before a fire in any self-contained dwelling unit threatens their safety. In order to meet this objective, in all except the smallest such HMOs, communal areas need to be protected by siting detectors

generally in accordance with the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017 for a Category L2 system; these are similar to, but more onerous than, the recommendations of this part of BS 5839 for a Category LD2 system (see [Table 1](#)).

9.1.3 Appropriate systems for typical premises

Premises covered by this part of BS 5839 can be divided into a number of broad classes. [Table 1](#) shows the minimum grades and categories of system recommended for the protection of life in typical premises in each class. Attention is, however, drawn to building regulations ([1] to [4]), which govern fire precautions in new premises, and to other legislation concerning fire precautions in certain types of existing premises (such as HMOs). Where fire precautions are subject to legislative control, the guidance that supports the legislation needs to be consulted before a decision on the appropriate grade and category of system is reached.

[Table 2](#) shows the minimum grades and categories of system appropriate for the protection of property in typical premises. In the case of large premises, the installation of a fire detection and fire alarm system might be required by fire insurers or might be taken into account by the insurer. In this case, the insurer needs to be consulted before a decision on the grade and category of system is reached.

It is important to note that [Table 1](#) and [Table 2](#) relate only to typical premises in each class, and these examples are not intended to be comprehensive. If any doubt exists as to the appropriate system for any premises, the advice of specialists, such as the fire and rescue service, fire consultants or, if appropriate, the fire insurer, needs to be sought, and the choice of system needs to be based on a risk assessment (see [Clause 4](#)). In some circumstances, this might determine that a higher standard of protection (i.e. with additional detectors) is warranted.

9.1.4 Specification of systems

When specifying a system by reference to this part of BS 5839, the grade and category of system always need to be stated.

The specification for a Category PD2 or Category LD2 system always needs to include details of the areas and rooms of the premises that are to be protected. Where mixed or combined grades or categories of system are required in premises, the grade(s) or category(ies) of system required in each part of the premises need to be specified (see also [9.1.5](#)).

9.1.5 Appropriate systems for sheltered housing

Sheltered housing varies greatly in the design of the building, the nature of the residents, the level of support provided or required and the extent of communal facilities. Accordingly, it is not possible to specify a unique, generic form of fire detection and fire alarm system for all sheltered housing blocks.

It is necessary for the specifier to take account of the objectives of the fire warning and evacuation strategy, and to ensure that designs meet these objectives in specific circumstances. Examples of possible configurations are given in this part of BS 5839, but these are not intended to be exhaustive.

Generally, the design of sheltered housing is very similar, or identical, to the design of general needs housing, and each flat is an independent, fire-resisting compartment, within which a fire is expected to be contained. This facilitates a “stay put” policy, in which only the occupants of the flat of fire origin need to evacuate, while it is safe for other residents to remain within their own flat.

However, as in general needs housing, a “stay put” policy is predicated on the assumption that the fire and rescue service will attend and extinguish the fire. It is also assumed that, if necessary, the fire and rescue service will instruct residents, in flats that might ultimately be affected by the fire, to evacuate.

In the case of sheltered housing, some residents might be slower to evacuate if required to do so. Accordingly, there is a need to compensate for this by early attendance of the fire and rescue service.

On the basis of these considerations, the objectives of fire warning arrangements in sheltered housing are, potentially, threefold:

- a) to alert residents in the flat or room of fire origin to enable their early evacuation;*
- b) to alert the fire and rescue service to the fire, so facilitating early attendance while avoiding, as far as practicable, attendance to false alarms; and*
- c) early detection of a fire in any communal facilities (such as lounges, kitchens or laundries) that might grow to affect common escape routes.*

The first of these objectives can be achieved, as in any housing, by the provision of smoke alarms within each flat (and a heat alarm in each kitchen). In determining the level of fire detection that is appropriate, account needs to be taken of the nature of the residents. In particular, some residents in sheltered housing might have reduced mobility or they might be Deaf or hard of hearing. Older people in particular tend to have hearing loss most severe in relation to high frequencies, such as those produced by most smoke alarms.

This first objective could also be achieved by use of smoke, heat, or multi-sensor detectors connected to a communal fire detection and fire alarm system. However, such an arrangement does not readily facilitate verbal confirmation of fire alarm signals by any ARC to which the system is connected. Such an arrangement normally results in an audible alarm signal in that flat, but not in the common parts or any other flat. Where this arrangement is adopted, it needs to be determined whether access into individual dwellings will be possible for maintenance purposes.

The second objective, namely the early summoning of the fire and rescue service, can be achieved by connection of smoke, heat, or multi-sensor alarms within flats to the social alarm system within the flat, so enabling signals from smoke, heat, or multi-sensor alarms to be transmitted to any on-site scheme manager or remote ARC. In this case, alarm signals can be filtered by two-way speech communication between the scheme manager, or social alarm ARC, and occupants of the flat. However, if an occupant is Deaf or hard of hearing, this might not be practicable.

Certain engineering safeguards are necessary in such an arrangement to ensure reliable alarm transmission. In particular, it is necessary to ensure that a signal is transmitted, regardless of which smoke or heat alarm operates. Fire alarm signals need to be readily distinguishable from social alarm signals by the scheme manager and at the ARC. The normal arrangement for social alarm transmission is that, when the scheme manager is on site, the signal is transmitted without delay to the scheme manager, automatically enabling two-way speech communication between the scheme manager and the flat to permit filtering of alarm signals, so avoiding unnecessary summoning of the fire and rescue service. When the scheme manager is offsite or does not respond to the signal within a specified time (typically not greater than 30 s), the signal is automatically relayed to the ARC. The ARC then establishes speech communication with the flat. If it cannot, with certainty, be determined that the signal is a false alarm within 90 s of receipt of the alarm signal at the ARC, the fire and rescue service are summoned immediately (see [Clause 20](#)).

It is anticipated that analogue telephone services will cease to be provided within 5 to 10 years of publication of the 2019 edition of this part of BS 5839, as the UK's telecoms infrastructure is upgraded to digital connectivity. This shift brings a number of opportunities to improve the speed and flexibility of alarm transmission, but in addition has major implications for existing fire detection and fire alarm systems that rely on the fire alarm signal to be transmitted to an ARC or other responder. Many services that employ analogue connectivity, such as sheltered housing, supported housing fire detection and fire alarm systems, and dispersed social alarm (telecare) systems, will need to be upgraded, adapted or replaced to ensure that signalling equipment operates correctly. There is a risk that a great number of vulnerable people could lose the technology on which they rely, and it is likely that other health and care services would be significantly impacted as a result. Manufacturers, designers, installers and

maintainers, in addition to other persons responsible for these systems, need to ensure that a process is in place to confirm that their equipment is compatible with the changes and that testing protocols are in place to verify that signalling is not compromised.

Smoke (or heat) detection (as appropriate) ought to be installed in any communal facility, such as a communal lounge or laundry, from where fire could spread to affect common escape routes. When a fire detector in one of these areas operates, a signal ought to be transmitted to the scheme manager and/or ARC and sounders operated throughout adjacent (or all) common parts to ensure that these areas are evacuated, while residents can still remain in their own flats.

Where there might be combustible materials, such as chairs and tables, within common parts, smoke or multi-sensor detection ought also to be installed within the common parts. Again, operation of these detectors needs to result in transmission of alarm signals to the scheme manager and/or ARC and trigger an audible alarm only in the common parts.

Based on these considerations, a typical fire alarm configuration might comprise smoke/heat alarms within each flat connected to the social alarm system. The provision of these ought to be in accordance with BS 5839-6. A separate communal system is normally necessary if there are communal facilities located off internal corridors. This system ought to be installed in accordance with BS 5839-1:2017 for the appropriate category of system (Category L4 or Category L5). No communal system is likely to be necessary in simple sheltered housing that, architecturally, is similar to a general needs block of flats with no communal facilities.

If a communal system is installed, as a further enhancement, heat detectors, connected to this system, might be installed within the hallway of each flat [in addition to the smoke alarm(s) within the flat]. The heat detectors could be used as confirmation of a fire within a flat. Under these circumstances, it might be appropriate, according to the fire risk assessment for the premises, to evacuate adjacent (or all) common parts and, if appropriate, certain flats in close proximity to the flat of fire origin (or, in small schemes, all other flats). For example, this might be appropriate in the case of a sheltered housing block that does not incorporate all measures normally provided in purpose-built blocks of flats as the basis for a “stay put” policy. Where the communal system is also used to alert residents to a fire in their own flat, or in another flat in close proximity, account needs to be taken of the necessary sound levels within the flats.

Any ARC to which fire alarm signals from a communal fire detection and fire alarm system in sheltered housing are transmitted may be, but need not necessarily be, the same ARC to which fire alarm signals from flats are relayed, as filtering by two-way speech communication is not normally possible for fire alarm signals within common parts or communal facilities.

9.1.6 Mixed systems

Normally, even in the largest of premises, a single fire detection and fire alarm system serves the entire premises. However, exceptions might arise in some premises in order to meet different objectives.

An example of such an exception is an HMO that has three or more storeys. One objective of installing a fire detection and fire alarm system is to warn all occupants before a fire in any premises threatens the communal escape routes. This objective could be met by meeting the recommendations given in BS 5839-1:2017 for a Category L3 fire detection and fire alarm system, which involves the installation of smoke detectors within the communal escape routes and either heat, smoke, carbon monoxide or multi-sensor detectors in rooms or areas adjoining the communal escape routes.

The purpose of the detectors in the accommodation adjoining the escape routes is only to give a warning to occupants of other dwellings before the fire breaks through the door of the dwellings in which it originates. The detectors within dwellings may be sited on the ceiling or wall close to the entrance door of the dwellings. The siting and type of detector might not therefore be such as to provide a sufficiently

early warning for occupants in the dwellings of fire origin to escape. These occupants could be adequately protected by installing smoke alarms within the circulation areas of self-contained dwelling units, following the principles adopted in purpose-built flats. (If necessary, these smoke alarms could also be supplemented by interlinked heat or smoke alarms in specific rooms.)

An advantage of this arrangement is that false alarms due to, for example, cooking activities in dwellings, are unlikely to result in disturbance of all occupants, particularly if heat detectors are installed in areas adjoining escape routes for the purpose of meeting the recommendations given in BS 5839-1.

Although this arrangement (a “mixed system”) results in a mixture of system grades, it meets both life safety objectives. Alternatively, the objectives could be met by a single system which has detectors sited in accordance with BS 5839-1 and that incorporates smoke detectors in communal escape routes and in the circulation areas within dwellings (and detectors in any rooms in which protection is necessary within dwellings). Other means might then be incorporated to prevent unnecessary disruption to all residents as a result of a false alarm in one dwelling unit (see [Clause 12](#)). This arrangement can also simplify maintenance of the system.

Similarly, in sheltered housing or blocks of flats, detectors installed within the dwellings are not intended to give a warning in other dwellings. If fire detection in either communal escape routes or selected high-risk areas, such as plant rooms or communal living rooms, is required, an entirely separate system could be installed in these areas (see [8.1.2](#)).

Mixed systems might also be acceptable where, for example, a Grade A Category PD2 system is installed for property protection in one part of premises, while, for protection of life, a Grade D Category LD3 system is installed throughout the circulation areas of the premises.

If two separate systems are installed (e.g. a BS 5839-1 system supplemented by smoke alarms), it is essential that occupiers are aware of the separate nature of the systems. For example, occupiers of an HMO need to be aware of the need to maintain any smoke alarms provided in individual dwellings, even though a separate system is installed for protection of escape routes.

9.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) Where there is a need to specify a fire detection and fire alarm system for dwellings in which the characteristics of the occupants are unknown (e.g. new dwellings), or for a group of dwellings in which occupant characteristics vary (e.g. when specifying requirements for retrofitting of smoke alarms throughout the properties of a local authority), the recommendations given in [Table 1](#) should be followed.

NOTE 1 Where [Table 1](#) refers to a house with a specific number of storeys (e.g. a two-storey house), basement storeys can be ignored.

- b) Where there is a need to specify a fire detection and fire alarm system for a specific dwelling, in which occupant characteristics are known or can be anticipated (e.g. when imposing requirements for an HMO under legislation, or designing a system on behalf of a specific occupier), the recommendations in [Table 1](#) should be followed, but may be modified on the basis of a fire risk assessment (see [Clause 4](#)).
- c) If a fire detection and fire alarm system is required under legislation, before selecting the grade and category of system, the recommendations given in any guidance documents that support the legislation in question should be taken into account.
- d) [Table 2](#) provides recommendations for the minimum grade and category of system that should be installed for property protection in typical dwellings. However, if a fire detection and fire

alarm system is intended to satisfy the requirements of fire insurers, before selecting the grade and category of system, there should be appropriate consultation with the fire insurers.

- e) Any specification for a system that is intended to satisfy the recommendations of this part of BS 5839 should identify the grade and category of system required.
- f) In sheltered housing, measures should be put in place to prevent receipt of alarm signals by any ARC from being significantly delayed if, prior to the fire alarm signal, a device on the social alarm signal is operated in the flat of fire origin or in any (or all) other flats. At the very least, under these circumstances, the display at the ARC should immediately indicate unambiguously a waiting fire alarm signal, without the need to interrupt speech communication initiated in response to a signal from a social alarm device.

NOTE 2 It is acceptable to install a mixed system (see 3.40) in premises in any situation in which there is more than one fire safety objective that can be satisfied by more than one grade of fire detection and fire alarm system.

Table 1 — Minimum grade and category of fire detection and fire alarm system for protection of life in typical premises

Class of premises	Minimum grade and category of system for installation in:			
	New or materially altered premises		Existing premises	
	Grade	Category	Grade	Category
Single-family dwellings^{A)} and shared houses^{B)} with no floor greater than 200 m² in area				
Owner-occupied ^{C)} bungalow, flat or other single-storey unit	D2	LD2 ^{D)}	F2 ^{E),F),G)}	LD3 ^{F),G),H)}
Rented bungalow, flat or other single-storey unit	D1	LD2 ^{D)}	D1	LD2 ^{D)}
Owner-occupied ^{C)} maisonette with no floor above 4.5 m from ground level or owner-occupied two-storey house	D2	LD2 ^{D)}	F2 ^{E),F),G)}	LD3 ^{F),G),H)}
Rented maisonette with no floor above 4.5 m from ground level or rented two-storey house	D1	LD2 ^{D)}	D1	LD2 ^{D)}
Rented maisonette with any floor above 4.5 m from ground level and with alternative means of escape	D1	LD2 ^{D)}	D1	LD2 ^{D)}
Any maisonette with any floor above 4.5 m from ground level and no alternative means of escape	D1	LD1	D1	LD1
Owner-occupied ^{C)} three-storey house	D2	LD2 ^{D)}	F2 ^{E),F),G)}	LD2 ^{D)}
Rented three-storey house	D1	LD2 ^{D)}	D1	LD2 ^{D)}
Owner-occupied ^{C)} four- (or more) storey house	A	LD2 ^{D)}	D2 ^{I)}	LD2 ^{D)}
Rented four- (or more) storey house	A	LD1 ^{D)}	D1	LD1 ^{D)}
Single-family dwellings^{A)} and shared houses^{B)} with one or more floors greater than 200 m² in area				
Owner-occupied ^{C)} bungalow, flat or other single-storey unit	D2	LD2 ^{D)}	D2 ^{I)}	LD3 ^{F),G),H)}
Rented bungalow, flat or other single-storey unit	D1	LD2 ^{D)}	D1	LD2 ^{D)}
Owner-occupied ^{C)} maisonette with no floor above 4.5 m from ground level or owner-occupied two-storey house	A	LD2 ^{D)}	D2 ^{I)}	LD3 ^{F),G),H)}
Rented maisonette with no floor above 4.5 m from ground level or rented two-storey house	A	LD2 ^{D)}	D1	LD2 ^{D)}
Rented maisonette with any floor above 4.5 m from ground level and with alternative means of escape	A	LD2 ^{D)}	D1	LD2 ^{D)}
Any maisonette with any floor above 4.5 m from ground level and no alternative means of escape	A	LD1	D1	LD1
Owner-occupied ^{C)} three-storey house	A	LD2 ^{D)}	D2 ^{I)}	LD2 ^{D)}
Rented three-storey house	A	LD2 ^{D)}	D1	LD2 ^{D)}
Owner-occupied ^{C)} four- (or more) storey house	A	LD2 ^{D)}	A	LD2 ^{D)}
Rented four- (or more) storey house	A	LD1 ^{D)}	A	LD1 ^{D)}

Table 1 (continued)

Class of premises	Minimum grade and category of system for installation in:			
	New or materially altered premises		Existing premises	
	Grade	Category	Grade	Category
Houses in multiple occupation ^{(K), (L)} (HMOs) HMOs of one or two storeys with no floor greater than 200 m ² in area Other HMOs: Individual dwelling units, within the HMO, comprising a single room, which include cooking facilities (bedsits) Individual dwelling units, within the HMO, comprising a single room, which do not include cooking facilities (bedsits) Individual dwelling units, within the HMO, comprising two or more rooms Communal areas of the HMO	D1	LD1 ^{D)}	D1	LD2 ^{D)}
	D1 ^{M)}	LD1 ^{D), (N)}	D1 ^{M)}	LD1 ^{D), (N)}
	D1 ^{M)}	LD1 ^{D)}	D1 ^{M)}	LD1 ^{D)}
	D1 ^{M)}	LD2 ^{D)}	D1 ^{M)}	LD2 ^{D)}
	Grade A, Category LD2, with detectors sited in accordance with the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017 for a Category L2 system ^{O)}			
Sheltered housing ^{P)} Individual dwelling units Communal areas	D2	LD1 ^{D)}	D2	LD2 ^{Q)}
	Grade A in accordance with the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017 for a Category L4 or L5 system ^{R)}			
Self-catering premises or premises with short-term paying guests	D1	LD1 ^{D)}	D1	LD1 ^{D)}
Supported housing Single-storey Two or more storeys and not more than four bedrooms Two or more storeys and more than four bedrooms	D1	LD1 ^{D)}	D1	LD1 ^{D)}
	D1	LD1 ^{D)}	D1	LD1 ^{D)}
	D1	LD1 ^{D)}	D1	LD1 ^{D)}
	A	LD1 ^{D)}	A	LD1 ^{D)}

^{A)} Including premises with long-term lodgers, but not boarding houses, the latter of which are outside the scope of this part of BS 5839.

^{B)} Houses shared by no more than six persons, generally living in a similar manner to a single family (e.g. houses rented by a number of students).

^{C)} Including premises in which lodgers live as their principal home.

^{D)} Heat detectors should be installed in every kitchen. A smoke detector should be installed in the principal habitable room (see 3.4.7). Where more than one room might be used as the principal habitable room, a smoke detector should be installed in each of these rooms. The detector in the principal habitable room (but not the kitchen) may alternatively be a carbon monoxide fire detector. However, consideration needs to be given to the potential for false alarms from a smoke detector in the lounge if a kitchen opens directly into, or is combined with, the lounge.

^{E)} A Grade F1 system should be installed if there is any doubt regarding the long-term suitability or reliability of a battery-powered system, i.e. the ability to replace batteries.

^{F)} Where electrical work such as a rewire is undertaken, a Grade D (D1 or D2), Category LD2 system should be installed.

Table 1 (continued)

Class of premises	Minimum grade and category of system for installation in:		
	New or materially altered premises		Existing premises
	Grade	Category	Grade Category
<p>o) In Scotland, under the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (Tolerable Standard) (Extension of Criteria) Order 2019 [11], Grade F1, Category LD2 systems are required as a minimum in all existing dwellings.</p> <p>p) Category LD2 if a risk assessment justifies the provision of additional detectors (see Clause 4).</p> <p>q) A Grade D1 system should be installed if there is any doubt regarding the long-term suitability or reliability of a battery powered system, i.e. the ability to replace batteries.</p> <p>r) Detectors may normally be omitted from roof voids unless there are specific significant fire hazards such as gas boilers or electrical equipment for photovoltaic systems.</p> <p>s) Other than houses with long-term lodgers and houses shared by no more than six persons, generally living in a similar manner to a single family (e.g. houses rented by a number of students).</p> <p>t) In England and Wales, under the Housing Act 2004 [8], certain houses converted into blocks of flats prior to the Building Regulations 1991 [12] coming into force are treated as HMOs.</p> <p>u) The detectors in individual dwelling units may be incorporated within the system installed in communal areas, subject to compliance with 12.2b).</p> <p>v) In individual bedsits which include cooking facilities, a heat or multi-sensor fire alarm should be fitted. In the case of a multi-sensor fire alarm, the provision of an alarm silence facility would be beneficial.</p> <p>w) Heat detectors should be installed in every communal kitchen. Heat or smoke detectors, as appropriate (taking into account the fire risk and the potential for false alarms), should be installed in every communal lounge.</p> <p>x) See also 20.2c).</p> <p>y) Where sheltered housing is upgraded, electrical work such as a rewire is undertaken, or smoke alarms are replaced, a Grade D (D1 or D2), Category LD1 system should be installed.</p> <p>z) The provision of detection should be based on a fire risk assessment. Normally, communal lounges, kitchens, laundries, etc., should be protected, and, where these facilities are provided, it might be appropriate for smoke detection to be installed throughout the circulation areas. Such detection could be extended to include detection within dwelling units, subject to the need to filter false alarms from dwelling units. Where there are no significant communal facilities, and the sheltered housing is similar to a general needs block of flats, there is normally no need for any fire detection within circulation areas; fire detection can be restricted to individual dwelling units. Further guidance can be found in NFCC document <i>Fire safety in specialised housing</i> [7].</p>			

Table 2 — Minimum grade and category of fire detection and fire alarm system for protection of property in typical premises

Class of premises	Grade	Category
Single-storey and two-storey dwellings	C	PD2
Other premises	A system conforming to the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017 for a Category P1 system ^{A)}	
^{A)} May be reduced to P2 if the risk to property from fire, and the maximum potential loss, do not warrant a Category P1 system.		

10 Types of fire detector and their selection

10.1 Commentary

10.1.1 General

Fire detectors are designed to detect one or more of four characteristics of a fire, namely smoke, heat, combustion gas (normally carbon monoxide) and flame. These characteristics can be detected in various ways. No single type of detector is the most suitable for all applications and the final choice is dependent upon individual circumstances. Particularly in the case of Category LD2 and Category LD1 systems, it can be appropriate to use a mixture of types of detector.

All fire detectors respond to some extent to phenomena other than fire. Recommendations for reducing the incidence of such false alarms are given in [Clause 12](#).

10.1.2 Smoke detectors

Two classes of smoke detector are commonly used:

- a) ionization chamber smoke detectors, which operate on the principle that the electrical current flowing between electrodes in an ionization chamber is reduced when smoke particles enter the chamber;*
- b) optical smoke detectors, which operate by detecting the scattering or absorption of light by smoke particles.*

Some detectors combine both types of sensor, so ensuring that the earliest possible warning is given, regardless of the type of fire.

Smoke detectors installed in premises are normally of the point type, which detect smoke at one position; these detectors can operate on optical or ionization chamber principles. Other types of smoke detector include those of the aspirating type, in which air is drawn from a number of positions to a central detector, and the beam type, which work on the optical obscuration principle. Each sampling point in an aspirating detection system can be regarded as a "point" detector, but aspirating detection systems can also benefit from the cumulative effect of sampling the environment within a large area via a number of sampling points in that area; this can enable detection of low concentrations of smoke over a wide area, sooner than in the case of point detectors. Some aspirating detectors provide "enhanced" or "high" sensitivity and staged alarms, which further add to their early warning capabilities. Beam detectors are effectively "line" detectors, since they can detect the presence of smoke in a small part of the beam. Some optical beam smoke detectors can also sense thermal turbulence from a fire, by detecting the refraction of the beam at turbulent interfaces between hot and cold air.

Ionization chamber smoke detectors are particularly sensitive to smoke containing small particles, such as are produced in rapidly burning, flaming fires. However, they are likely to be less sensitive to the larger particles found in optically dense smoke, which can be produced by smouldering materials.

Optical smoke detectors are sensitive to the larger, optically active particles found in optically dense smoke, but are less sensitive to the small particles found in clean-burning fires.

Where this part of BS 5839 recommends the use of smoke detectors, either type of detector is generally suitable for detection of fire, particularly if the objective is property protection. However, choice of detector type needs to take into account both the type of fire that might be expected and the need to avoid false alarms (see [Clause 12](#)). When certain materials, such as polyurethane foam, smoulder, they produce relatively large smoke particles to which ionization chamber detectors are comparatively insensitive. Ionization chamber detectors are also less sensitive to smoke that has travelled some distance from the seat of the fire, during which time smoke particles have coalesced to form larger particles. In general, therefore, optical smoke detectors are appropriate in circulation areas, such as hallways and landings. Optical detectors are also appropriate in areas in which a likely cause of fire is ignition of furniture or bedding by a cigarette. Ionization chamber detectors might be appropriate in rooms, such as the living room or dining room, where a fast-burning fire might present a greater danger to occupants than a smouldering fire, taking into account the potential for unwanted alarms (see [3.16](#)).

Aspirating and beam type smoke detectors are usually only appropriate for the protection of mansions and properties of historic importance. In these properties, such detectors are often suitable for protection of large or high spaces, such as entrance halls and banqueting halls. Aspirating detectors, and in some cases beam detectors, are also suitable for protecting areas in which aesthetic considerations preclude the installation of normal point-type detectors on ornately decorated ceilings. For high-risk properties, or those with contents of high value (such as works of art), the early warning benefits that are possible with “enhanced” or “high” sensitivity aspirating detectors can be used to facilitate early intervention.

10.1.3 Heat detectors

There are two main types of heat detector:

- a) point detectors, which respond to the temperature of the gases in the immediate vicinity of a single point;*
- b) line detectors, which respond to the temperature of the gases in the vicinity of a line.*

Only point heat detectors are likely to be appropriate for installation in most premises. Line heat detectors are only likely to be appropriate for use in, for example, a long, relatively narrow structure, such as a cellar or cable tunnel.

Both point and line detectors can be categorized as follows:

- 1) those using fixed-temperature (static) elements, which operate when they reach a preselected threshold temperature;*
- 2) those using rate-of-rise of temperature elements, which operate when their temperature rises at an abnormally fast rate.*

Heat detectors with fixed-temperature elements are used where ambient temperatures are likely to fluctuate rapidly over short periods (e.g. kitchens). Either rate-of-rise heat detectors, incorporating fixed-temperature elements, or fixed-temperature heat detectors can be used in all other situations.

Heat detectors respond much more slowly to fire than smoke detectors (see [10.1.2](#)), but are significantly less likely to give false alarms. They also require less maintenance than smoke detectors (see [Clause 26](#)). They are not suitable for installation in circulation areas that form the escape routes from a premises. The application for heat detectors depends on the system category.

A sprinkler head is a form of heat detector. If a dwelling is protected by an automatic sprinkler system, the sprinkler system can be interfaced with the fire detection and fire alarm system (e.g. by means of a flow switch), so that a fire alarm signal is given by the system’s fire alarm devices when a sprinkler head

operates. Each sprinkler head can then be regarded as a heat detector (but is not equivalent to a smoke detector), provided that, during a period of mains failure, operation of a single head can still cause the fire alarm devices to operate and that, when a sprinkler head operates, the sound pressure level of the fire alarm signal satisfies the recommendations in [Clause 13](#). Therefore, sprinkler protection does not obviate the need for smoke detectors to be sited in accordance with the recommendations in this part of BS 5839 for the relevant category of system.

10.1.4 Carbon monoxide fire detectors

Carbon monoxide fire detectors are point-type detectors that respond to the carbon monoxide that is produced in most fires when incomplete combustion occurs as a result of restriction of the amount of oxygen available to support the combustion process. These detectors are not, therefore, equivalent to smoke detectors in their response to fire.

Carbon monoxide fire detectors are most sensitive to smouldering fires and fires in which the rate of burning is controlled by the supply of air. They can be relatively insensitive to free burning fires supported by a plentiful supply of oxygen. However, this is not the most common form of fire to occur in premises.

Carbon monoxide fire detectors can be immune to certain environmental influences that can result in false alarms from certain smoke detectors, such as dust, steam and cigarette smoke, while responding to most types of fires appreciably faster than heat detectors.

Electrochemical cells, which are used as sensors within carbon monoxide fire detectors, have a finite life (typically 7 years), after which replacement is necessary. It is important that the user is made aware of the likely lifetime of any carbon monoxide fire detectors used in a fire detection and fire alarm system. Owners and occupiers of premises, particularly single-family dwellings in which there are not normally any formal arrangements to ensure periodic maintenance of the fire detection and fire alarm system on a long-term basis, might not appreciate the need for replacement of the electrochemical cell some years after carbon monoxide fire detectors were first installed. Accordingly, these detectors might not be suitable for such premises, unless the detectors are incorporated in a system that is likely to be subject to periodic maintenance for the entire life of the system.

Carbon monoxide alarms conforming to BS EN 50291 are intended only to detect carbon monoxide from faulty, or inadequately ventilated, heating appliances. This type of alarm is intended to give an alarm signal at much higher carbon monoxide levels than carbon monoxide fire detectors and therefore they are not suitable for giving early warning of fire. Accordingly, BS EN 50291 excludes from its scope carbon monoxide detectors that are intended to detect fire.

10.1.5 Flame detectors

Flame detectors detect the infrared or ultraviolet radiation from flame. They cannot detect smouldering fires, and their response to such fires is delayed until the onset of flaming. As they use radiative transfer of energy from the fire, instead of the convective transfer of combustion products required by heat or smoke detectors, they can be wall-mounted and do not need to be on the ceiling.

In general, flame detectors are not suitable for the protection of life in domestic premises. However, in some applications, particularly under high ceilings in mansions or historic properties, their ability to detect fire when mounted on walls can be used to advantage, usually in combination with smoke detectors. Such applications can require specialized knowledge.

10.1.6 Multi-sensor fire detectors

In a multi-sensor fire detector, there is, within the detector, more than one sensor, each of which responds to a different physical and/or chemical characteristic of fire. The purpose of combining sensors in this way is to enhance the performance of the detector in detection of fire, or its resistance to at least

certain categories of false alarm, or both. For example, in some fire detection and fire alarm systems of the type to which BS 5839-1 applies (and that, hence, can be used in Grade A systems), by analysing the signals from more than one sensor within each detector, there can be significant potential for reduction of many types of false alarm.

Multi-sensor fire alarms (see 3.43) are available (e.g. incorporating a smoke sensor and a heat sensor). As in the case of multi-sensor fire detectors used in systems to which BS 5839-1 applies, these have the potential to offer some of the benefits described, such as a broader spectrum of fire detection.

10.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) Smoke detectors may be used in any room or area of premises, other than kitchens, bathrooms and shower rooms. However, other than in the case of circulation areas (e.g. hallways, staircase landings and corridors), their use should be avoided in any room or area in which smoke detectors would have a high potential for false alarms (see Clause 12), unless the risk from fire warrants the provision of automatic fire detection and the use of other forms of fire detection is precluded on the basis of their speed of response to fires of the type that might be anticipated.
- b) Smoke detectors installed within circulation areas, such as hallways, staircase landings and corridors, should be of the optical type (or multi-sensor type incorporating an optical sensor), unless the use of optical detectors would significantly increase the rate of false alarms above that anticipated in the case of ionization chamber smoke detectors (see also Clause 12), or unless (unusually) there is evidence that there is a significant risk of a fast, clean-burning fire in these areas.

NOTE 1 Prior to the 2004 edition of BS 5839-6, custom and practice was to use ionization chamber smoke alarms throughout the above circulation areas. This practice is now deprecated in view of the greater potential for ionization chamber smoke detectors to generate false alarms when exposed to fumes from kitchens, and in view of their poorer response to smouldering fires and smoke that has drifted some distance from its source.

- c) Heat detectors should not be used within circulation areas, such as hallways, staircase landings and corridors (i.e. heat detectors should not be used in any Category LD3 system).

NOTE 2 In the case of Grade A systems and systems meeting the recommendations given in BS 5839-1:2017 for a Category L3 system, it might be necessary to install detectors in rooms or areas opening onto escape routes; heat detectors may be used for this application.

- d) In Category LD1, Category LD2 and Category PD systems, heat detectors may be installed within certain rooms in premises, unless it is necessary to give the earliest possible warning of a fire within the room (e.g. to protect sleeping occupants within the room or to protect high value properties or their contents).

NOTE 3 A heat detector is unlikely to operate early enough to save the life of anyone asleep in the room in which it is installed. Moreover, a heat detector in the room of fire origin might not give sufficient warning for occupants elsewhere in the premises to escape safely if the door to that room is open.

NOTE 4 If premises are protected by an automatic sprinkler system, and, on operation of any single sprinkler head, the fire detection and fire alarm system in the premises is activated (even if the mains power supply within the premises has failed), each sprinkler head may be regarded as a heat detector for the purpose of this part of BS 5839.

- e) Carbon monoxide fire detectors, or multi-sensor fire detectors incorporating a carbon monoxide sensor, should not be used within premises, unless:
 - 1) the detectors are incorporated within a Grade A system and there is a high likelihood that the system will be subject to periodic maintenance by a competent person at periods not exceeding 12 months; or
 - 2) a fault warning is given to indicate the need to replace the electrochemical cell of the detector before it reaches the end of its anticipated life.
- f) If carbon monoxide fire detectors are installed within the circulation areas of premises, there should be an equal or higher number of optical smoke detectors within each circulation space.
- g) Carbon monoxide fire detectors should not be installed within kitchens.

NOTE 5 If, in any room of a dwelling other than a kitchen, a heat detector could provide adequate fire protection, a carbon monoxide fire detector may, subject to compliance with 10.2e), be used instead.
- h) If a multi-sensor fire detector conforms to BS EN 54-7 or BS EN 14604, it may be used in any circumstances in which the use of a smoke detector would provide adequate fire protection. However, if a multi-sensor fire detector incorporates an ionization chamber smoke sensor, it should only be used in a circulation area on a storey into which a kitchen opens if the system incorporates suitable measures to limit the potential for false alarms during cooking processes.

11 Location and siting of fire detectors

11.1 Commentary

11.1.1 Category LD systems

In a Category LD1 system, detectors are installed in all circulation areas and all rooms or areas in which fire might start, other than toilets, bathrooms or shower rooms. Such areas include roof voids, unless it can be determined that there are no significant sources of ignition within the void and no readily combustible materials such as stored items. Category LD1 systems might be appropriate where occupants are likely to be vulnerable, or as part of a fire engineering solution, in which, for example, structural fire precautions might be less than would otherwise be required.

In a Category LD2 system, in addition to the smoke detectors required to meet the recommendations for a Category LD3 system (i.e. one or more detectors in the circulation routes at each floor level), detectors are installed in certain rooms. For example, a heat, smoke or multi-sensor detector is often installed in each kitchen, and a detector might be installed in the living room. The rooms in which the additional detectors are installed need to be determined, where practicable, by a risk assessment (see [Clause 4](#)). In selecting the appropriate type of detector for any room, account needs to be taken of the speed of detection required, the likely type of fire and the need to avoid false alarms (see [Clause 12](#)).

In 2019 it is increasingly common for electrical equipment to be installed in loft spaces, particularly in premises fitted with photovoltaic power systems and other plant (e.g. boilers). In such cases, a Category LD2 system needs to incorporate a smoke detector within the loft space.

In a Category LD3 system, smoke detectors are sited in the circulation areas (normally hallways and staircases) that form the escape routes. In typical single-storey dwellings, only one detector is necessary. At least one smoke detector generally needs to be located between the sleeping area(s) and the most likely sources of fire (living room and kitchen). In typical two- or three-storey dwellings, a Category LD3 system normally comprises two or three smoke detectors respectively (i.e. one on each level). If there are long hallways or corridors, the installation of additional smoke detectors might be necessary. However, where smoke alarms are installed, it is important that siting also takes into account the need for the sound level of the smoke alarm(s) to be sufficient in all bedrooms (see [Clause 13](#)).

11.1.2 Category PD systems

In a Category PD1 system, detectors are installed in every room and area of the premises, although toilets, bathrooms and shower rooms need not have independent coverage. However, even in the case of a Category PD1 system, it might, exceptionally, be acceptable to omit detectors from areas in which there is no combustible material and no source of ignition (e.g. a disused cellar or attic in which all electricity supplies are permanently disconnected).

In a Category PD2 system, detectors are installed in only parts of the premises. Detectors need to be installed in areas where ignition sources or easily ignitable materials are present, where fire could spread rapidly, where supervision is absent, or where the consequences of loss or damage would be serious. Detectors are not essential in areas that contain few combustibles or ignition sources, have frequent supervision and have good structural fire separation from the remainder of the premises. It cannot, however, be assumed that a Category PD2 system need only include detectors in rooms containing high-value articles, such as works of art. Detectors are likely to be necessary in all areas in which fire might start and develop to an extent where it cannot be extinguished before loss of the high-value contents occurs.

In areas protected by a Category PD2 system, the spacing and siting of detectors is generally the same as for a Category PD1 system. If a fire starting outside the protected area spreads into it, the fire growth rate in the protected area is likely to be much higher than if the fire had been started in the protected area by a small ignition source. Although the system in the protected area would respond quickly, the rate of growth would probably be such that a high loss would ensue before firefighting could start. In order to prevent such spread, areas protected by a Category PD2 system need to be separated from unprotected areas by construction that will resist, to some degree, the spread of fire, although it might not have a recognized standard of fire resistance.

11.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) In a Category LD3 system, at least one smoke detector should be sited in each hallway or corridor and on each main landing of every staircase. In hallways or corridors exceeding 7.5 m in length, no point within the hallway or corridor should exceed 7.5 m from the nearest detector.
- b) Where smoke alarms are installed, no bedroom door should be further than 3 m from the nearest smoke alarm.
- c) At least one smoke detector should be located between every bedroom and every other room in the dwellings, other than a toilet, bathroom or shower room. In single-storey dwellings protected by a single detector, the detector should be as close as possible to living accommodation. However, where such rooms are located on both sides of any bedroom, a smoke detector should be sited midway between the doors to these rooms.
- d) Subject to compliance with b), in a multi-storey house, at least one smoke detector should be located on the ground floor between each staircase and every room, other than a toilet, bathroom or shower room. However, where such rooms are located on both sides of a staircase, a smoke detector should be sited midway between the doors to these rooms.
- e) In open-plan accommodation where a stair is open to a living/dining area (or any other room in which fire might start), the living/dining area (or other room) should be treated as a circulation area and be protected by a smoke detector.

NOTE 1 Care is necessary that smoke detectors in such areas are not sited in close proximity to any cooking equipment that forms part of the open-plan accommodation.

- f) In Category LD2 systems, detectors should be located and sited in circulation areas in accordance with the recommendations for a Category LD3 system. In addition, heat or smoke detectors (as appropriate) should be sited in all rooms in which protection is deemed necessary. Alternatively, subject to [10.2e](#)), carbon monoxide fire detectors may be installed in these rooms.
- g) In Category LD1 systems, detectors should be located and sited in circulation areas in accordance with the recommendations for a Category LD3 system. In addition, heat or smoke detectors (as appropriate) should be sited in all rooms and other areas of the premises, including lofts but excluding rooms in which there is negligible likelihood of ignition, such as toilets and bathrooms. Alternatively, subject to [10.2e](#)), carbon monoxide fire detectors may be installed in these rooms and areas.
- h) In Category LD1 and LD2 systems, and Category PD systems, detectors within rooms should be sited such that no point is further than 7.5 m from the nearest smoke detector or, in rooms protected by heat detectors, no further than 5.3 m from the nearest heat detector.
- i) Detectors should where practicable be mounted on ceilings, and should be located at least 300 mm horizontally from any wall or light fitting unless, in the case of light fittings, there is test evidence to prove that the proximity of the light fitting will not adversely affect the efficiency of the detector.
- j) Ceiling-mounted detectors should be located such that their sensitive elements are between 25 mm and 150 mm below the ceiling in the case of heat detectors, or between 25 mm and 600 mm below the ceiling in the case of smoke detectors. Where there is a pitched ceiling, detectors should be installed at, or not more than 600 mm vertically below, the apex for smoke detectors and 150 mm for heat detectors. For these detectors, the distances given in [11.2a](#)) and [11.2h](#)) may be increased by 1% per degree of slope, up to a maximum of 25%. Where the depth between the eaves and the apex is not more than 600 mm, the ceiling should be treated as flat.
- k) Where structural beams create an obstacle to flow of smoke across a ceiling:
 - 1) if the depth of the beam is greater than 10% of the ceiling height, it should be treated as a wall (i.e. detectors should be provided on both sides of the beam) or, if the beam is less than 600 mm in depth, a detector should be installed on the underside of the beam;
 - 2) in other cases, detectors should not be installed closer to the beam than twice the depth of the beam or 500 mm, whichever is less.
- l) If ceiling mounting is impracticable, in rooms and hallways not exceeding 10 m in both length and breadth, and not exceeding 50 m² in area, detectors may, alternatively, be mounted on a wall provided that:
 - 1) the top of the detection element is between 150 mm and 300 mm below the ceiling; and
 - 2) the bottom of the detection element is above the level of any door opening; and
 - 3) the manufacturer's instructions state that the detector is suitable for wall mounting.
- m) Detectors should not be mounted adjacent to, or directly above, heaters or air-conditioning vents.
- n) Detectors should be mounted in positions that are reasonably accessible for maintenance.

NOTE 2 This is particularly important in the case of smoke alarms that incorporate a battery or that have a routine testing or alarm silence facility. Such detectors ought not, for example, to be mounted above a stairwell.
- o) Where the use of carbon monoxide fire detectors is appropriate (see [10.2](#)), location and siting of these detectors should meet the recommendations for the location and siting of smoke detectors.

- p) Where photovoltaic power systems, boilers, and UPS systems are installed within loft spaces, a smoke detector/alarm or multi-sensor fire detector/fire alarm should be installed.

NOTE 3 To avoid unwanted alarms, this is typically an ionization chamber smoke detector or a multi-sensor detector with drift compensation.

12 Limitation of false alarms

12.1 Commentary

False alarms are common in fire detection and fire alarm systems installed in domestic premises, and as a result, some people might be reluctant to install smoke alarms. A more serious problem is that there is abundant anecdotal evidence of deaths and serious injuries from fires in dwellings in which smoke alarms have been disabled by householders because of frequent false alarms. Thus, false alarms are not simply a nuisance; they are seriously detrimental to fire safety. For this reason, this part of BS 5839 places great emphasis on the need to limit false alarms.

In domestic premises, false alarms with good intent and malicious false alarms (see 3.16) are rare. Equipment false alarms (see 3.16) do sometimes occur, but can be minimized by use of good quality equipment that satisfies relevant standards and has third-party certification (see 5.1).

However, since these and a small proportion of false alarms (see 3.16), including those caused by dust within smoke detectors, can result in a prolonged false alarm, it is important that users have some means of silencing such false alarms and/or disabling fire detectors. A facility to disable, or reduce the sensitivity of, smoke detectors at times when false alarms are likely (e.g. whilst cooking) can also be of benefit.

The overwhelming majority of false alarms are those described in this part of BS 5839 as “unwanted alarms” (see 3.16). The most common causes of false alarms in domestic premises are:

- *fumes from cooking processes (including toasting of bread);*
- *steam (from bathrooms, shower rooms and kitchens);*
- *tobacco smoke;*
- *dust (whether built up over a period of time or generated while cleaning);*
- *insects;*
- *aerosol spray (e.g. deodorants and cleaning fluids);*
- *smoke from sources other than a fire in the building (e.g. from an external bonfire);*
- *“hot work”, such as burning off paintwork with a blowlamp;*
- *processes that produce smoke or flame (e.g. flambéing of food);*
- *incense;*
- *candles;*
- *high humidity;*
- *water ingress.*

Most unwanted alarms occur during cooking activities. Ionization chamber smoke detectors are significantly more sensitive than optical smoke detectors to products that occur during toasting of bread, and during frying and grilling. Thus, optical smoke detectors are less likely than ionization chamber smoke detectors to respond to fumes from cooking. This makes the optical smoke detector much more suitable than ionization chamber detectors for installation in hallways and circulation areas

into which kitchens open. It is important that this information is conveyed to householders, particularly by those responsible for advising householders, including, for example, fire and rescue services.

On the other hand, optical smoke detectors are much more prone than ionization chamber smoke detectors to produce false alarms if exposed to steam. Optical smoke detectors are also generally more likely to produce false alarms when exposed to dense tobacco smoke. Ingress of dust can also cause instability of some optical smoke detectors, and result in constant false alarms. Thus, if optical smoke detectors are installed close to poorly ventilated bathrooms, shower rooms, kitchens or rooms in which people smoke heavily, false alarms might occur; in each of these cases, other than close to kitchens, ionization chamber smoke detectors would be less likely to produce false alarms. False alarms can also occur if smoke detectors are installed in dusty spaces, such as roof voids, and, in such situations, if smoke detectors are necessary, ionization chamber smoke detectors or optical/multi-sensor detectors with drift/dust compensation are preferable.

Heat detectors rarely produce false alarms. They are, however, much less sensitive than smoke detectors. The need to avoid false alarms ought never to take priority over an established need for early detection of fire. If heat detectors are installed within rooms, it needs to be accepted that a warning will be given only when a significant fire exists (typically with, as a rule of thumb, flame height equivalent to around one-third of the ceiling height within the room). Nevertheless, if the door of the room is closed (as is good practice during the night if the door opens onto a circulation area), earlier warning might be given by a heat detector in the room than by a smoke detector in the adjacent circulation area.

Carbon monoxide fire detectors are relatively immune to the most common causes of unwanted alarms in premises, such as cooking processes, steam, dust and tobacco smoke. False alarms can occur if a carbon monoxide detector is exposed to vehicle exhaust fumes or is installed in a poorly ventilated kitchen.

Where a sophisticated fire detection and fire alarm system is warranted, such as in a very large property, analogue smoke detection systems (i.e. those of the addressable type: see [3.1](#)) are likely to offer better immunity to false alarms than conventional two-state fire detection systems, particularly if signal processing incorporates techniques specifically intended to discriminate between certain unwanted alarms and real fires.

Similarly, certain multi-sensor fire detection systems have the potential to reduce significantly many common causes of unwanted alarms. There is some evidence that in, for example, sheltered housing, the use of such systems can significantly reduce the level of false alarms.

In some stately houses and large mansions, aspirating smoke detection systems are sometimes used, because the pipework through which air samples are transported to the central detector can be hidden within floor voids; one or more capillary tubes then sample air from each protected room below via a small hole(s) drilled in the ceiling, thus providing relatively “invisible” fire detection. Many such systems tend to operate at a level of sensitivity much higher than that of normal point-type smoke detectors. However, such high sensitivity might not be necessary in the case of domestic premises, and could, if utilized inappropriately, lead to unnecessary false alarms. It is, therefore, necessary to ensure that the sensitivity of the system is set at a level appropriate for the environment. In some cases it is, therefore, often necessary to desensitize the system to make it equivalent to the sensitivity of normal point-type smoke detectors. However, great care is necessary, when desensitizing a system that covers large areas, to ensure that individual sampling points are sufficiently sensitive to match the minimum requirements of BS EN 54-7.

In some (usually larger) HMOs, high levels of false alarms sometimes occur simply as a result of the number of different occupants, each of whom carry out activities, such as cooking, that can lead to false alarms. In such circumstances, occupiers have been known to compromise, or even cause damage to, the fire detection and fire alarm system, or to ignore fire alarm signals. This makes it important to minimize,

as far as practicable, the extent to which occupiers are disrupted by false alarms in other occupiers' accommodation. This might, for example, be achieved by use of a mixed system (see 9.1.6). Alternatively, other measures might be adopted; for example, in the event of a fire alarm signal in one dwelling unit, a short time delay might be incorporated for the occupier to investigate the cause and, if appropriate, reset the system before a fire alarm signal is given in other dwelling units.

The much higher rate of false alarms generated by fire detection and fire alarm systems in domestic premises, compared with the systems used in industrial and commercial premises, makes it generally inappropriate for such systems to result in automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service. In typical premises, such automatic transmission cannot, in any case, be justified on the grounds of life safety. It might, however, be justifiable in the case of premises occupied by disabled people that might make escape difficult in the event of fire. Some householders, or their insurers, might also wish such a facility to be provided for protection of their property. If facilities are provided for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service (usually via a commercially operated ARC), adequate measures need to be taken to minimize the level of false alarms transmitted to the fire and rescue service (see Clause 20).

To avoid unwanted alarms, it is of benefit if any control equipment of systems with facilities for transmission of fire alarm signals to an ARC bears a warning sign with the following wording: "Warning Monitored Alarm System. Fire Alarm is connected to an Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC). Contact the ARC [contact details to be inserted] before carrying out the weekly test."

12.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) All fire detection and fire alarm systems within the scope of this part of BS 5839 should have accessible means of silencing fire alarm signals, suitable for use by the occupiers of the premises. The silencing facilities should meet the following recommendations.
 - 1) Grade A systems should be provided with silencing facilities that meet the recommendations given in BS 5839-1:2017, 16.2.1g) and 16.2.1h).
 - 2) In Grade C systems, the silencing facilities should be capable of silencing both unwanted alarm signals (see 3.16) and permanent fire alarm signals that arise from, for example, a fault in a fire detector. The facilities may comprise a means of disabling a fire detector(s), a means for disabling fire alarm sounders, or any other facility that meets the recommendations given in this clause.
 - 3) In Grade D systems, means should be provided for silencing fire alarm signals that result from, for example, a fault in a detector. This may comprise a means for isolation of mains power to the detector. Since such faults are likely to be relatively rare, it is acceptable for the means of isolation to involve the use of a tool. However, isolation of power to any detector should not result in isolation of power to other electrical equipment, such as lighting, in the premises.

NOTE 1 A number of manufacturers use a fixed base for the electrical connections, and the smoke or heat alarm can be readily removed by use of a tool-operated release tab, etc.

NOTE 2 It is accepted that in Grade D systems, on isolation of mains power to a smoke alarm, the alarm signal will continue for some time, powered from the standby supply. This is acceptable only if the smoke alarm can be removed from the standby supply (with or without a tool).

NOTE 3 It is also of advantage to provide means for silencing short-term unwanted alarms (see 3.16) from smoke alarms. A suitable means can comprise an alarm silence facility conforming to BS EN 14604, provided the facility can be operated by occupiers of the dwelling

when standing at floor level. It would be appropriate to use smoke alarms incorporating such a facility in the case of dwellings in which occupants are most vulnerable and might be inclined to disable smoke alarms as a result of false alarms, such as rented properties of two (or more) storeys.

- b) In HMOs, subject to the agreement of the enforcing authority, a short time delay (typically no more than 2 min) may be incorporated between operation of a smoke detector in one dwelling unit and a fire alarm signal in other dwelling units. During this delay period, a fire alarm signal should be given in the dwelling unit in which the smoke detector is located, but if the system is reset before expiry of the delay period, no alarm signal need be given in other dwelling units.

NOTE 4 It is acceptable for a reset control to be installed in each dwelling unit, provided that this control only resets alarm signals generated within that unit.

NOTE 5 The provision of a reset control in each dwelling unit gives rise to a need for clear instruction of occupants regarding procedures for the use of the control.

- c) All smoke detectors within areas, such as hallways and corridors, into which kitchens open should be of the optical type, unless there are overriding factors that preclude the use of optical smoke detectors [see also [10.2b](#)].
- d) Optical smoke detectors should not be sited in close proximity to rooms from which steam might issue, such as poorly ventilated bathrooms, shower rooms and certain kitchens.
- e) Fire detectors should not be installed in bathrooms and shower rooms.
- f) If fire detectors are installed within kitchens, only heat detectors should be used.
- g) If it is necessary to install a smoke detector in a room or area in which significant quantities of dust or dense tobacco smoke are likely to occur (e.g. a dusty loft space), either:
- 1) an ionization chamber smoke detector should be used in preference to an optical smoke detector, unless there are overriding reasons to the contrary; or
 - 2) a multi-sensor fire detector may be used, provided that it would be likely to minimize unwanted alarms resulting from dust ingress or tobacco smoke ingress.
- h) Before smoke detectors are specified for installation in any room within premises, it should be confirmed that their use is necessary in order to satisfy the objective(s) of the system, based on, for example, a fire risk assessment (see [Clause 4](#)).
- i) Carbon monoxide fire detectors should not be used in locations in which carbon monoxide might occur, under normal circumstances, in quantities sufficient to create the potential for unwanted alarms.

NOTE 6 Such areas include badly ventilated kitchens and areas in which vehicle or other exhaust fumes occur.

- j) In a very large property, in which more than 50 smoke detectors are necessary, only systems of the analogue type should be used.

NOTE 7 In such properties, if there is potential for a high number of false alarms, multi-sensor systems could be used with detection algorithms that are intended to minimize the occurrence of false alarms.

- k) In some large mansions and historic houses in which aspirating fire detection systems are used, high sensitivity is not required in order to satisfy the objective of the system. In such cases, aspirating fire detection systems that can be arranged to provide sensitivity equivalent to that of point smoke detectors conforming to BS EN 54-7 should be used.
- l) Other than in the case of sheltered housing, automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to an ARC (or direct to the fire and rescue service) should not be specified for a fire detection and fire

alarm system in premises unless the specifier has confirmed that such a facility is necessary in order to satisfy the objectives of the system (e.g. property protection or protection of occupants at special risk from fire). Where such facilities are provided, they should be in accordance with [Clause 20](#). Before remote monitoring of fire alarm signals is put in place, occupiers should be given formal, written instructions regarding the need to avoid transmission of false alarms to the fire and rescue service and appropriate means whereby such false alarms can be avoided (see [Annex F](#)).

13 Audible fire alarm devices and audibility

13.1 Commentary

13.1.1 Audible fire alarm devices

Smoke alarms and heat alarms, by definition, include an integral sounder. In systems other than those incorporating smoke alarms and heat alarms, reliable audible alarm devices, such as bells or electronic sounders, are necessary.

Many commercially available electronic sounders produce a greater sound output than a bell. However, the sound output of electronic sounders tends to be more direction-dependent than that of a bell, and the high output on the axis of the electronic sounder is not always achieved at right angles to the axis. Whatever the audible alarm device used, the fire alarm signals need to be clearly distinguishable from any other alarm signals.

13.1.2 Audibility

A fire detection and fire alarm system only provides satisfactory protection of life if it is capable of rousing the principal occupants of the dwellings from sleep (e.g. the adult occupants in typical single-family dwellings). No particular sound pressure level is certain to rouse all occupants in all circumstances. Depth of sleep varies during the course of the sleep period and also varies from one person to another. Greater sound pressure levels are often required to rouse children from sleep than are necessary in the case of adults. People who are Deaf or hard of hearing, and older people with age-related hearing loss, might require different sound pressure levels or visual indicators to be roused from sleep. Alcohol intoxication can also result in the need for higher sound pressure levels to rouse people from sleep. BS 5839-1:2017 recommends that, if an audible alarm is intended to rouse sleeping persons, a sound level of 75 dB(A) ought to be achieved at the bedhead. However, this does not guarantee that every person will be awakened, particularly if they are Deaf or hard of hearing, or under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Most fire detection and fire alarm systems in dwellings comprise smoke alarms, which are usually fitted in, at least, the circulation areas, such as hallways and landings. BS EN 14604 requires that the sound output of a smoke alarm be at least 85 dB(A) at 3 m. Most domestic doors attenuate sound by around 20 dB; greater attenuation can occur in the case of solid doors, such as fire doors. It is therefore unlikely that a smoke alarm on, for example, the upstairs landing of a two-storey house will produce a sound level of 75 dB(A) at the bedhead in each bedroom, particularly if the bedroom doors are shut; levels of 55 dB(A) to 65 dB(A) are more likely. At the time of publication of this part of BS 5839, the committee is not aware of any evidence to show that lives are being lost due to inadequate audibility of the fire alarm signal from smoke alarms, except where people are incapacitated to such a degree that even much higher sound levels would not waken them. This might be because, in their own homes, people can be roused by an unusual sound of relatively low level compared with the sound level that might be required to wake them in premises with which they are unfamiliar (e.g. a hotel).

The historical adequacy of sound pressure levels applies to sheltered housing as well as general needs housing. However, in sheltered housing, especially sheltered housing which provides specialist older

people's housing, residents are more likely to experience age-related hearing loss than the general population. Accordingly, when a new fire detection and fire alarm system is installed in sheltered housing (either when the building is first constructed or when a replacement system is installed in existing sheltered housing), it is considered appropriate for higher sound pressure levels to be provided in every bedroom of each dwelling unit than those traditionally achieved (see also [Clause 14](#)).

In sheltered housing with a "stay put" strategy, care is necessary to ensure that, within flats, the sound pressure level of the communal fire alarm system is not high enough to cause confusion or a perceived need to evacuate. Local Government Association guidance [6] suggests that the sound pressure level in the hallway of residents' flats should not exceed 45 dBA.

13.1.3 Frequency

Research has shown that the most effective alarm signal to rouse hard of hearing people, children and intoxicated young adults from sleep is a 520 Hz square wave signal (one octave higher than middle C).

The integral sounder of most smoke alarms produces a sound with a frequency in excess of 2 000 Hz. The major frequencies of bells and electronic sounders used in fire detection and fire alarm systems are often at least one octave lower. Age and damage to hearing reduce the sensitivity of the ear, particularly to frequencies above 2 000 Hz (see also [Clause 14](#)). High-frequency sounds are also subject to greater attenuation by partitions, dividing walls and doors. An increase in frequency by one octave (so doubling it) can increase the attenuation by walls by around 5 dB, although the corresponding change in attenuation by doors is not as great.

13.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) Other than in the case of smoke alarms and heat alarms, the frequency(ies) produced by fire alarm sounders should be in the range of 500 Hz to 1 000 Hz. The frequency produced by smoke alarms and heat alarms should not exceed 3 500 Hz.
- b) The fire alarm warning should be clearly distinguishable from the sound produced by any other alarm system in the premises (e.g. an intruder alarm system or a carbon monoxide warning system). All fire alarm sounders in single premises should produce a similar alarm signal. However, if smoke alarms are installed in the same premises as a Grade A or Grade C system (to form a mixed system), the smoke alarms need not produce the same alarm signal as the sounders in the Grade A or Grade C system.
- c) In all premises, all smoke alarms and heat alarms (if provided) in Grade D and Grade F systems should be interlinked, such that, when fire is detected by any smoke alarm or heat alarm, an audible fire alarm warning is given by all smoke alarms and heat alarms (if provided) in the premises.

NOTE 1 The above recommendation does not apply to smoke alarms or heat alarms in a mixed system (see [9.1.6](#)) installed within an HMO if the smoke alarms and heat alarms are only intended to give a warning to occupants of the unit of accommodation in which fire occurs; under these circumstances only the smoke alarms and heat alarms (if provided) in that unit need be interlinked.

- d) In a Grade A or Grade C system, all fire alarm sounders within the same dwelling should give a fire alarm signal, regardless of where fire is detected in that dwelling.
- e) Unless there is, within the bedroom, a fire alarm sounder or a smoke alarm (or heat alarm) that will give a fire alarm signal whenever fire is detected anywhere in the premises, in all Category LD systems the sound pressure level of fire alarm signals, if measured at the doorway of each bedroom (with the door open), should be at least 85 dB(A), irrespective of where fire is detected in the premises. When a new fire detection and fire alarm system is installed in

sheltered housing, a fire alarm sounder, or a smoke alarm that will give a fire alarm signal whenever fire is detected anywhere in the premises, should be installed in each bedroom.

NOTE 2 A higher sound pressure level than 85 dB(A) might be necessary if occupants are hard of hearing (see also [Clause 14](#)) or if bedroom doors attenuate sound by significantly more than 20 dB. In these cases, the provision of an interconnected smoke alarm, or alarm sounder, in one or more bedrooms might be necessary. Attention is drawn to the availability of low frequency sounder devices for people who are hard of hearing (see [14.1](#)).

- f) The recommendations of [13.2e](#)) apply to many HMOs of limited size and with straightforward means of escape. However, in some HMOs, ambient noise levels or other factors might justify the need for a sound pressure level of 75 dB(A) at the bedhead of each bedroom within a dwelling unit, particularly in the event of a fire in an area beyond the dwelling unit, as is recommended by BS 5839-1:2017 for premises such as hotels. The need for this significantly higher sound pressure level within any or all bedrooms should be determined as part of a fire risk assessment (see [Clause 4](#)).

NOTE 3 Experience has shown that, to achieve 75 dB(A) at the bedhead in any bedroom, a fire alarm sounder or smoke alarm (or heat alarm) needs to be installed in the bedroom.

NOTE 4 A fire risk assessment might determine that a sound pressure level of 75 dB(A) is appropriate in only certain bedrooms within the premises.

NOTE 5 Specification of a requirement for compliance with this part of BS 5839 (e.g. by an enforcing authority or consulting engineer), without any further requirements in respect of sound pressure level, will only ensure that the recommendations of [13.2e](#)) are satisfied. If sound pressure levels higher than recommended in [13.2e](#)) are required [e.g. as described in [13.2f](#))], explicit information to this effect will be necessary in any specification, enforcement notice, etc.

- g) In all areas of each dwelling, other than those to which the recommendations of [13.2e](#)) or [13.2f](#)) apply, it should be possible for the occupants to be able to hear the fire alarm signal under most foreseeable circumstances. However, the sound level in the vicinity of any telephone likely to be used to summon the fire and rescue service should not be so high that it could interfere with the making of an emergency call to the fire and rescue service.

NOTE 6 The areas in which it is necessary to provide a warning might be determined as part of a fire risk assessment.

14 Fire alarm warnings for people who are Deaf and people who are hard of hearing

14.1 Commentary

People who are Deaf or hard of hearing have varying levels of sensitivity to sounds. Some Deaf and hard of hearing people might be able to detect some conventional alarm sounders; however, many people find the higher frequencies produced by most smoke alarms and heat alarms less detectable. Lower frequency devices, such as those producing a 520 Hz square wave signal, have been shown to be more effective. In some premises, there might always be a companion available to alert a Deaf or hard of hearing person in the event of fire (e.g. in the case of young children or some disabled people who would not be expected to remain alone in the premises).

For some people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, there might be a need to install a smoke alarm, interconnected with other smoke alarms in the premises, or an alarm sounder, in the bedroom. However, for some occupants, audible alarms might be insufficient to alert them in the event of fire, particularly if they are asleep, therefore other suitable means of giving warning in the event of fire will be necessary. If, in this case, smoke alarms are a satisfactory means of giving warning to occupants (i.e. a Grade F, Grade D or, possibly, Grade C system is appropriate: see [Clause 9](#)), a system of smoke alarms conforming to BS 5446-3 is appropriate for giving warning to the occupants.

If a Grade A system is necessary to protect occupants from fire, BS 5839-1:2017 contains appropriate recommendations for giving warning to people who are Deaf or hard of hearing in the event of fire. If vibrating devices triggered by radio signals are used in a Grade A system, the recommendations given in BS 5839-1:2017 for the associated control and transmission equipment are applicable.

Regardless of the grade of system installed, great care is necessary to ensure that any fire alarm devices provided for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing are suitably located, such that no one is exposed to undue risk from fire as a result of inadequate means of warning in any room or area of the premises. A fire risk assessment would be an appropriate means of determining the specific design requirements.

14.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) Any fire warning system intended for warning people who are Deaf or hard of hearing in the event of fire should be of the appropriate grade (see [Clause 9](#)).
- b) The nature of any fire warning system for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing should take into account the individual needs of each person for whom it is intended. In particular, an assessment should be undertaken, involving each person for whom the system is intended (and/or their parents or carers), to determine the measures that should be taken to give an adequate and appropriate warning in all appropriate rooms and areas in the premises. An audible alarm device (interconnected smoke alarm or alarm sounder) should generally be provided in bedrooms occupied by persons who are hard of hearing. However, for some people, both visual alarm devices and vibrating alarm devices (vibrating pads and vibrating alerters) are acceptable forms of warning device and are appropriate.

NOTE 2 It might be appropriate, in some cases, to incorporate means by which people who are Deaf or hard of hearing are alerted to a fire in premises when they are within, for example, the garden of the premises (e.g. by means of a vibrating alerter). In this case, it ought to be ensured that the range of the warning device is sufficient.

- c) Where the system needs to warn a person who is Deaf or hard of hearing who is awake, at least the principal habitable room should be provided with a visual alarm device. If there is a need to alert the person when they are asleep, devices which are effective for the individual in question should be used (e.g. a vibrating pad under the person's pillow or mattress).
- d) Where smoke alarms are an adequate form of fire detection and fire alarm system (see [Clause 9](#)), and an audible means of giving warning to one or more people who are Deaf or hard of hearing is not sufficient, a smoke alarm kit conforming to BS 5446-3 should be provided.
- e) Visual alarm devices, vibrating pads and vibrating alerters used in any grade of system should conform to the relevant requirements of BS 5446-3.
- f) If a Grade A system is intended to provide warning to any person who is Deaf or hard of hearing in the event of fire, the system should meet the recommendations given in BS 5839-1:2017, [Clause 18](#). Any control or transmission equipment used as part of a vibrating alerter system should, in these circumstances, meet the recommendations given in BS 5839-1:2017, [Annex C](#).

15 Power supplies

15.1 Commentary

Fire detection and fire alarm systems designed in accordance with this part of BS 5839 rely on electrical power for their operation. No source of electrical power is totally reliable; every source will fail at some time, even if only for a limited period. If the fire detection and fire alarm system has only a single source of supply (as in the case of Grade F systems), the system is totally disabled when this

supply fails. Provided that action is taken to rectify the failure soon after it occurs, the probability of a fire occurring during the relatively short period of disablement might be low. Nevertheless, in view of these considerations, a Grade F system is only suitable for retrofitting in existing premises in which the number of storeys is limited and the nature of the occupants is such that they are not those at greatest risk from fire.

In new premises, and in existing premises in which the fire risk (see [Clause 4](#)) is high, the provision of mains-operated systems with a standby supply (e.g. a Grade D system) is appropriate.

In general, a normal supply from mains electricity, backed up by a battery-powered standby supply which is connected automatically in the event of mains failure, is reliable. Some forms of standby battery (e.g. lithium type) will also last for several years before they need to be replaced. Some rechargeable batteries are likely to last for the full service life of the smoke alarm.

The standby supplies recommended in [15.2](#), [15.3](#) and [15.4](#) are likely to be satisfactory in virtually all premises. Only exceptionally, such as in the case of premises in which occupants could be deprived of mains electricity for periods greater than 72 h because they cannot pay for supplies, are greater capacities likely to be required.

In the case of systems that incorporate batteries, the manufacturer's recommendations regarding use and disposal of batteries need to be followed. It is essential that user instructions for the system (see [Clause 24](#)) include any relevant advice regarding the hazards of lithium batteries and the appropriate methods of disposal.

WARNING. Lithium batteries can present an explosion hazard if they are subject to severe overheating.

15.2 Recommendations for power supplies for Grade A systems

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) Power supplies for Grade A systems should meet the recommendations given in BS 5839-1:2017, [Clause 25](#), with the exception of [25.4e](#)).
- b) The circuit serving the fire detection and fire alarm system should be such that it is not isolated within the premises, except in the event of deliberate isolation of the supply by the occupier [e.g. by use of an isolating device meeting the recommendations given in BS 5839-1:2017, [25.2a](#))] or in the event of fault conditions.

NOTE 1 It is not, for example, acceptable for the mains supply to be connected via a card-operated meter or similar.

- c) The standby supply should be capable of automatically maintaining the system in normal operation (whilst giving an audible and visual indication of mains failure) for a period of 72 h, after which sufficient capacity should remain to supply the maximum alarm load (see [3.38](#)) for at least 15 min. However, in premises that are never left unattended (e.g. a mansion in which staff are always present and can arrange for rectification of a supply failure), or if the system has remote transmission to an ARC and transmits a "fire alarm fault" signal, the period of normal operation sustained by the standby supply may be reduced from 72 h to 24 h, provided that arrangements are in place to rectify the fault within the standby period. The capacity required to satisfy these recommendations should be calculated in accordance with [Annex G](#).

NOTE 2 The standby period would not be affected by the presence of an emergency generator.

NOTE 3 To provide a battery that will operate a Grade A system for 72 h in the event of mains failure normally necessitates relatively large batteries, which might need to be housed in a separate supply unit. Any external cabling between the power supply unit (PSU) and the CIE needs to be duplicated for compliance with BS 5839-1:2017 and needs to be fire-resisting.

15.3 Recommendations for power supplies for Grade C systems

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) The normal supply for the Grade C control and indicating equipment (CIE) should be derived from the public electricity supply to the dwelling. The mains supply to the CIE should take the form of either:
- 1) an independent circuit at the dwelling's consumer unit, in which case no other electrical equipment should be connected to this circuit (other than a dedicated monitoring device installed to indicate failure of the mains supply to the CIE); or
 - 2) a separately electrically protected, regularly used local circuit, in which case there should be a means for isolation of the CIE from the circuit (e.g. for maintenance).

NOTE 1 This does not imply that there need be separate electrical protection of the CIE; a single means of protection against overload or short circuit (e.g. a fuse or circuit-breaker) serving the entire circuit is acceptable. However, for electrical safety, adjacent to the CIE, there needs to be a means of isolation dedicated to the CIE or mains power supply, if separate, to enable safe maintenance.

- b) The mains supply to the CIE should be supplied, via an isolating protective device (such as a circuit-breaker) from the load ("dead") side of the main isolating device for the dwelling. The isolating protective device should be labelled "FIRE ALARM: DO NOT SWITCH OFF". Where fire alarms are connected to a local circuit, the label should, instead, read "CAUTION. FIRE ALARMS CONNECTED TO THIS CIRCUIT. DO NOT SWITCH OFF".
- c) In an HMO with a single key or card-operated meter, the mains power supply for the fire alarm may be served by the meter. However, where, in an HMO, the accommodation of each resident is served by a separate key or card-operated meter, Grade C CIE should not be supplied via the meter of any resident.

NOTE 2 This is to prevent isolation of the power supply to devices in common parts when, for example, the accommodation of one resident is vacated for a prolonged period of time.

- d) The circuit supplying the CIE should not be protected by any residual current device (RCD), unless RCD protection is required for reasons of electrical safety. If RCD protection is required, either of the following conditions should be satisfied.
- 1) The RCD should serve only the circuit supplying the fire detection and fire alarm system [e.g. residual-current circuit breaker with overcurrent protection (RCBO)].
 - 2) The RCD protection of the fire detection and fire alarm system circuit should operate independently of any RCD protection for circuits supplying socket outlets or portable equipment (e.g. RCBO).

NOTE 3 For example, 15.3d)2) would be satisfied if a time delayed 100 mA RCD served the entire electrical installation in the dwelling, including the circuit serving the fire detection and fire alarm system, while a 30 mA RCD served all circuits supplying socket outlets or portable equipment.

- e) The mains supply should be backed up by a standby supply comprising a secondary battery with an automatic charger, that is capable of automatically maintaining the system in normal operation for a period of 72 h (whilst giving the fault warnings recommended in 17.4), after which sufficient capacity should remain to support the maximum alarm load (see 3.38) for 4 min or to maintain fault warnings of the form and duration recommended in 17.4, whichever is the greater.
- f) The normal and standby supplies should each be capable of supplying the maximum alarm load irrespective of the condition of the other supply.

- g) Batteries used in Grade C systems should be of a type that has an expected life of at least 4 years under the conditions of use likely to be experienced in the system. Automotive lead-acid batteries (i.e. the type normally used for starting service in cars) are not suitable for fire alarm service and should not be used.
- h) The battery charger for the standby supply should be compatible with the batteries used, and should be capable of recharging a battery from its final voltage (see 3.18) to a capacity sufficient to meet the recommendations given in 15.3e) within a charging period of 24 h.
- i) In an HMO with a permanent landlord's supply in the common parts, but prepayment meters in dwelling units, a supply to any CIE in the premises should be derived from the landlord's permanent supply in the common parts.

Where this applies, permanent notices should be displayed on or adjacent to the meter, as well as on or adjacent to any secondary consumer unit in the dwelling, which states:

"CAUTION. THE FIRE ALARM IS NOT CONNECTED TO THIS CONSUMER UNIT. ISOLATION OF THIS UNIT, OR HAVING NO CREDIT ON THE METER, WILL NOT ISOLATE THE ELECTRICAL SUPPLY TO THE FIRE ALARM."

NOTE 4 For intruder alarm systems, BS EN 50131-1 recommends a standby capacity of less than 72 h. Modifications to an intruder alarm system are, therefore, likely to be necessary if it is to incorporate a fire detection and alarm facility meeting the recommendations given in this part of BS 5839 for a Grade C system. If a system is incapable of meeting the recommendations given in this clause, it might be appropriate to consider the possibility of a variation (see 3.65) in respect of standby power supply duration, subject to agreement of the relevant interested parties (e.g. the authority responsible for enforcing any relevant fire safety legislation). For example, a variation might be appropriate in the case of an intruder alarm system with a facility for transmission of a mains failure condition to an ARC.

15.4 Recommendations for power supplies for Grade D systems

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) The normal supply for smoke alarms and any heat alarms in a Grade D system should be derived from the public electricity supply to the premises. The mains supply to the smoke alarms and heat alarms should take the form of either:
 - 1) an independent circuit at the dwelling's consumer unit, in which case no other electrical equipment should be connected to this circuit (other than the supply to a dedicated social alarm control unit); or

NOTE 1 Mains powered CO alarms conforming to BS EN 50291 and installed in accordance with BS EN 50292 may also be interlinked with the fire detection and alarm system if the manufacturer of all the components makes such a recommendation.

- 2) a separately electrically protected, regularly used local lighting circuit, in which case there should be a means for isolation of the smoke alarm(s) from the lighting circuit (e.g. for maintenance).

NOTE 2 This does not imply that there need be separate electrical protection of the smoke alarm circuit; a single means of protection against overload or short circuit (e.g. a fuse or circuit-breaker) serving the entire circuit is acceptable.

NOTE 3 A number of manufacturers use a fixed base for the electrical connections, and the smoke or heat alarm can be readily removed by use of a tool-operated release tab, etc.

NOTE 4 The mains supply to the alarm system may be transformed to extra low voltage before being distributed at that voltage to the alarms.

- b) Any device that isolates the power supply to the smoke alarm(s) should be labelled “SMOKE ALARMS: DO NOT SWITCH OFF”. Where smoke alarms are connected to a lighting circuit, the label should, instead, read “CAUTION. SMOKE ALARMS CONNECTED TO THIS CIRCUIT. DO NOT SWITCH OFF”.
- c) If smoke alarms and any heat alarms are of a type that can be interconnected by wiring, all smoke alarms and heat alarms should be connected on a single final circuit.

NOTE 5 This recommendation is intended to ensure electrical safety by avoidance of a situation in which one device, isolated for maintenance, remains connected to a live device via the interconnect wiring. Accordingly, the recommendation does not apply if the form of interconnection is not capable of conducting current, e.g. if the means of interconnection comprises radio communication rather than wiring.

- d) The standby supply for smoke alarms and heat alarms should take the form of a primary battery or a secondary battery.
- e) The capacity of the standby supply should be sufficient to power the smoke alarm(s) and any heat alarms in the quiescent mode for at least 72 h whilst giving an audible or visual warning of power supply failure, after which there should remain sufficient capacity to provide a fire warning for a further 4 min. In the absence of a fire, a fault warning light should be active for at least 24 h.
- f) In an HMO with a single key or card-operated meter, the mains power supply for all smoke and heat alarms may be served by the meter. However, where, in an HMO, the accommodation of each resident is served by a separate key or card-operated meter, Grade D smoke and heat alarms in common parts should not be supplied via the meter of any resident.

NOTE 6 This is to prevent isolation of the power supply to devices in common parts when, for example, the accommodation of one resident is vacated for a prolonged period of time.

- g) In an HMO with a permanent landlord’s supply in the common parts, but prepayment meters in dwelling units, a supply to any smoke alarms in the dwelling units should be derived from the landlord’s permanent supply in the common parts.

Where this applies, permanent notices should be displayed on or adjacent to the meter, as well as on or adjacent to any secondary consumer unit in the dwelling, which states:

“CAUTION. SMOKE ALARMS ARE NOT CONNECTED TO THIS CONSUMER UNIT. ISOLATION OF THIS UNIT, OR HAVING NO CREDIT ON THE METER, DOES NOT ISOLATE THE ELECTRICAL SUPPLY TO THE SMOKE ALARM.”

15.5 Recommendations for power supplies for Grade F systems

Power supplies for Grade F systems should conform to BS EN 14604.

16 Wiring

16.1 Commentary

A fire detection and fire alarm system in which components are interconnected will not fulfil its functions unless these interconnections operate correctly. In most systems, the interconnections take the form of wiring, but other means, such as radio signals, may be used. Recommendations for radio-linked systems are given in [Clause 21](#).

In most single-family dwellings, any interconnections between components are not required to function for prolonged periods during a fire. Accordingly, the use of fire-resisting cables might not be necessary. However, wiring needs to be protected from exposure to mechanical damage, particularly if the wiring is unmonitored.

16.2 Recommendations for wiring in Grade A systems

Cables systems used in Grade A systems should, as a minimum, meet all the recommendations given in BS 5839-1:2017, 26.2 for standard fire-resisting cables.

16.3 Recommendations for wiring in Grade C systems

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) The cables used in Grade C systems should be selected and erected in accordance with the relevant requirements of BS 7671. The cables should be suitable for the current and voltage of the circuits concerned.
- b) The types of cable used in Grade C systems should not be readily susceptible to mechanical damage under the conditions in which they are installed. If cables are not sufficiently robust to withstand the likely effects of foreseeable impact, abrasion or rodent attack, additional protection against mechanical damage should be provided. Protection against mechanical damage should be provided, either by the building construction or by installing the wiring in conduit, ducting or trunking.

16.4 Recommendations for wiring in Grade D systems

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) Cables used for the mains supply to smoke alarms and any heat alarms, and any interconnecting wiring between all smoke/heat alarms, should be suitable for domestic mains wiring.
- b) Conductors used for interconnection of smoke/heat alarms should be readily distinguishable from those supplying power (e.g. by colour coding).
- c) Wiring systems of any circuits in Grade D systems should conform to the general requirements of BS 7671.

16.5 Recommendations for wiring in Grade F systems

Where battery-powered smoke/heat alarms are interconnected, the type of cable used in Grade F systems should be suitable for the voltage and current concerned and be installed in accordance with the general requirements of BS 7671.

17 Control and indicating equipment

17.1 Commentary

Grade A systems incorporate equipment for the reception, indication, control and relaying of signals originating from fire detectors and any manual call points connected to the equipment, and for the activation of fire alarm devices. The CIE is of an identical nature to that used in systems designed in accordance with BS 5839-1 for protection of non-domestic premises, such as offices, shops and other commercial premises.

Grade C systems can incorporate a simpler CIE, providing a source of power for either a number of smoke alarms (and, possibly, heat alarms) or a number of fire detectors, with a very basic form of control and indication. Such equipment can comprise, for example, equipment specifically intended to provide a central source of power and control for interconnected smoke alarms, or can, for example, comprise the CIE of an intruder alarm system or social alarm system, to which a number of fire detectors and fire alarm devices are connected. Facilities provided by the CIE in a Grade C system may also include some facilities that are, more typically, provided in the CIE of Grade A systems, which will satisfy all recommendations in respect of CIE for Grade C systems.

One benefit of Grade A and Grade C systems is a level of control over the system by occupiers of the premises, which is not possible in the case of Grade D and Grade F systems. In addition, the provision of CIE enables better information for the occupier(s) regarding the status of the system. This additional control and indication does, however, result in a possible need for an occupier to go to the CIE when a fire alarm signal occurs. Care needs to be taken to ensure that, if this action is followed (regardless of whether the action is appropriate or inappropriate), the occupant is not placed at significant risk from a fire. There is also a need to ensure that the system is not compromised as a result of casual tampering with the CIE.

17.2 Recommendations applicable to all control and indicating equipment

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) CIE should be sited on the same level as the normal entrance to the premises, close to the normal entrance.
- b) In single-family dwellings, including those with long-term lodgers, and houses shared by no more than six persons, generally living in a similar manner to a single family (e.g. houses rented by a number of students), CIE may be hidden from view (e.g. in a cupboard). In other premises (e.g. HMOs), CIE should be sited within a common circulation area, close to the door by which the fire and rescue service will normally enter the premises when summoned to a fire.
- c) Unless it is situated in a secure area or enclosed within a secure cabinet, CIE should normally be sited such that all controls are between 1.35 m and 1.45 m above floor level, to prevent casual tampering by children. A lower mounting height is, however, acceptable in premises occupied by wheelchair users.

17.3 Additional recommendations for control and indicating equipment for Grade A systems

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) CIE for Grade A systems should meet the recommendations given in BS 5839-1:2017, Clause 23.
- b) In addition, other than in the case of single-zone systems (see [Clause 19](#)), in Grade A systems CIE should incorporate zonal indicators, comprising a separate light-emitting indicator for each fire detection zone of the system (e.g. a LED matrix or illuminated mimic diagram), such that the equipment is capable of simultaneous display of fire alarm signals on every fire detection zone.

17.4 Additional recommendations for control and indicating equipment for Grade C systems

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) CIE for Grade C systems should incorporate a facility for silencing alarm signals.

NOTE 1 The operation of this facility may disable the system, by, for example, isolating smoke alarms from the power supply or by disabling a sounder circuit.

- b) The equipment should provide a visual indication of failure or disconnection of the normal supply. The indication should take the form of either of the following:
 - 1) a normally illuminated indicator is extinguished; or
 - 2) a fault indicator is illuminated.
- c) The system should be capable of maintaining the visual indication for at least 15 days.
- d) An audible warning should be given at the CIE when (or before) the standby battery capacity falls below that required to meet the recommendations given in [15.3e](#). If the audible warning is

intermittent, it should sound at least once every minute and should persist for at least 72 h after the standby battery no longer has the capacity to perform in accordance with [15.3e](#)).

NOTE 2 The audible warning may be given as soon as the mains supply fails.

- e) All visual indicators provided on CIE for Grade C systems should be clearly labelled to identify their function.
- f) The operation of any fire alarm device circuit should not be prevented by any defect in a visual indicator and should not depend on the operation of any indicator.
- g) An audible and visual fault indication should be given in the event of an open circuit or short circuit on the wiring to manual call points, smoke and heat alarms or fire detectors, and to fire alarm devices, unless the fault causes a fire alarm signal to be given [see [6.2b](#)]]. If the audible warning is intermittent, it should sound at least once every minute. It should be possible to silence the audible warning by operation of a manual control. The visual indication should persist until the fault has been rectified.

18 Manual call points

18.1 Commentary

In most single-family dwellings, the provision of manual call points is not necessary. If persons discover a fire, normally they can alert other occupants by word of mouth. In these premises, the role of the fire detection and fire alarm system is to provide automatic detection and warning of a fire that would not be detected by occupants until a much later stage in its development, when it would present a more serious danger to occupants, particularly those who are asleep.

However, if people are present in the room where a fire originates, they normally detect the fire before it is detected automatically. In a very large property, such as a country house or a mansion, and in most HMOs, manual call points are of benefit, so that a warning of fire can be initiated before it is detected by automatic fire detectors.

Generally, the incorporation of manual call points in the fire detection and fire alarm system is only necessary in certain premises that warrant the provision of a Grade A system. Manual call points can, however, readily be incorporated within a Grade C system. Grade D and Grade F systems normally have no facility for incorporation of manual call points, nor are manual call points necessary in the types of premises for which these grades of system are suitable. However, some smoke alarms do have a facility for connection of one or more manual call points, which can then be useful to test the operation of the system (see [Clause 25](#)).

It is necessary for any manual call points installed within dwellings to be simple and safe to operate by persons who are likely to have received no special instruction in their use. It is also necessary for any delay between operation of a manual call point and the sounding of the fire alarm signal to be kept to a minimum, so that there can be no doubt on the part of any person operating a manual call point that its operation has successfully resulted in the sounding of the fire alarm signal. Any significant delay in the sounding of the fire alarm signal might result in confusion, such as an impression that the system is defective, leading to inappropriate action.

Siting of manual call points is generally based on the principle that a person cannot leave any storey of the premises, or leave the premises by means of an exit to open air, without, first, passing a manual call point. For the call points to be of benefit, there is a need to ensure that sufficient call points are provided to minimize, to a reasonable extent, the delay between discovery of a fire and the sounding of the alarm.

18.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) Manual call points should be installed in very large single-family dwellings (including dwellings with long-term lodgers), and very large dwellings shared by no more than six persons, generally living in a similar manner to a single family (e.g. houses rented by a number of students), if a verbal fire warning, shouted by a person on the ground floor, is unlikely to be heard by all occupants of the premises.

NOTE 1 This situation is only likely to apply in the case of houses with four or more storeys above ground floor level and large, multi-storey mansions, country houses, etc. However, it is generally appropriate to, at least, consider the need for incorporation of manual call points in any Grade A system that is installed.

NOTE 2 This recommendation applies to both Category LD and Category PD systems.

- b) Manual call points should be provided in all HMOs, other than the following:
- 1) single-family dwellings with long-term lodgers;
 - 2) houses shared by no more than six persons, generally living in a similar manner to a single family (e.g. houses rented by a number of students);
 - 3) houses of only one or two storeys, with no floor greater than 200 m² in area.

NOTE 3 In the case of b)1) and b)2), there might be a need for manual call points in order to satisfy the recommendations of 18.2a).

- c) Manual call points should be installed in the common parts of sheltered housing only if smoke detection is provided in these areas.
- d) Manual call points should conform to BS EN 54-11 for Type A (“single action”) manual call points. All manual call points should be fitted with a protective cover, which is moved to gain access to the frangible element.
- e) The delay between operation of a manual call point and the sounding of the fire alarm signal should not exceed 3 s.
- f) In premises in which manual call points are appropriate, the manual call points should be located on escape routes (e.g. in the case of an HMO, the common parts) and, in particular, at all storey exits and all principal exits to open air. Those located at storey exits should be sited close to a door leading onto a protected stairway or on the landing of the stairway.

NOTE 4 A principal exit to open air includes a back door (e.g. located in a kitchen), but does not include all exits between rooms and open air (e.g. French doors leading from a living room to a garden).

- g) Where manual call points are appropriate, it should not be necessary to travel more than 45 m from any point in the premises to reach the nearest manual call point.
- h) Manual call points should be fixed at a height of 1.2 m above finished floor level.

NOTE 5 The figure of 1.2 m ought to be measured between finished floor level and the centre point of the frangible element of the manual call point.

19 Zoning and other means for identification of the source of alarm conditions

19.1 Commentary

In a Grade A or Grade C system, multi-zone CIE can, in principle, provide an indication of the area of the premises from which an alarm signal originates. This is not possible in Grade D and Grade F systems, which do not incorporate CIE.

In most typical single-family dwellings, the subdivision of the dwellings into fire detection zones for indication purposes is unnecessary. In large premises, particularly if the layout is complex, it is desirable that the fire alarm indicating equipment indicates the area of the premises from which the alarm originates. Even in the case of an addressable system, fire detection zone indication can assist the fire and rescue service, and others unfamiliar with the layout and designation of rooms, to locate the fire quickly and efficiently.

It can be more difficult to identify readily the location of a fire in HMOs and sheltered accommodation. If the individual occupancies into which an HMO is divided are multi-roomed dwelling units, the allocation of a fire detection zone for each dwelling unit might be appropriate. The use of an addressable system in these circumstances can be of benefit. However, other methods of identification may be adopted, particularly when the individual occupancies are small in area. In sheltered housing, if detectors in dwellings are linked to the fire alarm system in the common parts, it is necessary to use an addressable fire alarm system.

19.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) In Grade A systems, the premises should usually (see Note 1) be subdivided into fire detection zones in accordance with the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017, Clause 13.

NOTE 1 Subdivision of premises into zones is unnecessary in premises in which a Grade A system has been fitted voluntarily in a situation where a lower grade system would be acceptable.

- b) In the case of an HMO, there should, in addition, be means of identifying the dwelling unit from which a fire alarm signal originates. This should comprise one of the following:

- 1) the allocation of a fire detection zone for each dwelling unit; or
- 2) the use of an addressable fire alarm system, so that, at the CIE, the identity of the dwelling unit is described on a text display; or
- 3) the provision of remote indicator lights outside each dwelling unit.

- c) In sheltered housing, in the event of operation of a fire alarm system, the specific dwelling unit in which the signal has originated should be identified at the CIE.

NOTE 2 Premises in which Grade C systems are installed do not normally need to be subdivided into fire detection zones.

20 Remote transmission of alarm signals

20.1 Commentary

For a fire detection and fire alarm system to give the maximum benefit, particularly in the case of high risk to life, or in the case of Category PD systems installed within properties of high value, the fire and rescue service needs to be summoned as quickly as possible in the event of fire. However, it is essential that false alarms are not unnecessarily passed to the fire and rescue service.

In most premises, automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service (e.g. via an ARC) is unnecessary [see 12.2)]. It is sufficient for the fire and rescue service to be summoned by occupants, using the 999 (or 112) public emergency call system. Most premises have a telephone that can be used for this purpose. If access to the telephone is not available, many people have mobile telephones that can be used, or the emergency call can be made from the home of a neighbour. Unless use of a telephone within the premises would put occupants at risk from fire, dependence on a mobile telephone is, however, less appropriate than use of a fixed line telephone within the premises; poor mobile telephone reception can result in lack of clarity in the call received by the fire and rescue service,

while, in areas close to the boundaries between different fire and rescue services, the emergency call might be routed to the wrong fire and rescue service, resulting in a delay in the dispatch of fire appliances.

Even if there is a means for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service, the primary means for summoning the fire and rescue service needs to comprise a call to the fire and rescue service by occupants, as any automatic system can fail at the time it is required to operate.

The combined number of false alarms from fire detection and fire alarm systems in non-domestic and domestic premises received each year by fire and rescue services is regarded as unacceptable by Central Government, fire and rescue services and the committee responsible for this part of BS 5839 (see [Clause 12](#)). Although the majority of these false alarms emanate from non-domestic premises, this is because most dwellings have no facility for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service. However, the rate of false alarms generated by fire detection and fire alarm systems in dwellings (e.g. expressed as number of false alarms per detector per annum) is normally much higher than in the case of systems in non-domestic premises. If all domestic fire detection and fire alarm systems had facilities for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service, false alarms would impose a totally unacceptable burden on fire and rescue services, albeit that, if occupants suspect that a fire alarm signal might have resulted from a fire, the fire and rescue service needs to be summoned without delay. Indeed, there is evidence that the increasing number of dwellings that are provided with automatic transmission facilities is leading to a commensurate increase in the number of false alarms received by fire and rescue services from domestic systems.

There are, however, certain circumstances in which automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service is warranted. The most common of these situations is one in which a Category PD system is installed for protection of property, particularly in the case of properties of very high value (e.g. a stately home) or that contain contents of very high value (such as works of art); in these cases, the property insurer often requires the installation of a fire detection and fire alarm system with automatic transmission facilities, as a condition of insurance. Automatic transmission could also be appropriate for some disabled occupants, for example for some people with mobility or sensory impairments that would impact on their evacuation, or an impairment (for example a speech or hearing impairment) that would preclude communication by telephone with the fire and rescue service. In other premises, if means of automatic transmission to the fire and rescue service are provided, additional precautions are necessary to minimize the likelihood of transmission of false alarms to the fire and rescue service. In these premises, there is a need for occupants to be aware that, if a false alarm occurs when the premises are unoccupied, automatic transmission of the fire alarm signal to the fire and rescue service might result in damage to their property if the fire and rescue service considers that forced entry is appropriate.

In sheltered housing, tailored assistance to occupants in the event of fire can be important for many. Where a social alarm system is installed in premises such as sheltered housing, it is appropriate for fire alarm signals to be relayed to the same location as alarm signals from the social alarm system. However, in the first instance, it is not usually appropriate to summon the fire and rescue service on receipt of a fire alarm signal if there is an on-site warden or social alarm monitoring centre. If the fire detection and fire alarm system is integrated with the social alarm system (or any other alarm system, such as an intruder alarm system), and both systems share a single communications link to an ARC, it is important to ensure that fire alarm signals can be distinguished from other alarm signals at the ARC.

If automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service is deemed necessary, in a large managed property it might be appropriate to use a system with staged warnings, to permit an investigation before summoning of the fire and rescue service. Some systems can also provide a pre-alarm signal, to warn of an impending alarm signal.

If automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service is essential, the reliability of the transmission system needs to be taken into account. Methods for automatic transmission may generally be grouped into four categories, according to the means of communication with the ARC:

- *“carrier” systems, in which alarm (and usually line monitoring) signals are transmitted over normal telephone lines, which can be used for normal speech telephony without interfering with the alarm transmission function;*
- *systems that use public or private cellular radio communication;*
- *private communication circuits between the protected premises and the ARC (these are unlikely to be appropriate for domestic premises);*
- *systems that use the public switched telephone network (“digital communicators”).*

If the facility for automatic transmission is considered essential, systems in which the transmission path is continuously monitored are preferred. In these systems, failures in the transmission path can be identified quickly and action taken (see BS EN 50131-1), so minimizing the down time of the system. Monitored systems might not, however, be available in all areas of the United Kingdom.

If the services of an ARC are used, it needs to be ensured that the ARC has a formal arrangement with the fire and rescue service in whose area the premises are situated for rapid communication with the fire and rescue service by reliable means. If the automatic transmission facility is essential, the effect of fire on the reliability of the automatic transmission facility also needs to be assessed (e.g. the effect of fire on communication lines and equipment).

20.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) In Category LD systems, facilities for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service should be provided under the following circumstances:
 - 1) if the occupants have a mobility or sensory impairment that could impact on their evacuation in the event of fire; or
 - 2) if the occupants have a speech or hearing impairment that would preclude communication by telephone with the fire and rescue service.
- b) In Category PD systems, facilities for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service should be provided if there is a need for early attendance of the fire and rescue service when the premises are unoccupied.

NOTE 1 The need for this facility can normally be determined by consultation with the fire insurer.

- c) In sheltered housing, facilities should be provided for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service (via a fire or social ARC), both in the case of fire alarm signals from individual dwellings and signals from any fire detection in the common parts. When a scheme manager is on site, the alarm signal may be transmitted to the scheme manager, but, if the scheme manager does not respond to the alarm signal within 30 s, the signal should be relayed automatically to the ARC. The facilities should automatically open a two-way speech channel to permit filtering of fire alarm signals.
- d) Before any facility for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service becomes operational, the occupier (or, in the case of an HMO, the landlord) should be provided with written guidance regarding:
 - 1) the importance of avoiding false alarms;
 - 2) suitable measures to avoid false alarms; and

- 3) the possible need for the fire and rescue service to force entry to the premises in the event of a false alarm when the premises are unoccupied (see [Clause 24](#) and [Annex F](#)).

In the case of HMOs, the landlord should be advised to confirm that the relevant guidance has been passed on to every occupier.

- e) If a system has a facility for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service, the guidance described in **20.2d)** should be provided in writing to the occupier (or the landlord in the case of an HMO) at periods not exceeding 12 months (e.g. at the time of renewal of a contract for monitoring alarm signals).
- f) Facilities for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals should be provided only in the case of Grade A or Grade C systems. Fire alarm signals from Grade D and Grade F systems should not be transmitted automatically to the fire and rescue service, other than in the case of Grade D systems in the dwelling units of sheltered housing or supported housing, or in any telecare-enabled fire detection and fire alarm system.
- g) Other than in the case of smoke alarms connected to social alarm systems, fire alarm signals should not be transmitted automatically to the fire and rescue service unless a contract is in place for maintenance of the system, at periods not exceeding 6 months, in accordance with the recommendations of [Clause 26](#).
- h) If a facility is provided for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service in circumstances other than those described in **20.2a)** and **20.2b)**, a form of alarm filtering should be incorporated, whereby either:
- 1) if fire alarm signals are transmitted to an ARC, on receipt of a fire alarm signal from a dwelling at the ARC, the ARC endeavours to contact the premises by telephone, or speech communication facility, to determine whether the alarm signal is a false alarm or has arisen as a result of a fire (alarm verification). If it cannot be established that the alarm signal is a false alarm within 60 s of the point at which the ARC operator completes the dialling process, the alarm signal should then be passed to the fire and rescue service without further delay; or
 - 2) the alarm signal is not transmitted to the ARC for 2 min after the audible fire alarm signal is given within the premises. If, within this 2 min period, the occupier determines that the alarm signal is a false alarm and operates a manual control (usually at the CIE), no signal is automatically transmitted to the ARC (or the fire and rescue service).

NOTE 2 If, in the case of **20.2h)1)**, the first attempt at dialling the telephone number of the premises fails (e.g. because the telephone at the premises is engaged), a further attempt(s) at dialling the number may be made, but the 60 s delay period would still apply from the point at which the first attempt at dialling the telephone number is made.

NOTE 3 In the case of **20.2h)2)**, the period of 2 min is appropriate for the majority of typical premises. However, it might be appropriate to increase this, to no more than 4 min, in the case of large premises, in which action by occupants to investigate the fire alarm signal and reach the appropriate manual control is likely to take longer than 2 min.

NOTE 4 The arrangement described in **20.2h)2)** may also be incorporated within a Category PD system, but only if the system has a high potential for false alarms and if the time delay is agreed with the property insurers.

NOTE 5 Filtering is not usually possible in the case of fire alarm signals initiated by fire detection in the common parts of sheltered housing (other than when a warden is known to be on duty), as there is normally no one available to investigate fire alarm signals.

- i) Where facilities are provided for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service, this should not comprise an arrangement whereby a pre-recorded speech message is automatically transmitted direct to the fire and rescue service via the public emergency call system.
- j) If a facility for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service is provided, written instructions to the user should stress that, regardless of this transmission facility, the fire and rescue service should still be summoned from a safe location, either within the premises or external to the premises, as soon as possible in the event of fire (see [Clause 24](#)).
- k) Any ARC to which fire signals are relayed should meet the recommendations given in BS 8591.
- NOTE 6 Schemes exist for third-party certification of ARCs to BS 8591. However, receipt of fire alarm signals (as opposed to intruder alarm signals) is not always within the scope of the ARC's certification; if reliance is placed on third-party certification, it needs to be confirmed that monitoring of fire alarm signals is within the scope of certification.*
- l) Automatic transmission of fire signals should not be prevented by the act of silencing fire alarm sounders, nor should it depend on the state of any silencing switch.
- m) Where an alarm transmission device is mounted in an enclosure separate from that of the fire alarm CIE, the connection from the CIE to the alarm transmission device should be monitored, so that an audible and visual fault signal is given, either at the fire alarm CIE or at the alarm transmission device, in the event of an open or short circuit fault on the cable used for the connection.
- NOTE 7 Where the two enclosures are mounted adjacently or not more than 50 mm apart, this recommendation does not apply to cables that pass directly between apertures in the two enclosures, as there is no material length of external cable that can be subject to damage.*
- n) Power supplies for any facility used for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service should meet the recommendations given in [Clause 15](#) for the appropriate grade of system.
- o) If the automatic transmission system is intended to satisfy the requirements of the property insurers, or will be taken into account in insurance underwriting, the method of transmission should be agreed with the property insurer.
- p) In Category PD systems, the area in which the transmission equipment is installed should be protected by automatic fire detection unless it is installed in an area of low fire risk.
- NOTE 8 An electrical distribution cupboard is not an area of low fire risk.*
- q) In Grade A systems, if there are facilities for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service (via a fire or social ARC), a means should be provided for disablement of the transmission facility, for use during periods of testing, maintenance or potential false alarms. Warning of disablement should conform to BS EN 54-2.
- r) If a fire detection and fire alarm system is integrated with another system (e.g. in the case of a Grade C system, with an intruder alarm system or social alarm system) and both systems share a single communications link to an ARC, the transmission system should be designed such that the fire alarm signals can be separately identified at the ARC.
- s) In the case of sheltered housing, fire alarm signals from dwelling units should, at any site monitoring facility provided for use by a warden or any ARC, be clearly distinguishable from other alarm signals that can be relayed from the dwellings, and distinguishable from alarm signals from any other dwelling units.

21 Radio-linked systems

21.1 Commentary

In Grade A and Grade C systems, control equipment and other components of the fire detection and fire alarm system, such as detectors, manual call points and sounders, are normally interconnected by means of wiring. However, some or all of these interconnections may be made by radio links.

It is common for the alarms in Grade D and Grade F systems to be interlinked by radio. Other than recommendation [21.2b](#)) and [21.2d](#)), this clause does not apply to radio-linking in these grades of system.

In radio-linked systems, the normal supply to the CIE is derived from a mains supply in the normal way, while the power supply to detectors and manual call points is usually provided by a primary battery, with a second primary battery as a reserve. Signals from detectors and manual call points are transmitted to the control equipment by radio. Usually, the interconnection between the control equipment and the fire alarm sounders also comprises a radio link, again with a primary battery as the power supply for the fire alarm sounder, and a second primary battery as a reserve power supply.

However, the fire alarm sounders may be connected to the control equipment by a conventionally wired circuit, or, if a radio link is used, the normal supply to each fire alarm sounder may be derived from a mains supply, with a primary or secondary battery as a standby supply.

Radio-linked systems have both advantages and disadvantages. In the context of premises, the major advantage is the ease of installation and the avoidance of the need to damage or disfigure décor in order to install wiring. The latter advantage is of particular benefit in historic buildings and buildings with ornate finishes; the use of radio-linked systems in historic buildings is relatively common.

The most significant disadvantage of solely battery-powered radio-linked systems in premises is the need to replace batteries in each of the many battery-powered components that usually exist in a large installation. This might make a radio-linked system less suitable (but not necessarily unsuitable) for applications in premises in which occupants might not be able to replace batteries (e.g. owing to financial constraints, or to physical or mental disability) or in which occupants are not directly responsible for supervision of the fire detection and fire alarm system (e.g. an HMO). However, the use of batteries, such as lithium type, which have a longer life than conventional batteries, can greatly reduce the frequency of battery replacement, and rechargeable lithium cells may be used (see [15.1](#)).

Some of the recommendations of this part of BS 5839, applicable to wired systems, are unsuitable for, or cannot be applied to, radio-linked systems. These include, in particular, those relating to power supplies and fault monitoring. Additional recommendations apply to radio-linked systems in order to address the integrity and performance of the radio communications link between components and the CIE.

In practice, no system can have total reliability, but one of the objectives of good system design is to reduce the probability of the system being inoperative in the area of a fire when the fire starts. Great care needs to be taken when assessing a site and choosing the technology to use, as neither the radio nor the hardwired system is singularly suitable for all premises.

Although a properly designed radio-linked system is not likely to be any more susceptible to false alarms than a wired system, frequent false alarms in premises can reduce the life of radio-linked fire alarm sounder batteries, particularly in an HMO in which there might be no overall supervision of the fire detection and fire alarm system. Automatic silencing of radio-linked sounders is sometimes employed to overcome the potential for undue discharge of sounder batteries. Sounders with this facility need to reactivate when any new fire alarm signal arises. It is important that an automatic silencing facility does not impair the system's ability to provide an adequate audible warning to the occupants of the premises in the event of fire.

Other components of a radio-linked system may include radio relay units, which are installed remote from the CIE, so as to extend the range of the system in very large premises. Radio communication may also be used to link a small number of detectors and other components to what is essentially a wired system. The recommendations of this part of BS 5839 apply equally to integral radio-linked systems of this nature.

21.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) In the case of Grade A systems, radio-linked systems should meet the recommendations given in BS 5839-1:2017, **27.2**.

NOTE 1 BS 5839-1:2017, 27.2g) places great emphasis on the need for a comprehensive radio survey to be undertaken, prior to the installation of a radio-linked system, and recommends that a copy of the signal levels measured be kept in the premises along with the system logbook.

- b) If a radio-linked system is installed in an HMO, all batteries used as the normal supply to manual call points and fire detectors should be capable of supplying the following loads for at least 5 years before warning of impending failure of the battery is given:
- 1) the quiescent load of fire detectors and manual call points;
 - 2) the additional load resulting from routine weekly testing; and
 - 3) the load from false alarms, each of 5 min duration, at the rate of two false alarms per smoke detector per annum.
- c) If a radio-linked system is installed in an HMO, all battery-powered fire alarm sounders should silence automatically after 30 min, unless the premises are continuously supervised so enabling manual silencing by occupants at any time that false alarms can occur. The sounders should restart if, before the system is reset, a further fire alarm signal occurs.
- d) If the power supplies recommended in [15.4](#) and [15.5](#) are used to power radio-links between smoke or heat alarms, this should not reduce the life or duration of a battery supply below those recommended in [15.4](#) and [15.5](#) as appropriate.

NOTE 2 Only recommendations 21.2b) and 21.2d) apply to radio-linking between smoke or heat alarms in Grade D and Grade F systems.

22 Electromagnetic compatibility

22.1 Commentary

Particular care needs to be taken in the design and installation of the fire detection and fire alarm system to avoid electromagnetic interference, particularly received from, but also transmitted to, other equipment. Electromagnetic interference to a fire detection and fire alarm system can result from mobile telephones, lightning and power transients.

22.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) Grade A systems should meet the recommendations given in BS 5839-1:2017, Clause **28**.
- b) In the case of Grade C systems, any recommendations of the manufacturer of the system in respect of electromagnetic compatibility should be taken into account in the design and installation of the system.

- c) If, in a Grade D system, the normal supply to smoke alarms is derived from a lighting circuit [see 15.4a)], and the lighting circuit also serves fluorescent luminaires, it should be confirmed, at least by reference to the written instructions provided by the manufacturer of the smoke alarm(s), that the smoke alarms will not be affected when the fluorescent luminaires are switched on or off.

23 Installation, commissioning and certification

23.1 Commentary

This clause provides recommendations for the work associated with installation of a fire detection and fire alarm system, the subsequent commissioning of the system, and certification of the system. In the case of dwellings, design, installation, commissioning and certification are often undertaken by a single organization, such as an electrical contractor. In the case of Grade F systems, however, the system is normally installed by the occupier or other non-specialist. Although different processes might be undertaken by different parties (e.g. installation by an electrical contractor, with commissioning by a fire alarm system manufacturer), it needs to be ensured that one organization is responsible for compliance with this part of BS 5839 and that this responsibility is agreed prior to the start of the installation contract. One way of demonstrating competence of the installer is for them to hold certification, by a third-party certification body under a UKAS-accredited certification scheme.

The nature and quality of the installation work needs to be such as to maintain the integrity of the fire detection and fire alarm system, and to minimize the duration and extent of disablement of the system during maintenance or modifications. Installation practices and workmanship need to conform to BS 7671. Penetrations of construction (e.g. for the passage of cables) need to be made good to avoid the free passage of fire or smoke, regardless of whether the construction has a recognized degree of fire resistance.

On completion of wiring, the installer needs to carry out tests to ensure the integrity of cable insulation and adequacy of earthing. Further tests need to be carried out on completion of the system; in large, sophisticated systems, these tests might form part of a separate commissioning process, in which certain of the tests are specified by the system manufacturer.

The process of commissioning involves thorough testing of the installed system to ensure that it operates correctly in accordance with the recommendations of this part of BS 5839 and with any specification produced by the purchaser. Usually, the organization or person responsible for commissioning the system is the same organization or person that designed and installed the system, but the responsibility for commissioning needs to be clearly defined prior to the start of the installation work. Where commissioning is carried out by a specialist commissioning engineer, part of this engineer's role is to verify that the system does not have any obvious potential for an unacceptable rate of false alarms.

At commissioning, where practicable, the user ought to be given an opportunity to carry out a brief inspection of the system, have its operation demonstrated and receive the relevant documents. On completion of the system, it needs to be ensured that adequate records and instructions are provided to the user. Particular importance needs to be attached to the provision of specific operating instructions (see [Clause 24](#)).

An important part of the documentation provided to the user comprises a certificate(s) confirming conformity of the system, and the installation and commissioning work, to the recommendations of this part of BS 5839. In many cases, a copy of this certificate(s) is required by a relevant enforcing authority, such as that enforcing building regulations or, in the case of HMOs, housing legislation. It is essential that the person who signs the certificate(s) is competent to verify whether the recommendations of this part of BS 5839 have, or have not, been satisfied. The purchaser might, subsequently, rely on the

certificate(s) as, for example, evidence of compliance with legislation. Liability could arise on the part of any organization that issues a certificate(s) without due care in ensuring its validity. In the case of Grade A systems, the greater complexity of these systems warrants more detailed certification of the type recommended by BS 5839-1:2017, and the certificates issued take the form of the model certificates contained in BS 5839-1:2017, suitably modified to reflect conformity to BS 5839-6.

23.2 Recommendations for installation, commissioning and certification of Grade A systems

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) Grade A systems should be installed, tested, commissioned and certificated in accordance with BS 5839-1:2017, Section 4 and Section 5.
- b) An Electrical Installation Certificate in accordance with BS 7671 should be provided.

NOTE 1 Model certificates are contained in [Annex D](#). The certificate issued for any of these processes may vary in format from that shown in [Annex D](#), provided that, as a minimum, the information and statements of conformity within the model certificates are present.

NOTE 2 The certificates in [Annex D](#) enable compliance with the relevant recommendations in respect of these certificates contained in BS 5839-1:2017, as well as the recommendations of this part of BS 5839.

23.3 Recommendations for installation, commissioning and certification of Grade C and Grade D systems

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) The responsibilities associated with the installation, commissioning and certification of the system should be clearly defined prior to the commencement of the installation work.

NOTE 1 Normally, a single organization takes responsibility for installation, commissioning and certification of the system, but the responsibilities need to be defined by, or agreed with, the purchaser or specifier.

- b) All variations from the recommendations of this part of BS 5839 (see [3.65](#)) should be agreed with the purchaser and, where the system is required to satisfy legislation or the requirements of the fire insurer, with the authority responsible for enforcing fire safety legislation (e.g. the building control authority or local authority) or the fire insurer respectively.
- c) In the case of Grade C systems, all control, indicating and power supply equipment that is likely to need routine attention for maintenance should be sited in readily accessible locations that facilitate safe maintenance work.
- d) The installation should conform to BS 7671.
- e) Cables that are directly fixed to surfaces should be securely fixed at suitable intervals, in accordance with the recommendations of the cable manufacturer or BS 7671 as appropriate.
- f) Joints in cables, other than those contained within the enclosures of equipment, should be avoided wherever practicable. All joints, other than those within system components, should be enclosed within junction boxes, labelled with the words "FIRE ALARM" to avoid confusion with other services.
- g) Other than in the case of mineral insulated copper sheathed cables and steel wire armoured cables, cables should be given mechanical protection in any areas in which physical damage or rodent attack is likely (e.g. by installation in trunking).
- h) Where a cable passes through a wall, a small clearance hole should be provided. If additional mechanical protection is necessary, a smooth-bore sleeve should be sealed into the wall. The hole surrounding the cable should be as small as reasonably practicable and made good with

materials that do not reduce the fire resistance of the construction. Spaces through which fire or smoke could spread should not be left around the cable, or around any conduit or trunking.

- i) Where a wiring system, such as conduit, cable ducting or cable trunking, penetrates walls, floors or ceilings of fire compartments (such as those enclosing individual dwelling units in an HMO), it should be internally sealed so as to maintain the fire resistance at the wall, floor or ceiling, as well as being externally sealed, to maintain the required fire resistance.

NOTE 2 A non-flame-propagating wiring system, having a maximum internal cross-sectional area of 710 mm², need not be internally sealed.

- j) The ends of any sleeves should be free from sharp edges that might damage cables during installation.
- k) All installed cables with a manufacturer's voltage rating suitable for mains use should be subject to insulation testing at 500 V DC. Prior to this test, cables should be disconnected from all equipment that could be damaged by the test. The insulation resistance, measured in the above test, between conductors, between each conductor and earth, and between each conductor and any screen, should conform to BS 7671.
- l) Earth continuity and, for mains supply circuits, earth fault loop impedance, should be tested for conformity to BS 7671.
- m) Any other tests specified by the manufacturer of the system should be carried out.
- n) At commissioning, the entire system should be inspected and tested to determine whether it operates satisfactorily and whether, in particular:
 - 1) all manual call points and automatic fire detectors function correctly when functionally tested. Smoke detectors should be functionally tested by a method that determines whether smoke can enter the detector chamber and produce a fire alarm signal (e.g. by use of apparatus that generates simulated smoke or suitable aerosols around the detector). The material used should only be applied by a competent person and it should be such that the aerosol does not cause damage to, or affect the subsequent performance of, the detector; the manufacturer's guidance on suitable materials should be followed. Heat detectors should be functionally tested by means of a suitable heat source, unless operation of the detector in this manner would then necessitate replacement of part or all of the sensing element. The heat source should not have the potential to ignite a fire; live flame should not be used. Multi-sensor fire detectors should be functionally tested by a method that determines whether an alarm will be signalled by the combination specified by the manufacturer or, if suitable test equipment is not available, by each detection element separately. For instance, for a smoke and heat multi-sensor, the tests should be carried out for separate smoke and heat detectors;
 - 2) in the case of Grade C systems, all alarm, control, indicating, printing and ancillary functions of the system operate correctly and are adequately labelled or identified;
 - 3) in multi-zone Grade C systems, every manual call point and automatic fire detector on operation, results in the correct zone indication, and, in the case of addressable systems, correct text display, at all indicating equipment;
 - 4) any facility for remote transmission of fire alarm signals (and, where appropriate, fault signals) to an ARC operates correctly;
 - 5) all fire alarm warning devices (including any provided for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing) operate correctly;
 - 6) all relevant documentation (see [Clause 24](#)) has been provided to the user.

- o) In Grade C systems, labels, visible when batteries are in their normal position, should be fixed to batteries, indicating the date of installation.
- p) On completion of the installation and commissioning work, a certificate, confirming conformity of the system to the recommendations of this part of BS 5839, or identifying any variations from these recommendations (see 3.65), should be issued to the user. The certificate should be accompanied by either an Electrical Installation Certificate or a Minor Electrical Installation Works Certificate, as appropriate, in accordance with BS 7671.

NOTE 3 A model certificate is contained in Annex E. The certificate issued may vary in format from that shown in Annex E, provided that, as a minimum, the information and statements of compliance within the model certificate are present.

23.4 Recommendations for installation, commissioning and certification of Grade F systems

For Grade F systems, the following user instructions should be provided.

- a) Detectors should be rigidly fixed to permanent construction.
- b) Any interconnecting wiring between detectors should be installed in accordance with the general requirements of BS 7671.
- c) On completion of installation, each detector should be tested to confirm that it operates correctly and that it correctly triggers signals from any interlinked detectors. If the system is installed by a professional installer (e.g. an electrical contractor), the method of test should be as described in 23.3n)1) or be carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

NOTE 1 If the system is installed by the householder or owner of the property, it is sufficient to test each detector by use of an integral test button.

- d) If a Grade F system is installed by a professional installer (e.g. an electrical contractor), a certificate confirming conformity of the system to this part of BS 5839, or identifying any variations from these recommendations (see 3.65), should be issued to the user.

NOTE 2 If a Grade F system is installed by the user, landlord, or fire and rescue service, certification is not necessary for the purpose of conformity to this part of BS 5839.

NOTE 3 Since Grade F systems are only suitable for installation in existing single-family dwellings of no more than two storeys, a certificate of conformity to this part of BS 5839 is not normally required by any enforcing authority, and is unlikely to be required by a fire insurer.

24 User instructions

24.1 Commentary

It is essential that the occupier of the premises (which might mean all occupiers in the case of an HMO) understands the operation of the system, the action to take in the event of a fire alarm signal, the means for avoidance of false alarms, the procedures for testing the system and the need for routine maintenance of the system. It is normally the responsibility of the installer of the fire detection and fire alarm system to provide this information, but, as smoke alarms might be installed by the householder, the equivalent information needs to be provided by the supplier of smoke alarms.

It is important that the information provided is sufficient to ensure that the user of the system can ensure that necessary steps are taken to avoid situations that are detrimental to the standard of protection afforded by the system and to ensure that the level of false alarms is minimized.

24.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) The supplier of the fire detection and fire alarm system should provide the occupier of the premises (or the owner in the case of an HMO) with written information on the following matters. The same information should be provided to purchasers of smoke alarms:
 - 1) operation of the system;
 - 2) on the case of Grade D and Grade F systems, the importance of interlinking all smoke alarms and heat alarms in the premises;
 - 3) action in the event of a fire alarm signal;
 - 4) avoidance of false alarms;
 - 5) the typical lifetime of components that are likely to require replacement during the life of the system (e.g. smoke alarms, batteries, or electrochemical cells in carbon monoxide detectors);
 - 6) a warning that an apparent false alarm from a carbon monoxide detector might actually be caused by a potentially dangerous concentration of carbon monoxide (e.g. from a poorly ventilated fuel burning appliance);
 - 7) action in the event of a false alarm;
 - 8) routine testing of the system (including, where applicable, arrangements for testing any means for transmission of fire alarm signals to an ARC);
 - 9) maintenance of the system (including intervals at which any batteries should be replaced);
 - 10) the need to keep a clear space around all detectors and manual call points;
 - 11) special precautions relevant to any lithium batteries used in the system;
 - 12) checking the system on reoccupation of the premises after a vacation, etc.;
 - 13) the need to avoid contamination of detectors by paint;
 - 14) in the case of systems with facilities for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service, special instructions regarding the need to avoid false alarms (see [Annex F](#)).
- b) The operating instructions should be sufficient to enable a lay person to understand fully the use of all controls and the meaning of all visual and audible signals that the system is capable of giving.
- c) Operating instructions should describe the circumstances under which silencing and disablement facilities should be used, but should stress the importance of maintaining the system in the normal state, in which fire can be detected and alarm signals given.
- d) The recommended action in the event of fire should stress the importance of ensuring that all occupants leave the premises as quickly as possible and that the fire and rescue service is summoned immediately; it should be made clear that the fire and rescue service should be summoned regardless of the size of the fire and regardless of whether there is a facility for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service.
- e) Guidance should be given to the user concerning common causes of false alarms and their avoidance. The user should be advised to take precautions to prevent false alarms and damage to detectors by contamination during work that gives rise to dust, smoke, paint spray, etc. The means for resetting after false alarms should be made clear in the instructions.

- f) Instructions for routine testing of the system should be in accordance with [Clause 25](#).
 - g) Instructions for maintenance of the system should be in accordance with [Clause 26](#).
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25 Routine testing

25.1 Commentary

All grades of system need to be tested periodically to ensure that there has not been any major failure. This does not require any specialist knowledge, and can normally be carried out, quite easily, by the occupier of the premises, who will, however, need simple instructions in how to do so.

25.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) Instructions to users should stress the importance of routine testing of the system (see [Clause 24](#)).
 - b) Grade A systems should be tested every week in accordance with the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017, **44.2**.
 - c) All systems, other than Grade A systems, should be tested at least every month. In the case of smoke alarms, heat alarms and multi-sensor fire alarms, this test may be carried out by use of a test button on every alarm installed in the premises. If an alarm has no test button, assistance with testing should be sought from a competent person. In the case of interlinked alarms, the “one alarm, all alarm” feature should be verified. The alarm should be visually inspected and any defects should be noted for action.

NOTE In some Grade C and Grade D systems, a manual test switch (which can take the form of a manual call point) can be added to the system to permit routine testing without the need to access test controls on the smoke or heat alarms themselves.
 - d) The occupier should be advised that if the premises have been unoccupied for a period during which the normal and standby supply (if provided) could have failed, they should check immediately on reoccupying the premises that the system has not undergone total power failure.
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26 Maintenance

26.1 Commentary

It is essential that the system is subject to periodic inspection, so that unrevealed faults are identified, and, in the case of more complex systems, so that preventive measures can be taken to ensure the continued reliability of the system.

In premises in which a Grade A system is provided, periodic inspection and servicing needs to be carried out by a competent person with specialist knowledge of fire detection and fire alarm systems, including knowledge of the causes of false alarms, sufficient information regarding the system, and adequate access to spares. This is normally an outside fire alarm servicing organization. One way of demonstrating competence of a fire alarm servicing organization is for them to hold certification, by a third-party certification body under a UKAS-accredited certification scheme.

Recommendations for testing and servicing of all grades of system are given in [Table 3](#).

26.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be met.

- a) Grade A systems should be inspected and serviced at periods not exceeding 6 months in accordance with the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017, Clause 4.5. In HMOs, batteries in any radio-linked devices (such as manual call points, automatic detectors and fire alarm devices) should be changed by the servicing organization before the low battery warning condition recommended by BS 5839-1:2017, 27.2b)3) is likely to be given. On completion of the work, any outstanding defects should be reported to the premises management, and an inspection and servicing certificate should be issued.

NOTE 1 A model inspection and servicing certificate is shown in [Annex H](#).

- b) Grade C, Grade D, and Grade F systems should be maintained in accordance with [Table 3](#) and the equipment manufacturer's instructions. On completion of the work, any outstanding defects should be reported to the premises management, and an inspection and servicing certificate should be issued.

NOTE 2 A model inspection and servicing certificate is shown in [Annex H](#).

Table 3 — Testing and servicing by grade

Grade of detection	Type of fire detection and fire alarm system	Frequency of test by user	Testing action to be taken by user	Frequency of service by competent person	Servicing procedure by competent person	Records held for property	Battery change recommendations
A	Systems of a type described in BS 5839-1:2017	Weekly	As in BS 5839-1:2017	6 months	As in BS 5839-1:2017	As in BS 5839-1:2017	As in BS 5839-1:2017
C	Fire detectors and fire alarms supplied with power from a common PSU, with central control equipment	Monthly	Press test button on central control equipment (if a fire alarm system has no test button, testing should be carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's or supplier's instructions, or advice should be sought from a service company)	12 months for sheltered housing scheme and dispersed telecare-enabled fire detection and fire alarm systems; otherwise to the extent recommended by the manufacturer ^{A)}	As in Annex L, if applicable ^{B), C)}	—	If replaceable follow manufacturer's recommendations
D	Mains-powered smoke alarms, heat alarms or multi-sensor alarms with standby supplies	Monthly	Press test button	12 months for sheltered housing scheme and dispersed telecare-enabled fire detection and fire alarm systems; otherwise not applicable ^{B)}	As in Annex L, if applicable ^{B), C)}	—	Internal batteries replaced in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations or when a low battery warning has been generated, whichever is the soonest
F	Battery-powered smoke alarms, heat alarms or multi-sensor alarms	Monthly	Press test button	12 months for sheltered housing scheme and dispersed telecare-enabled fire detection and fire alarm systems; otherwise not applicable ^{B)}	As in Annex L, if applicable ^{B), C)}	—	Internal batteries replaced in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations or when a low battery warning has been generated, whichever is the soonest

Table 3 (continued)

Grade of detection	Type of fire detection and fire alarm system	Frequency of test by user	Testing action to be taken by user	Frequency of service by competent person	Servicing procedure by competent person	Records held for property	Battery change recommendations
	<p>^{a)} Attention is drawn to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 [13], the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 [14] and the Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 [15], which might make requirements in relation to maintenance of Grade C systems.</p> <p>^{b)} Other than in the case of sheltered housing scheme and dispersed telecare-enabled fire detection and fire alarm systems, this part of BS 5839 does not specifically recommend that Grade C, Grade D and Grade F systems are maintained by a competent person, unless identified in the manufacturer's instructions. If these systems are serviced by a competent person, this should be carried out in accordance with Annex I.</p> <p>^{c)} Where access to individual dwellings is denied or difficult, it might be possible to verify some systems remotely. However, although the need for access to the dwelling would thus be minimized, functional testing of each device would not be possible.</p>						

27 Logbook

27.1 Commentary

In the case of Grade A systems, a logbook needs to be kept for the purpose of recording all events that occur in respect of the system, including fire signals, fault signals and work on the system. This information can be of value to the organization that services the system and if special action is taken to address false alarm problems. The logbook might provide evidence of compliance with certain fire safety legislation (such as the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 [13], the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 [14], the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006 [16], the Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 [15] and the Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 [17]).

A similar logbook is also necessary in the case of sheltered housing and supported housing, regardless of the grade of system.

Enforcing authorities might wish to have sight of such a logbook in the course of inspections under fire safety legislation.

27.2 Recommendations

In the case of all Grade A systems, and any system in sheltered housing or supported housing, the following information should be recorded in a logbook:

- a) the name(s) of the member(s) of the premises management to whom responsibility for the fire detection and fire alarm system is delegated;
- b) brief details of maintenance arrangements;
- c) dates and times of all fire alarm signals (regardless of whether the signal is a false alarm or is initiated as the result of a test, fire drill or genuine fire); if the fire alarm signal has resulted from the operation of a manual call point or fire detector, the device and its location should be recorded;
- d) causes, circumstances surrounding and category of all false alarms;
- e) dates, times and types of all tests;
- f) dates, times and types of all faults and defects; and
- g) dates and types of all maintenance (e.g. service visit or non-routine attention).

NOTE The logbook may be kept in electronic form but needs to be accessible for all interested parties.

Annex A (informative)

Fire risk assessment for dwellings

A.1 General

This annex discusses the factors that are generally relevant to consider in carrying out a fire risk assessment for dwellings (including communal areas where relevant), in order to determine the most appropriate design of fire detection and fire alarm system for any particular premises. However, if relevant factors, such as the characteristics of the occupants, change, there might be a need to reconsider the validity of the risk assessment and, hence, system design.

A.2 General approach

- A.2.1** In assessing the fire risk, each room in the dwellings needs to be considered separately. It is appropriate for the assessment to be based on recognized fire statistics.
- A.2.2** In considering the probability of fire in a room, account needs to be taken both of current statistical data on the relative likelihood of fire in a room of that type (e.g. living room, bedroom), and of all potential sources of ignition within the room. In considering the potential for injury or death to occupants, account needs to be taken both of current statistical data on the relative likelihood of injury or death due to fires that start in a room of that type, and of all occupant characteristics, including lifestyle factors, that are relevant to the probability of their injury or death from fire.
- A.2.3** In properties where the occupants are likely to change frequently, it might be advisable to make provision for the highest level of detection to account for the lifetime of the building and its occupancy. This avoids the need for a new risk assessment to be made when the occupants change or when occupants become more vulnerable.
-

A.3 Consideration of detection and warning objectives

In assessing the fire risk to which occupants of dwellings are exposed, the following factors concerning detection and warning objectives are relevant.

- a) The presence of smoke in escape routes is the greatest impediment to safe escape in the event of fire. It is essential that any fire that starts in a circulation area, or smoke that spreads into a circulation area, be detected as early as possible. To satisfy this objective, smoke detectors need to be installed in the circulation areas of all premises.
- b) Many fatalities from fires in dwellings occur in the room where the fire originates. If the door of the room where the fire originates is closed, a smoke detector outside the room is unlikely to operate at an early enough stage to prevent loss of life in the room.
- c) The combined number of fires originating in living rooms and dining rooms is similar to the number of fires originating in bedrooms. However, around 40% of all fatal fires in dwellings start in living rooms or dining rooms, whereas approximately 30% start in bedrooms. This suggests that, if detectors are installed within rooms in dwellings, the living room and dining room might be the first priority, followed by the bedrooms. However, it might be appropriate to reverse these priorities if the fire risk in the living room or dining room is low but occupants smoke in bed, or if bedrooms contain potential sources of ignition such as electric blankets or other electrical appliances.

- d) Occupants of dwellings are at greater risk when they are asleep. It is therefore essential that fire detection and fire alarm systems are capable of operating correctly when occupants are asleep and are capable of arousing occupants from normal sleep.
-

A.4 Consideration of occupant characteristics

In assessing the fire risk to which occupants of dwellings are exposed, the following factors around occupant characteristics can be relevant.

- a) Older people are at significantly greater risk from fire than other age groups. For those aged 80 years or over, the probability of dying from fire is much greater than that for those aged from 30 to 59 years. Those aged from 60 to 80 years are also at slightly increased risk. Children under 5 years are at greater risk than older children, but are not at greater risk than adults. Dwellings in which the principal occupant is an older person, or in which there is a number of occupants who are older people or young children, need to be protected to an appropriately high level. In the case of older people, account needs to be taken of the possible effects of age-related loss of hearing on the effectiveness of audible alarm signals, particularly when the people are asleep.
- b) Socially deprived occupants on a low income are more likely to suffer death or serious injury from fire than those in higher socio-economic groups. Research also indicates that social housing properties, single parent households, households that experience financial instability/difficulties, and properties located in inner cities or areas of high physical disorder, have the greatest likelihood of experiencing a domestic fire. For those most at risk, replacement of batteries in smoke alarms might, of necessity, be a low priority. In these cases, a more reliable power supply for the fire detection and fire alarm system is essential.
- c) The risk of death from fire in an HMO is generally higher than in a single-family house. However, the term "house in multiple occupation" includes a wide range of varying forms of premises, in which the risk from fire varies significantly. In some HMOs, such as households with long-term lodgers and houses shared by a limited number of persons, the risk from fire might not be very different from the risk in a similar property occupied by a single family. The risk appears to be greatest to those living in houses converted into bedsits, and to older people living in sheltered housing. In the event of fire, the risk to people in houses converted into flats is greater than the risk to those living in purpose-built flats, unless the same standard of structural fire protection applies in both cases.

Generally, in all HMOs, the risk is greater if the property exceeds two storeys in height. Where the risk in an HMO is relatively high, it is essential that there is protection by a highly reliable fire detection and fire alarm system. It is also essential that a warning is given in the event of a fault that impairs the standard of protection.

- d) Some people with physical, sensory or cognitive impairments might require more time to escape. To allow for this, the system needs to give earlier and effective/relevant warning in the event of fire; this might necessitate the provision of detectors in additional rooms.
-

A.5 Consideration of lifestyle factors

In assessing the fire risk to which occupants of dwellings are exposed, the following factors concerning occupants' lifestyles are relevant.

- a) The use of candles in premises has increased, resulting in more fires. Non-fatal casualties from such fires have risen commensurately. The frequent use of candles in a particular room might be

justification for a fire detector in that room, particularly if lit candles could be left unattended near combustible materials.

- b) Incapacity as result of alcohol consumption or use of drugs are known risk factors for occupants of premises. Such incapacity can result in occupants failing to be roused from sleep by the sound of a smoke alarm or the effects of fire, until escape from fire is impossible. Once roused from sleep, those under the influence of alcohol or drugs are more likely to experience impaired decision-making, possible confusion and disorientation, and impaired motor functions. These factors can seriously delay or preclude escape from fire. Alcohol consumption is also sometimes a factor in ignition of fire (e.g. when an occupant falls into a deep sleep immediately after food has been left on a cooker, or while holding a lit cigarette). If alcohol or substance abuse by occupants is known to occur on a regular basis, a high standard of fire detection is warranted, possibly comprising a heat detector in the kitchen, a heat or smoke detector in the lounge, and, possibly, smoke detectors in certain bedrooms.
- c) The need for use of certain medical equipment can also increase the risk to occupants from fire. Examples are medical beds, which are not subject to restrictions in bedding flammability and can be a source of electrical fires, and the use of oxygen cylinders, which can release oxygen that then results in more rapid fire development, and can explode if involved in fire. Again, these factors might justify enhanced fire detection.

A.6 Consideration of ignition sources

In assessing the fire risk to which occupants of dwellings are exposed, the following factors concerning ignition sources are relevant.

- a) In the United Kingdom, around 50% of fires in dwellings attended by fire and rescue services involve cooking appliances. However, only around 15% of all fire deaths result from fires that originate in kitchens. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to install heat detectors in kitchens in new dwellings. (In Scotland, legislation requires that all existing dwellings are provided with heat detectors in kitchens.)
- b) Electrical appliances and wiring are a common source of ignition of accidental fires in dwellings, but do not, typically, result in a high number of deaths. The use of laptop and mobile phone chargers has increased, resulting in a corresponding increase in risk. Use of electric blankets, particularly by high-risk groups such as older people, increases the justification for providing smoke detectors in bedrooms. There is anecdotal evidence that the increased use of loft spaces to house electrical equipment, such as inverters for photovoltaic systems and heating equipment, has resulted in a number of fires within the loft spaces. Where such equipment is present in loft spaces, there might be justification for fire detectors within the loft space.
- c) Smokers' materials and matches are also a common source of ignition of accidental fires in dwellings. However, fires started by smokers' materials and matches are the most common cause of fatalities, resulting in around 35% of fatalities in accidental fires. In many cases, the item ignited is bedding or furniture. If occupants are known to smoke, there is greater justification for installing fire detectors in living rooms and dining rooms, particularly as older furniture might not be resistant to ignition by a smouldering cigarette or a match. If the occupants smoke in bed, consideration might be given to the installation of smoke detectors or multi-sensor fire detectors in bedrooms.
- d) Space heating appliances are a further cause of fatalities from fire in dwellings. These fires often result when combustible materials are placed too close to the source of heat. If portable heaters or solid-fuel fires are used during the night, there might be justification for installing smoke detectors in the relevant rooms, particularly if these are bedrooms.

- e) Deliberate ignition is another common source of fires in dwellings, and is a more significant source of ignition of fire in multiple-occupancy dwellings than in single-family dwellings. If deliberate fire-raising is a significant possibility, the level of protection needs to be high. If deliberate ignition by a third party is considered to be a significant threat (e.g. by passing burning material through a letterbox), the system needs to be capable of providing early warning of a fire inside the premises that starts in the vicinity of any entrance door.

A.7 Additional considerations for property protection

- A.7.1** The matters described in [A.3](#), [A.4](#), [A.5](#) and [A.6](#) relate to the risk to life from fire. All systems that meet the recommendations in this part of BS 5839 need to be designed to protect occupants in the event of fire. Only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. in a house of historic importance in which no one sleeps) is it likely that the objective of the system would be solely the protection of property. However, the objective of the system might sometimes be the protection of property as well as of life. A fire detection and fire alarm system for the protection of property needs to be able to detect fire automatically and result in the summoning of the fire and rescue service at an early enough stage in fire development to ensure that, when the fire and rescue service arrives, the fire is relatively restricted in extent.
- A.7.2** If the attendance time of the fire and rescue service is incompatible with the probable rate of fire spread, and water supplies for firefighting are limited, the provision of additional fire protection measures to limit fire development prior to the arrival of the fire and rescue service needs to be considered in the case of properties of particular importance (e.g. a historic country mansion).
- A.7.3** Since a fire that starts anywhere in the house will result in damage, detectors need to be provided in some or all rooms of the premises. It is unlikely to be sufficient to provide detectors only in circulation areas. The primary considerations are the probability of fire in each room and the probability that fire will be discovered before significant spread occurs. Accordingly, there might be a need for fire detectors in kitchens, living and dining rooms, for example, as well as in boiler rooms and other infrequently visited areas (e.g. cellars and roof spaces) where there are likely sources of ignition.
- A.7.4** There is evidence that the presence of fire detectors can result in a reduction in the amount of damage in the event of fire, provided that prompt action is taken when fire is detected. Even in premises protected by smoke alarms, property has on occasions been saved because neighbours heard the alarms when the premises were unoccupied. However, a good level of property protection can usually be achieved only if there is a means for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service when the premises are unoccupied (see [Clause 20](#)).

Annex B (normative)

Control and indicating equipment for Grade C systems

COMMENTARY ON ANNEX B

This annex brings together the recommendations for Grade C systems, in particular:

- monitoring (6.2);
- limitation of false alarms (12.2);
- power supply (15.3);
- function (17.4).

B.1 Indicators

An audible fault indicator should be provided.

NOTE This may be the same as the audible indicator of a fire condition.

An indication of a fault condition should either be a normally lit indicator being extinguished (green) or a normally unlit indicator being lit (yellow).

Where an illuminated indicator is intermittent it should be lit for at least 0.25 s every 5 s.

The following colours should be used.

- Indicators of fire should be red.
- Indicators of faults should be yellow.
- Indicators for the supply of power should be green.

B.2 Controls

Manual controls should take the form of:

- a control fulfilling the function of a biased/momentary switch; and/or
- a control fulfilling the function of a secure switch.

There should be facilities for:

- silencing the fire alarm devices;
- resetting the fire condition (if the system does not automatically reset);
- testing the system.

All controls should be clearly labelled with their functions.

NOTE There may be a control for muting the fault buzzer.

B.3 Fire condition and silencing

The activation of a fire detector should result in the activation of all the dwelling unit's fire alarms.

A red indicator should be illuminated on activation of a fire detector and remain illuminated until the system is reset.

Activating the silence control should silence the fire alarms.

Activating the reset control (if provided) should reset/resound the fire alarms.

NOTE The CIE may automatically reset if the fire condition abates.

There may be an output from the CIE to other dwelling units via a centrally connected system, e.g. in HMOs where a Grade A system is fitted in the communal areas. This output may be subject to a delay (normally not more than 2 min). During this delay, a fire alarm output should be given in the affected dwelling unit, but if the system is reset before the expiry of the delay period, no alarm signal need be given to the central CIE.

B.4 Monitoring and connection of fire detectors and fire alarms

If the audible fault warning is intermittent, it should sound for 0.5 s at least once every 100 s. There should be a manual control to enable the audible warning to be silenced. The visual indication should remain lit until the fault has been rectified.

An audible and visual fault indication should be given in the event of an open circuit or short circuit on the wiring to manual call points, smoke and heat alarms or fire detectors, and to fire alarm devices, unless the fault causes a fire alarm signal to be given [see 6.2c)].

B.5 Power supplies

All power supplies should conform to the recommendations of 15.3 or to the requirements of BS EN 54-4.

An audible and visible indication should be given on failure of the normal or standby supplies.

NOTE 1 The condition may be reset automatically when the fault condition is removed.

NOTE 2 This recommendation is for a minimum of 72 h standby. Some systems do not have this capacity, in which case Note 4 to 15.3 applies.

Where the dwelling CIE is powered solely from outside the dwelling (e.g. in the form of a satellite PSU from the main premises' CIE), then this connection should be duplicated, diversely routed and fault monitored back to the main CIE. Short circuit or disconnection of one power supply circuit should not prevent the correct functioning of the individual dwelling's CIE.

Annex C (informative)

Choice of appropriate grade of fire detection and fire alarm system

C.1 General approach

This part of BS 5839 recognizes eight different grades of fire detection and fire alarm system, of which two are not currently defined. These grades differ widely in cost, complexity, reliability and level of self-monitoring. The guidance in this annex is intended to assist in selection of appropriate grade, based on the specifier's assessment of the risk to occupants of the premises from fire.

C.2 Grades F1 and F2 (battery-powered smoke alarms and heat alarms)

- C.2.1** The simplest form of fire detection and fire alarm system is a single battery-powered smoke alarm. These inexpensive devices are relatively simple to install in existing premises.
- C.2.2** Battery-powered smoke alarms conforming to BS EN 14604, and heat alarms conforming to [BS 5446-2](#), give an audible fault warning before an increase in the internal resistance, or a decrease in the terminal voltage, of the battery prevents correct operation.
-

C.3 Grade F2 (system of one or more battery-smoke and/or heat alarms powered by a user-replaceable primary battery or batteries)

Provided that the battery or batteries are always replaced when necessary, Grade F2 smoke alarms and heat alarms can provide a reasonable degree of protection. However, the audible fault warning can be disabled by removal of the battery, and failure to then replace the battery results in total loss of protection. The socio-economic groups most at risk from fire are those least likely to be able to ensure that a battery is always present. Batteries are also sometimes removed to prevent false alarms. In these cases, the ability of Grade F2 smoke alarms and heat alarms to warn of fire is likely to decrease with time. Consequently, this part of BS 5839 recommends the installation of Grade F2 smoke alarms and heat alarms only in owner-occupied dwellings, where there is a reasonable likelihood that the battery or batteries will be replaced promptly when necessary.

C.4 Grade F1 (system of one or more battery-powered smoke and/or heat alarms powered by a sealed battery)

- C.4.1** The installation of a Grade F1 system where the battery or batteries are tamper-proof and do not require replacement during their natural life means the system is likely to be more reliable than a Grade F2 system. Nevertheless, because Grade F1 systems rely on a single source of power, as in the case of a Grade F2 system, a Grade F1 system is recommended only for use in existing owner-occupied dwellings.
- C.4.2** This type of system normally incorporates a battery of a type unsuitable for use in normal domestic appliances and removable only with the use of a tool. The battery is, therefore, unlikely to be removed for other purposes.

C.5 Grade D2 (system of one or more mains-powered smoke and/or heat alarms, each with an integral standby supply consisting of a user-replaceable battery or batteries)

- C.5.1** This part of BS 5839 recommends Grade D2 systems for use in new owner-occupied dwellings. Owing to the possibility that the standby battery might be removed from the alarm, this part of BS 5839 does not recommend that a Grade D2 system is installed in rented dwellings.
- C.5.2** Because it is able to operate in the event of mains failure, a Grade D2 fire detection and fire alarm system may be connected to a lighting circuit (see [15.4](#)). This has the advantage that the circuit is unlikely to be disconnected for a prolonged period of time. However, account needs to be taken of the potential difficulty of disabling a detector that is permanently in an alarm state, without isolating the lighting circuit [see [12.2a](#)3)].

C.6 Grade D1 (system of one or more mains-powered smoke and/or heat alarms, each with a sealed-in standby supply consisting of a battery or batteries)

- C.6.1** Grade D1 systems are recommended for fire detection and fire alarm systems in rented dwellings, whether new or existing, due to the potential for a higher level of reliability that is appropriate because occupants of rented dwellings tend to be at higher risk.
- C.6.2** Because it is able to operate in the event of mains failure, a Grade D1 fire detection and fire alarm system may be connected to a lighting circuit (see [15.4](#)). This has the advantage that the circuit is unlikely to be disconnected for a prolonged period of time. However, account needs to be taken of the potential difficulty of disabling a detector that is permanently in an alarm state, without isolating the lighting circuit [see [12.2a](#)3)].

C.7 Grade C (system of fire detectors and alarm sounders, which may be combined in the form of smoke and/or heat alarms, connected to a common power supply, comprising the normal mains and a standby supply, with central control equipment)

- C.7.1** More effective control and monitoring of a fire detection and fire alarm system can be achieved by connecting and monitoring the wiring between all fire detectors and fire alarms to common control equipment and power supplies, and by use of a standby supply such as a secondary battery. Examples of such systems include:
- a) intruder or social alarm systems that incorporate CIE, to which one or more fire detectors and fire alarms are connected (which may be combined as smoke or heat alarms), and which meet the recommendations for monitoring ([6.2](#)), limitation of false alarms ([12.2](#)), power supply ([15.3](#)) and function ([17.4](#));
 - b) one or more fire detectors and fire alarms operating at ELV and connected to a control unit meeting the recommendations in [Annex C](#) and power supply equipment meeting the recommendations in [15.3](#). The wiring for such systems is monitored as described in [6.2](#).
- C.7.2** These types of system normally incorporate a secondary battery of a type unsuitable for use in normal domestic appliances and which can only be removed with the use of a tool. The battery is, therefore, unlikely to be removed for other purposes. The standby time of the power supply needs to be a minimum of 72 h as described in [15.3e](#)).

C.7.3 Advantages of systems incorporating central CIE include:

- silencing of the fire alarm can be achieved whilst standing at floor level as described in [12.2a](#)). This is especially useful if elderly or disabled people are likely to have to operate the equipment;
- testing of the system can be achieved whilst standing at floor level;
- muting of the system's audible fault indication can be achieved whilst standing at floor level;
- where wiring is used to connect the fire detectors and fire alarm sounders to the CIE, the wiring is monitored so that a fault indication is given at the CIE in the event of specified faults in the wiring.

NOTE Some of the above facilities are available in lower grade systems with the provision of additional components.

C.7.4 Grade C systems can also provide external and remote monitoring of the system in an individual dwelling. This enables swift and efficient repair by the landlord of any faults in social alarm systems and centrally monitored systems.

C.8 Grade A (system of a type described in BS 5839-1)

C.8.1 A higher standard of control, monitoring and system availability can be achieved by installing a system of the type recommended in BS 5839-1. Such systems comprise dedicated fire alarm CIE, fire detectors and fire alarm devices. Interconnections from the fire detectors and fire alarm devices to the CIE are monitored so that a fault indication is given at the CIE in the event of specified faults. Any wiring of these systems is fire-resisting, which is not essential in lower grades.

C.8.2 Systems of the type recommended in BS 5839-1 might be appropriate where the fire risk is high, and a commensurately high level of reliability is required. However, adequate protection of premises might be possible without following all the recommendations of BS 5839-1.

Annex D (informative) Model certificates for Grade A systems

D.1 Design certificate

A model design certificate for Grade A systems is shown in [Figure D.1](#).

Figure D.1 — Model design certificate for Grade A systems

Certificate of design for the fire detection and fire alarm system at:
 Address:

I/We being the person(s) responsible (as indicated by my/our signatures below) for the design of the fire alarm system, particulars of which are set out below, CERTIFY that the said design for which I/we have been responsible complies to the best of my/our knowledge and belief with the recommendations of BS 5839-6:2019, Clauses 1 to 22 and the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017, Section 2 (as modified by the recommendations of BS 5839-6:2019) for the Grade A system described below, except for the variations, if any, stated in this certificate.

Name (in block letters): Position:

Signature: Date:

For and on behalf of:

Address:

..... Postcode:.....

The extent of liability of the signatory is limited to the system described below.

System Category (see BS 5839-6:2019, Clause 8):

.....
 Variations from the recommendations of BS 5839-6 (including any variations from BS 5839-1:2017, Section 2, other than those specifically recommended by BS 5839-6:2019):
 Extent of system covered by this certificate:

.....

Brief description of areas protected (not applicable for Category LD1 or PD1 systems):

Detector coverage is designed to satisfy the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017 for a Category L1 or L2 system.

N/A L1 L2

D.2 Installation certificate

A model installation certificate for Grade A systems is shown in [Figure D.2](#).

Figure D.2 — Model installation certificate for Grade A systems

Certificate of Installation for the fire detection and fire alarm system at:
 Address:

I/We being the person(s) responsible (as indicated by my/our signatures below) for the installation of the fire alarm system, particulars of which are set out below, CERTIFY that the said installation work for which I/we have been responsible complies to the best of my/our knowledge and belief with the specification described below and with the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017, Section 4, except for the variations, if any, stated in this certificate.

Name (In block letters): Position:
 Signature: Date:
 For and on behalf of:
 Address:
 Postcode:

The extent of liability of the signatory is limited to the system described below.
 Extent of installation work covered by this certificate:

Specification against which system was installed:

Variations from the specification and/or BS 5839-1:2017, Section 4 (see BS 5839-1:2017, Clause 7):

Wiring has been tested in accordance with the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017, Clause 38. Test results have been recorded and are provided on the appended BS 7671 Electrical Installation Certificate:

Supplied to the person responsible for commissioning the system Supplied by others

This certificate may be required by an authority responsible for enforcement of fire safety legislation, such as the building control authority or housing authority. The recipient of this certificate might rely on the certificate as evidence of compliance with legislation. Liability could arise on the part of any organization or person that issues a certificate without due care in ensuring its validity.

D.3 Commissioning certificate

A model commissioning certificate for Grade A systems is shown in [Figure D.3](#).

Figure D.3 — Model commissioning certificate for Grade A systems

Certificate of commissioning for the fire detection and fire alarm system at:
 Address:

I/we being the person(s) responsible (as indicated by my/our signatures below) for the commissioning of the fire alarm system, particulars of which are set out below, CERTIFY that the said work for which I/we have been responsible complies to the best of my/our knowledge and belief with the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017, Clause 39, except for the variations, if any, stated in this certificate.

Name (in block letters): Position:
 Signature: Date:
 For and on behalf of:
 Address:

 Postcode:

The extent of liability of the signatory is limited to the system described below.
 Extent of system covered by this certificate:

Variations from the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017, Clause 39 (see BS 5839-1:2017, Clause 7):

All equipment operates correctly.

Installation work is, as far as can reasonably be ascertained, of an acceptable standard.

The entire system has been inspected and tested in accordance with the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017, 39.2c).

The system performs as required by the specification prepared by:
 a copy of which I/we have been given.

Taking into account the guidance contained in BS 5839-1:2017, Section 3, I/we have not bymins by a delay in transmission of fire alarm signals to the alarm receiving identified any obvious potential for an unacceptable rate of false alarms.

The documentation described in BS 5839-1:2017, Clause 40 has been provided to the user.

The following work should be completed before/after (delete as applicable) the system becomes operational:

The following potential causes of false alarms should be considered at the time of the next service visit:

Before the system becomes operational, it should be soak tested in accordance with the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017, 35.2.6 for a period of:

(Enter a period of either one week, such period as required by the specification, or such period as recommended by the signatory to this certificate, whichever is the greatest, or delete if not applicable.)

This certificate may be required by an authority responsible for enforcement of fire safety legislation, such as the building control authority or housing authority. The recipient of this certificate might rely on the certificate as evidence of compliance with legislation. Liability could arise on the part of any organization or person that issues a certificate without due care in ensuring its validity.

D.4 Acceptance certificate

A model acceptance certificate for Grade A systems is shown in [Figure D.4](#).

Figure D.4 — Model acceptance certificate for Grade A systems

Certificate of design for the fire detection and fire alarm system at:
 Address:

I/We being the competent person(s) responsible (as indicated by my/our signatures below) for the acceptance of the fire alarm system, particulars of which are set out below, ACCEPT the system on behalf of:
 Name (In block letters): Position:
 Signature: Date:
 For and on behalf of:
 Address:

 Postcode:.....

The extent of liability of the signatory is limited to the system described below.
 Extent of system covered by this certificate:

The following work is required before the system can be accepted:

All installation work appears to be satisfactory.
 The system is capable of giving a fire alarm signal.
 The facility for remote transmission of alarms to an alarm receiving centre operates correctly. (Delete if not applicable.)

The following documents have been provided to the purchaser or user:
 "As-fitted" drawings.
 Operating and maintenance instructions.
 Certificates of design, installation and commissioning.
 Electrical Installation Certificate in accordance with BS 7671 for circuits operating at mains voltage
 A logbook.
 Sufficient representatives of the user have been properly instructed in the use of the system, including, at least, all means of triggering fire signals, silencing and resetting the system and avoidance of false alarms.
 All relevant tests, defined in the purchasing specification, have been witnessed. (Delete if not applicable.)

The following work is required before the system can be accepted:

D.5 Modification certificate

A model modification certificate for Grade A systems is shown in [Figure D.5](#).

Figure D.5 — *Model modification certificate for Grade A systems*

Modification certificate – Grade A systems

Certificate of modification for the fire detection and fire alarm system at:

Address:

I/we being the competent person(s) responsible (as indicated by my/our signatures below) for the modification of the fire detection and fire alarm system, particulars of which are set out below, CERTIFY that the said modification work for which I/we have been responsible has to the best of my/our knowledge and belief been carried out in accordance with the recommendations of BS 5839-6:2019, 23.2 and the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017, 46.4, except for the variations, if any, stated in this certificate.

Name (in block letters): Position:

Signature: Date:

For and on behalf of:

Address:

Postcode:

The extent of liability of the signatory is limited to the system described below.

Extent of system covered by this certificate:

Variations from the recommendations of BS 5839-6:2019, 23.2, and the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017, 46.4:

Following the modifications, the system has been tested in accordance with the recommendations of BS 5839-6:2019, 23.2, and the recommendations of BS 5839-1:2017, 46.4.2.

Following the modifications, as-fitted drawings and other system records have been updated as appropriate.

I/we the undersigned confirm that the modifications have introduced no additional variations from the recommendations of BS 5839-6:2019, other than those recorded above:

Signed:
 Capacity:
 (e.g. maintenance organisation, system designer, consultant or user representative)

Annex F (informative)

Model guidance to occupiers and landlords

Model guidance to occupiers and landlords, regarding avoidance of false alarms in systems with facilities for automatic transmission of fire alarm signals to the fire and rescue service, via an alarm receiving centre, is shown in [Figure F.1](#).

Figure F.1 — *Model guidance to occupiers and landlords*

Guidance to occupiers and landlords in properties with remote monitoring of fire alarm systems

IMPORTANT: You must read this guidance before your fire detection and fire alarm system is monitored at a remote location.

The company responsible for the fire detection and fire alarm system at your property has proposed that the system will be/continues to be *[delete as applicable]* monitored at an alarm receiving centre.

It is important that you read the guidance in this note carefully, before this service is provided.

Remote monitoring of the system means that, when your fire detection and fire alarm system sounds the alarm, the system automatically causes the fire and rescue service to be called (by staff at an alarm receiving centre). This service is often valuable if the people who live in your property have a disability and so might not be able to call the fire and rescue service themselves or get out of the property safely. It might also be required by your fire insurers if you live in a very expensive house, such as a mansion or country house.

In other properties, the monitoring service might not be of much benefit to you, as people in your property can usually call the fire and rescue service themselves, provided they do so from a place of safety, such as a telephone on the ground floor, near the front or back doors, or at a neighbour's house. Unless you live in an isolated location, if your house catches fire when you are not there, often neighbours will call the fire and rescue service.

If your fire detection and fire alarm system is monitored, it is very important that you do everything possible to avoid the fire and rescue service being called to your property as a result of a false alarm.

Nearly 30% of fire calls that fire and rescue services receive each year are caused by false alarms from fire alarm systems. This is very costly for the taxpayer and, in rural areas, often causes part-time firefighters to be called out from their homes or places of work. Most false alarms come from workplaces, such as offices, shops, factories, hotels, hospitals, colleges, etc., and not from private houses. This is because most houses do not have fire detection and fire alarm systems that are monitored at alarm receiving centres or fire and rescue service control rooms.

However, a problem is that each smoke detector in a house is usually more likely to cause a false alarm than a smoke detector in a workplace. There are good reasons for this. In the small confines of a house, fumes from the kitchen, people smoking, steam, dust, aerosol sprays and some do-it-yourself or maintenance work (e.g. causing dust or involving use of blowlamps) can set off smoke detectors (but normally not heat detectors).

The fire and rescue service understands these problems. If they are called to a false alarm at your house, they will not be annoyed, nor will you be charged any fee for their call-out. However, for your safety, they will always assume that any call to your property results from a genuine fire and react accordingly.

In travelling to your property as fast as possible, the firefighters put themselves and other road users at additional risk. More importantly, while attending a false alarm at your property, the fire engines are not available to deal with other real fires in the area, and this puts other people at risk.

There are many things you can do to avoid false alarms and unnecessary calls to the fire and rescue service. These are set out below. Make sure you understand these measures if you wish your fire alarm system to be monitored at a remote location. If you need advice, contact the installer of your fire alarm system or your local fire and rescue service.

- 1) Unless you need the fire and rescue service to attend with the minimum of delay because you are disabled or because your fire insurer requires this, a short delay should be allowed for you to check whether there is a fire before the call is passed automatically to the fire and rescue service. (People in the property should not, however, delay calling the fire and rescue service if they even suspect that there is a fire.)

Figure F.1 (continued)

Normally, the delay is applied by the alarm receiving centre, who will try to telephone you to check whether the signal they have received from your system is a false alarm. If you do not answer the telephone within 60 seconds, the alarm receiving centre will assume that there is a fire and call the fire and rescue service. If you are certain that it is a false alarm, you should answer the telephone as quickly as possible, so that the alarm receiving centre do not call the fire and rescue service. On the other hand, if there is a fire, you should not delay leaving the house to answer the telephone. You should get out right away and telephone the fire and rescue service yourself just in case the automatic transmission system has not worked properly.

In some sophisticated fire alarm systems, the delay is not applied at the alarm receiving centre. Instead, you will have a short period to check whether there is a fire. If there is no fire, you can stop the signal being sent to the alarm receiving centre by using a control on your fire alarm control panel. If you do not stop the signal, the fire and rescue service will be called without further delay as soon as it is sent. If you have this type of system, you should make sure that you understand how to use the "abort" control.

If you have any doubts about the way your system operates, whether you have, or should have, a delay period, or any other uncertainty, you should contact your fire alarm installer or maintenance company as soon as possible.

- 2) So that faults in your system do not cause false alarms, you must have it serviced at least every six months. You should check that you have a current contract for servicing and for call-out of an engineer if your system is faulty.
- 3) There might be a switch on your fire alarm panel that allows you to disable the automatic transmission facility at certain times (e.g. if you find that cooking is likely to cause false alarms). If there is not such a switch, there might be a facility to disable the fire detectors. However, you should then ensure that the system is restored to normal operation as soon as the risk of false alarms no longer exists.
- 4) When cooking, you should make sure that fumes from the kitchen do not reach a nearby smoke detector (e.g. by shutting the kitchen door). You should also make sure that steam (e.g. from a bathroom) does not reach any smoke detector.
- 5) There are two types of smoke detector, called ionization smoke detectors and optical smoke detectors. Optical smoke detectors are less likely to cause false alarms during cooking. You should make sure that the smoke detectors near the kitchen (which means smoke detectors installed in both the hallway and upstairs landing of a typical two-storey house) are optical type. These detectors may occur within multi-sensor detector devices. If you are not sure, you should ask your fire alarm system installer or maintenance company to confirm this.
- 6) If people are smoking in a room with a smoke detector, make sure that the room is ventilated, so that the smoke does not reach the smoke detector. (This does not matter if the room has a heat detector.)
- 7) Some aerosol sprays can set off smoke detectors. You should not spray any aerosol close to a smoke detector.
- 8) If a lot of dust is being generated (e.g. by builders), you should protect smoke detectors from the dust (e.g. by covering them with a plastic bag). You should, however, remove this as soon as the work that is causing the dust is finished. If someone is using a blowlamp (e.g. to burn off paint) near a smoke detector, you should disable the automatic transmission facility or the smoke detectors (but restore the system to normal operation as soon as the work is finished).
- 9) Carbon monoxide detectors can be set off by vehicle exhaust fumes, and might give false alarms if installed in a poorly ventilated kitchen.

REMEMBER

- Always make sure that someone in the house calls the fire and rescue service when there is a fire. Do not rely purely on the automatic transmission facility.
- Make sure everyone in the house knows how to prevent false alarms.
- Make sure your system is serviced properly.
- If there is anything about the system, or how to avoid false alarms, that you do not understand, ask your fire alarm installer or maintenance organization, or contact the community fire safety department of your local fire and rescue service.

Annex G (normative)

Method for calculating standby battery capacity for Grade A systems

The minimum capacity of valve regulated lead acid batteries should be calculated in accordance with the following formula:

$$C_{\min} = 1.25(T_1 I_1 + D I_2 T_2)$$

where:

- C_{\min} is the minimum capacity of the battery when new at the 20 h discharge rate and at 20 °C, in ampere hours (Ah);
- T_1 is the total battery standby period, in hours (h);
- T_2 is the total battery alarm period, in hours (h);
- I_1 is the total battery standby load, in amperes (A);
- I_2 is the total battery alarm load, in amperes (A); and
- D is a derating factor.

NOTE Where $C_{\min}/20$ is equal to or greater than I_2 , it can be assumed that $D = 1$.

When $C_{\min}/20$ is less than I_2 , the value of D should either be based on the battery manufacturer's data or be 1.75.

In practice, C_{\min} is unlikely to correspond exactly to an available battery capacity and therefore the next highest available capacity size should be used.

Annex H (informative) Model inspection and servicing certificate for all systems

A model inspection and servicing certificate for all systems is shown in [Figure H.1](#).

Figure H.1 — Model inspection and servicing certificate for all systems

Reference No:	As recommended in BS 5839-6:2019, Clause 26
Certificate of servicing for the fire alarm system at: Address:	
<p>I/We being the competent person(s) responsible (as indicated by my/our signatures below) for the servicing of the fire alarm system, particulars of which are set out below, CERTIFY that the said work for which I/we have been responsible complies to the best of my/our knowledge and belief with the recommendations of BS 5839-6:2019, Clause 26, except for the variations, if any, stated in this certificate.</p> <p>Name (In block letters): Position:</p> <p>Signature: Date:</p> <p>For and on behalf of (name of maintenance company):.....</p> <p>Address:</p> <p>..... Postcode:</p> <p>The extent of liability of the signatory is limited to the system described below.</p> <p>Extent of system covered by this certificate:</p> <p>Variations from the recommendations of BS 5839-6:2019, Clause 26 for periodic or annual inspection and test (as applicable):</p> <p><input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> Grade of system, <input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> Category of system</p> <p>The following work/action is considered necessary:</p>	
This certificate may be required by an authority responsible for enforcement of fire safety legislation, such as the building control authority or housing authority. The recipient of this certificate might rely on the certificate as evidence of compliance with legislation. Liability could arise on the part of any organisation or person that issues a certificate without due care in ensuring its validity.	

Annex I (normative)

Servicing procedure by competent person

NOTE The following servicing procedures are only applicable to Grade C, Grade D or Grade F systems when the risk and/or circumstances require a competent person (not a user) to assess the fire alarm equipment and its operation.

I.1 General

Fire detection and fire alarm systems should be serviced at the intervals indicated in [Table 3](#).

Fire detection and fire alarm systems should be tested in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

In the case of systems with facilities for transmission of fire alarm signals to an ARC, it should be confirmed that a fire alarm test signal is correctly received at the ARC and that the information displayed there is correct.

I.2 Visual inspection

A visual inspection should be made to check whether structural or occupancy changes have affected conformity to the recommendations of this standard for the siting of individual fire detectors, smoke alarms or heat alarms. Particular care should be taken to verify whether:

- a) a clear space of 500 mm is maintained directly below each fire detector;
 - b) the ability of the alarm to receive the stimulus that it has been designed to detect has not been impeded by other means;
 - c) any changes to the use or occupancy of an area makes the existing types of fire alarms unsuitable for detection of fire or prone to unwanted alarms;
 - d) any building alterations or extensions require additional fire detection and fire alarm equipment to be installed.
-

I.3 Cleaning

Fire detectors should be cleaned periodically in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

I.4 Functional testing

The guidance of the manufacturer on the method by which the detector/alarm can be tested effectively should be followed.

For linked fire alarms (either wired or radio-linked) the link(s) should be tested to confirm that the signal can be successfully transmitted between devices.

NOTE 1 This can, for example, be conducted by activation of one device and checking that all devices are activated.

Smoke alarms and smoke detectors should be tested to determine whether products of combustion are capable of passing unhindered from the protected area to the sensing chamber/elements of the detector/alarm.

Heat alarms and heat detectors should be tested by means of a suitable heat source.

In the absence of a standard that addresses testing of multi-sensor domestic detectors, such detectors should be tested in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

NOTE 2 It is necessary to ensure that any test product used does not cause damage to, or affect the subsequent performance of, the alarm and that the manufacturer's guidance on suitable test products is followed.

NOTE 3 Carbon monoxide toxic gas detectors are not fire alarms and are therefore not covered in this part of BS 5839.

I.5 Records

On completion of the work, any outstanding defects should be reported to the person responsible for the property. A record of the inspection and test should be made on the servicing certificate, and also, for Grade A systems, in any property logbook/records.

An inspection and servicing certificate should be completed.

NOTE A model inspection and servicing certificate is shown in [Annex G](#).

For Grade A systems, the property logbook/records should be examined to confirm that any faults recorded have received appropriate attention.

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