

PD 6531:2018



BSI Standards Publication

**PUBLISHED DOCUMENT**

**Queries and interpretations  
on BS 5839-1**

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Published by BSI Standards Limited 2018

ISBN 978 0 50 99653 5

ICS 3.22.20, 13.320

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

Committee reference FSH/12/1

Draft for comment NA

**Amendments/corrigenda issued since publication**

Date	Text affected
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## Foreword

### Publishing information

This Published Document is published by BSI Standards Limited, under licence from The British Standards Institution, and came into effect on 30 April 2018. It was prepared by Subcommittee FSH/12/1, *Installation and servicing*, under the authority of Technical Committee FSH/12, *Fire detection and alarm services*. A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its secretary.

### Supersession

This Published Document supersedes PD 6531:2010, which is withdrawn.

### Relationship with other publications

Since the publication of BS 5839-1, a number of queries on interpretation have been submitted to BSI. In some cases, the queries have shown that although the standard is correct, misunderstandings have arisen over both its interpretation and the philosophies behind its recommendations.

This Published Document, therefore, gives not merely the queries and answers, but seeks to give the intentions of BS 5839-1 in the hope that these might help future users of the standard.

### Information about this document

This Published Document gives supplementary information on the recommendations and application of BS 5839-1:2017; it does not in any way supersede or modify the recommendations in BS 5839-1. Any user claiming compliance with BS 5839-1 is expected to be able to justify any course of action that deviates from its recommendations.

Unless stated otherwise, all clause and subclause references in this Published Document are to BS 5839-1:2017.

This is a full revision of the Published Document and all queries and answers have been revised in line with BS 5839-1:2017.

### 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 Published Document cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.**

## 0 Introduction

### 0.1 Summary of BS 5839-1

The BS 5839-1:2017 code of practice is subdivided into several sections, each one dealing with specific aspects of the design and installation of the fire detection and fire alarm system up to the time it is ready to enter operation. There are seven sections as follows:

- *General* gives the scope of the document, normative references and terms and definitions. This section also explains why a fire detection and fire alarm system might be needed and the type of systems available. It provides several categories of systems which can be used by designers to suit specific cases. It defines the exchange of information which is needed between the parties involved and stipulates when and how variations to recommendations may be adopted when the main recommendations cannot be complied with.
  - *Design considerations* re-groups all items which need to be considered during the system design stage. This includes relating the system categories and areas that are protected and assessing the subdivision of a system in detection zones and alarm zones. More specifically, design considerations address specific issues leading to the selection of the correct type of fire detection and audible and visual alarms, as well as the specific type of control and indicating equipment and power supply equipment which should be used. It also makes recommendations on network systems and radio-linked systems.
  - *Limitation of false alarms and unwanted fire alarm signals* recognizes that false alarms can seriously prejudice the safety of occupants by reducing their trust in any future alarms and that unwanted fire alarm signals can waste precious resources in the fire and rescue service. Responsibilities for the limitation of such false alarms and unwanted fire alarm signals are clearly established and tools are given for use by those responsible to achieve the recommended limitation. This section can help users to address a high rate of false alarms in existing systems, regardless of whether they were designed in accordance with the 2017 version of BS 5839-1.
  - *Installation* establishes the responsibilities of the installer and recommends best practices and workmanship as well as giving recommendations for the inspection and testing of the system wiring.
  - *Commissioning and handover* specifies the process involving thorough testing of the installed system to ensure that it operates correctly in accordance with the recommendations of the standard and with the specification. It specifies documentation and records which should be made available before the system handover to the purchaser for acceptance.
  - *Maintenance* is a critical and essential activity for ensuring the long-term reliability of the installed fire detection and fire alarm system. This section specifies the test and verification processes to be carried out by the user and routine work by a third-party inspection and servicing organization. It also gives guidance and recommendations for dealing with modifications to the system.
- User's responsibilities* specify the need for the user to appoint a single, named member of the premises management to supervise all matters pertaining to the fire detection and fire alarm system, including the maintenance of records in a logbook.

Two normative and five informative annexes are included that provide supplementary information to support several aspects covered by the code.