



FIA Guidance for the Fire Protection Industry Visual Alarm Devices: Conflict between BS 5839 and EN 54-23

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1. Introduction

In 2010, the UK adopted and published as BS EN 54-23, the new European Standard for visual alarm devices (VAD), EN 54-23.

In the 2013 editions of BS 5839-1 and BS 5839-8 published in March 2013, the Codes of Practice make a clear recommendation that VADs should conform to BS EN 54-23:2010. However, due to a recent extension of its coexistence period, EN 54-23 will not become a mandatory harmonized European specification until 31st December 2013.

The purpose of this FIA Guidance document is to advise those who are responsible for installing, commissioning and servicing systems using VADs as regards the use of non-EN 54-23 compliant products during this interim period.

2. Extension of the coexistence period for EN 54-23

The European Commission Standing Committee on Construction (SCC) agreed at its 74th meeting an extension of the coexistence period for EN 54-23, the Standard for VAD, from 31st March 2013 to 31st December 2013. This decision is published in the European Union official journal (OJEU) with a date of 2013.03.25.

What does this mean? - Until the end of the coexistence period, BS EN 54-23 is a valid Standard which can be used on a voluntary basis, as part of an installation contract. After the end of the coexistence period, i.e. from 31st December 2013, all VADs covered by the scope of BS EN 54-23 must conform to the harmonised European specification.

This new situation whereby EN 54-23 does not become a mandatory harmonized specification until 31st December 2013 means that until then, a number of existing products which do not comply with BS EN 54-23 will continue to be placed on the market and coexist with compliant products.

3. Conflict with BS 5839-1 and BS 5839-8

In the March 2013 edition of BS 5839-1 and BS 5839-8, it is stated in 11.2 m) and 11.4 respectively, that “Visual alarm devices should conform to BS EN 54-23”. In this respect, both codes are accurate in that they refer to a current published Standard.

However, BS 5839-1 and BS 5839-8 do not take into consideration that non-EN 54-23 products are, and will be until 31 December 2013, legitimately available on the UK market and that these products may offer acceptable performance for the application. Also, these products may have been specified in existing contracts which have yet

to be installed, commissioned and handed-over. It is therefore important that during the transition period to 31st December 2013, an approach is taken which will enable these installations to be assessed and accepted against the new BS Codes.

This assessment should be based on the use of the VADs in the premises and the evacuation strategy for the building, including the need to effectively warn those who may be unable to hear or have difficulty in hearing the audible alarm signal.

4. Recommendations

The FIA recommends that where a conflict exists in assessing an installation to the 2013 editions of BS 5839-1 and BS 5839-8 with respect to the VAD used, the requirements stated in these codes of practice be deferred until the end of the coexistence period of EN 54-23:2010. This is currently 31st December 2013. A variation notice in accordance with clause seven of these Codes of Practice should be issued to record the reasoning behind this decision and ensure that it is acceptable to all parties concerned.

5. References and applicable standards

BS 5839-1:2013, Fire detection and fire alarm systems for buildings - Code of Practice for design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of systems in non-domestic premises

BS 5839-8: 2013, Fire detection and fire alarm systems for buildings - Code of Practice for design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of voice alarm systems

EN 54-23:2010, Fire detection and fire alarm systems, Part 23: Fire alarm devices – Visual alarm devices, published in the UK as BS EN 54-23:2010

NANDO web site: <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newapproach/nando/index.cfm?fuseaction=cpd.hs>

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