

INTERFACING FIRE ALARM SYSTEMS WITH DOOR HARDWARE: THE NEW BS 7273-4

Fire alarm systems are commonly interfaced with other equipment. The engineering of certain interfaces is covered in various parts of BS 7273. The latest, and most widely relevant, part, BS 7273-4, covers interfaces with door hardware, namely devices that hold fire doors open (electromagnets and acoustically or radio-linked devices), electronic locks (magnetic and solenoid locks) and control gear for powered sliding doors.

A review of this code will appear in a future issue. Meantime, readers should be aware of

the major changes to custom and practice that now apply. For example, only fail-safe interfaces should be used in critical situations, in which doors now need to release on fire alarm fault conditions. Also, the extent of fire detection needed where fire doors are held open has increased.

BS 7273-4 will create consistency amongst enforcing authorities, who, previously, often made local requirements regarding the matters now addressed in this national code. ■

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Where a competent person is already employed by the responsible person, that person must be appointed in preference to a third party. This does not imply that fire risk assessments must be undertaken by the in-house competent person, nor is it necessary for the "safety assistance" to be available by a person within each building. Typically, in a large company, the assistance may come from a company health and safety advisor or department.

In small companies, it may be difficult to appoint an employee, and it may be necessary to use consultants. Equally, for small, simple buildings, the level of competence required by an employee may not be onerous. All that may be necessary is a basic understanding of the legislation and the principles of fire safety, and care to recognize the limitations of their own knowledge, so that professional advice is sought when necessary.

However the advice is sourced, it is important that suitable assistance is available; not only is this a legal requirement, but, since fire and rescue authorities no longer specify detailed fire precautions, the safety of occupants in non-domestic premises is now reliant on self-compliance and commitment to fire safety by those who operate, occupy or own premises. ■

Trading Tip!

Your customer's Fire Safety Strategy is extremely important - correctly prepared it quite literally is a life-saving strategy. Make sure your customers are aware; tell them about it and help them by supplying them with Fire Warden equipment, etc!