

Expert commentary

BS 8418:2021 — *Design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of detection-activated video surveillance systems (VSS) — Code of practice*

David Roscoe, Field Operations Manager, Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board (SSAIB)

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1 Overview

BS 8418:2021, *Design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of detection-activated video surveillance systems (VSS) – Code of practice,* gives recommendations for an electronic security system that combines intruder detection equipment with a visual surveillance system (VSS). The functionality of the systems is such that when an alarm occurs, images from the area where the alarm occurred are transmitted to a remote monitoring centre, commonly known as a remote video response centre (RVRC), to aid an operator in verifying the cause of the alarm.

These systems are most commonly installed outdoors, protecting the perimeter of a building or an outside area but can also be used indoors.

Systems installed and monitored in compliance with this standard can obtain a unique reference number (URN) which is issued by the police. The police use URNs to record information about the premises where the security system is installed. The monitoring centre then quote the URN when requesting the police to respond to criminal activity. Use of a URN enables the police to provide a much quicker response to the property where the criminal activity is observed.

BS 8418:2021 is the 4th edition of this standard and has undergone a full revision. It technically revises, cancels and replaces BS 8418:2015+A1:2017. Unlike previous revisions that were primarily to clarify existing clauses, correct errors or update existing recommendations, this revision has incorporated significant change aimed at increasing adoption of the standard by installers of detection-activated VSS. The level of change in this standard may be regarded as medium to high. The main changes compared to the previous edition are as follows:

- Inclusion of recommendations for two types of system design, Type A and Type A+. The two types may differ based on risk analysis of the property to be protected that takes account of the threat and consequences of criminal activity. A 'Type A' system sets the base requirements, a 'Type A+' system includes additional security features and functionality.
- Removed the content that applied to the Remote Video Response Centre (RVRC) which has been transferred to another standard, BS 9518:2021, *Processing of alarm signals by an alarm receiving centre – Code of practice.*

1.1 Reasons for change

When BS 8418:2021 was due for its periodic review the technical committee responsible for maintenance of the standard sought feedback from stakeholders including the police, insurers, installers and certification bodies. One of the most significant points identified was the relatively low adoption of the standard by designers and installers of this type of security system.

Considering BS 8418:2021 was first published nearly 20 years ago there is still relatively low adoption by installers of this type of system compared to other standards of a similar content.

One of the key benefits of compliance with this standard is that the police specify BS 8418:2021 in their 'Security Systems Response to Security Systems document' and will issue a unique reference number (URN) to a system installed in compliance with this standard. Security systems that have a URN benefit from a Level 1 – 'Immediate' response from the police in instances where the monitoring centre witness crime in progress.

Note: The police may not accept a request to attend a security system of this type if it has not been issued with a URN.

Reasons for low adoption fed back from the industry were:

- some recommendations make a BS 8418:2021 compliant system financially uncompetitive against similar systems
- non-compliant systems may still obtain a police response to incidents (although much slower and not guaranteed)
- some recommendations are technically challenging
- the design recommendations while satisfying installations where the risk of criminal activity is perceived to be high does not accommodate instances where the risk is considered to be low, thus not justifying the additional security features and expenses incurred

For the above reasons one key objective of the revision was to amend the standard with the aim of achieving an increased adoption of the standard.

1.2 Summary

- removed all recommendations applicable to an RVRC
- inclusion of two system designs, Type A and Type A+
- clarification and simplification of several technical recommendations
- fault and tamper tables modified to differentiate between Type A and Type A+ designs
- inclusion of a table in the introduction that identifies the key differences between a Type A and Type A+ system design.

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