

White Paper
For Building Managers: outsourcing
the maintenance of fire safety and security systems



Changes revision table			
Date	Rev #	Paragraph / Page	Change

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Note: The English version of this document, 16-12-12-PO-21-EN, is the approved Euralarm reference document.

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Introduction

More and more building owners and managers are outsourcing the maintenance of their buildings and systems to specialised facility management companies. By doing so, the fire safety and security systems are often bundled together with other types of systems into one maintenance service contract. This approach not only lowers the costs but also reduces the number of service suppliers. However, the maintaining of fire safety and security system services by generalist service suppliers also brings the risk of non-specialists becoming responsible for the maintenance of fire safety and security services.

This trend leads to an increasing amount of non-specialists coming into the field of fire safety and security services, amongst those are Facility Managers (FM) and Guarding Companies (GC). While FM's and GC's may be prepared to take over this maintenance, you as the building owner/operator have the responsibility to ensure that service providers are qualified and certified to carry out the work according to European and local standards, regulations and laws.

Euralarm, as the European association of the electronic fire safety and security industry, is driving the establishment of quality levels for services tied to fire safety and security systems and has defined the levels of competence for organisations and employees involved in the planning, design, installation, commissioning, verification, handover and maintenance of such systems. The purpose of this white paper is to bring awareness of existing risks related to the outsourcing of fire and security maintenance and to outline means of mitigating them.

Why the concern?

Outsourcing services does not equate to offsetting liabilities and responsibilities. The concern is that FM and GC personnel do not typically come with technical qualifications, skills and expertise needed to ensure the correct and appropriate maintenance of fire safety and security systems. They lack the vital product and system training and are unaware of existing national or European norms for application and maintenance. The consequence is a dysfunction in the systems which are meant to protect people, property and assets. Such vulnerabilities need to be taken seriously given that people's lives and business continuity are at stake. Further those deemed 'responsible' for the fire safety and security are held personally and legally accountable for the lives of those that are lawfully on their premises.

You can be held liable in the event a fire safety or security system fails to work properly. Proof of verification from your suppliers including sub-contractors is crucial and should include:

- a) necessary qualifications and competent staff, and
- b) proficiency in the appropriate standards, regulations and laws.

Legal actions, social responsibilities, risks to business continuity and reputation can be the consequences to your enterprise. Some European countries are more consequent in case of an offence; subjecting companies to unlimited fines or convicting individuals to a prison term. In addition, proof of negligence can lead to insurance companies either refusing to pay for damages or raising premiums accordingly.

Systems must be 'fit for purpose'

Fire alarm systems, voice alarm systems, intrusion alarms, access control systems and video surveillance systems will degrade and deteriorate over time, compromising the systems' functionality and reliability. Vandalism, inadequate maintenance or improper usage of the equipment can also harm or reduce the effectiveness of these systems.. Only proper and regular maintenance: inspection, repair, servicing, analysis and calibration, can preserve the integrity of equipment and the entire system, and therefore its ability to protect lives and assets.

Anyone carrying out maintenance is required to demonstrate their ability and competence to ensure the reliability, resilience and availability of the systems they are servicing. Yet it is your responsibility, as the contractor to ensure that your service provider supplies evidence that he knows and applies the appropriate regulation and provides documentation of the maintenance, and the processes to monitor the quality of its subcontracted services.

Means of mitigating your risks

As a purchaser of services, you want to be confident that the services you're purchasing fit the purpose, because fire safety and security is all about protecting people, property and assets. In view of mitigating these risks, Euralarm initiated the development of the first European Standard concerning quality levels of services for fire safety and security systems. The European Norm, EN 16763, titled 'Services for fire safety systems and security systems' defines quality requirements for service providers. It describes basic levels of competence of the employees, including subcontractors, entrusted with the planning, design, installation, commissioning, verification, handover or maintenance of fire safety or security systems. It defines minimum requirements on the service output and documentation. The service provider must demonstrate knowledge of the application guidelines, and the product and system requirements.

Requirements for the service provider ¹ (note that the text below is only a sample):

The service provider shall meet the national laws and regulations applicable in the country where the declared services are executed. Additionally the service provider shall use this document only in conjunction with European standards and national guidelines (e.g. applications guidelines etc.) if available in the declared services in the area where the services are executed.

The service provider shall:

- have resources, infrastructure, knowledge and skills to fulfil the declared services,*
- have processes for identification and fulfilment of requirements for a stage of work in accordance with the contract, relevant laws and regulations, authorities, standards, and other applicable documents,*
- have processes to collect and check all information required to successfully execute the declared services,*
- have executed services in the field of expertise,*
- have initial and ongoing staff training, relative to their role for the declared services,*
- have insurance for all declared services in the geographical area where the services are executed.*

Requirements for maintenance providers:

- Involved staff has the specific knowledge, skills and competence for the particular installed system(s) they work on,*
- Maintenance is performed*
 - in accordance with the maintenance contact*
 - in accordance with the specifications of the manufacturers of the components and systems*
 - based on documentation available by the client*
- the service output is in accordance with the requirements, and informs the client of:*
 - works preformed,*
 - status of the system,*
 - deficiencies of the system,*
 - differences between the installed system and the documentation,*
 - changes in availability of the components and maintainability of the system.*

By demanding valid certification of conformance with the EN 16763 Services standard in your request for quotations, you can expect a minimum standard in terms of competence, expertise and quality. There would be a causal effect extending to the other system parts, which would have a positive influence on the whole of the system.

Conclusion

The threat of death or property damage due to fires or security threats is real. Every year people die or are seriously injured as results of such incidents. It is essential for you as property owner or manager to understand that outsourcing fire safety and security system maintenance comes with some risk, moreover that this risk can be mitigated. It is not expected that you or your procurement team are experts in the fields of fire safety and/or security, but it is expected that if you outsource the maintenance, you take the responsibility to ensure that your service provider is qualified, competent, experienced and capable to maintain the system(s) you have entrusted him with.

Euralarm encourages you to use EN 16763's guidance and build in the requirements for valid 3rd party certification into tenders and contracts when deciding which service provider to choose!

Note:

¹ European Standard, Services for fire safety systems and security systems, Ref. No. EN 16763:2016 E

² Euralarm, is working with certification bodies, insurance companies, first responders, consumer organisations and others "with a genuine interest in enhancing service level quality on a European scale" to get involved in establishing clear service quality levels for electronic fire safety and security systems.

³ EN 16763 is a pan-European Norm that will cover all European countries incl. Turkey.

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