

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES FOR APPLICANTS SEEKING NACOSS GOLD APPROVAL

PREMISES

The published NACOSS GOLD Criterion for Approval (Criterion 2.1) in respect of premises is as follows:-

The company shall operate from suitable and adequate premises.

The published "Guidelines" in relation to this Criterion are as follows:-

GUIDELINE

Non-residential business/commercial premises are preferred and are normally expected. However, in the case of installers of security systems, for very small companies a suitably adapted and segregated secure area within residential premises may be accepted at the sole discretion of NSI.

GUIDELINE

At the time an application for approval is considered, the company is normally expected to demonstrate that it has reasonable security of tenure of the premises (for example, freehold; leasehold with at least three years to run; or a long history of occupation by the firm with no reason to anticipate termination).

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The following supplementary notes expand upon the published Guidelines and are intended to assist applicants and prospective applicant companies by indicating how various situations and types of premises are likely to be judged by NSI.

1. General Comments

NSI requires its approved companies to demonstrate that they operate from suitable and adequately secure premises. This means that they must be able to show that they have the capability to support a correctly-run installation business where properly organised documentation can be kept secure and in conformity with NACOSS GOLD Rules and Codes of Practice (including British Standards, where appropriate).

2. Structure of Building

NSI recognises that on commercial and industrial sites many different forms of construction are in use. NSI does not seek to stipulate any particular rules or guidelines concerning the type of construction for buildings used by security companies as business accommodation on commercial or industrial sites. However, such buildings must be:-

- Of masonry construction, or
- Of reasonably robust structure and construction not more vulnerable to intruders than a building of normal masonry construction, or
- Of reasonably robust structure and construction supplemented by other means (such as by siting the building within a secure compound) such that, overall, the premises are not more vulnerable to intruders than a building of normal masonry construction.

In the case of portable, transportable or pre-fabricated buildings on a commercial or industrial site, evidence of appropriate planning consent should be available and short-term or temporary planning consent would not enable 7 or 11 below to be complied with. In addition, for such buildings, clear evidence that the building meets the provisions of the first paragraph of this section (Section 2) will need to be provided.

In the case of office accommodation within a private home or in an outbuilding within the grounds of a private home, masonry construction is required; attention is drawn to 9.4 below, and particularly to 9.4 (f).

3. Space Available, Etc.

There needs to be adequate space available to conduct the ordinary business and administration of the company un-impeded by space constraints. If the nature of the business carried on by the company is such that it is likely that large drawings/plans need to be examined the space available needs to be adequate for this to take place. If drawings/plans are to be worked-on (generated, modified, or annotated), the space available needs to be adequate for this to take place, and appropriate drafting facilities need to be provided.

4. Physical Security of Premises

Reasonable and prudent physical security provisions should be adopted. For example, good quality door locks should be provided and used. Window locks should be provided and used. Consideration should be given to providing additional physical security on vulnerable windows and any other vulnerable areas, so as to eliminate the vulnerability.

5. Intruder Alarm

A police-calling intruder alarm is required. (*See also 9.4 (e) below*).

NOTE: Exceptionally, however, NSI may agree to accept a non police-calling intruder alarm (this exception to apply only if given in writing by NSI) if there is evidence that:-

- (a) The premises are manned by at least one person on shift/duty 24 hours a day and 365 days a year (366 in a leap year), OR
- (b) Private (i.e. non-Police) manned response is provided under contract by an NSI approved company holding NSI approval for the provision of this type of response service, OR
- (c) The applicant-company is itself NSI approved for the provision of this type of manned response service, and there is evidence that the company's personnel are directed to provide this service to the premises, OR

- (d) The applicant-company has demonstrated to NSI's satisfaction that the applicant-company's personnel are trained, equipped, available and able to provide manned response service to the company's own premises, and there is evidence that the company's personnel are directed to provide this service to the premises, and are provided with clear assignment instructions. When assessing a company under this provision, NSI will have regard to relevant clauses of BS 7984 insofar as they reasonably apply to a company's own personnel providing manned response to the company's own premises; an NSI guidance note is available for companies considering this option.

In cases (b), (c) and (d) above, NSI will need to be satisfied that the private manned response is likely to be no less prompt than police-response.

6. Reception of Visitors

There must be suitable and adequate accommodation for meeting customers (and other visitors attending for business purposes) and for NSI audits to take place. A suitable office would suffice for this purpose. A shop or showroom is not necessary, nor is a public reception area.

7. Security of Tenure

At the time of making the application, an applicant-company is expected to demonstrate that it has reasonable security of tenure (for example freehold, or leasehold with a number of years to run, or with every reasonable expectation of renewal) or that in the case of short tenancies or licences to occupy, the company has a record of occupation with no reason to anticipate termination.

8. General Presentation

Premises (and their grounds/environs) should be clean, tidy, of good appearance, and kept-up to a reasonable standard.

9. Examples of Types of Accommodation

9.1 Self-Contained Commercial Premises

The ideal premises for an installer would be secure, self-contained commercial premises with their own individual access.

9.2 Commercial Accommodation within a Multi-Occupancy Building

There is no objection to a multi-occupied building, so long as the installation premises are separate from other occupants, and are individually alarmed and where staff from other organisations do not have free access to the area occupied by the installation business.

9.3 Commercial Accommodation within a "Serviced Office Complex"

Another possible type of business arrangement is the "serviced office complex" in which there are a number of small self-contained offices within one building. These offices are generally leased with the services of a common secretary/receptionist who answers the telephone on behalf of each business. Word processing and postal/fax facilities may also be available as part of the package. It is important to recognise that in the context of a security company, there are potential issues and problems with this type of

accommodation. Where a NACOSS GOLD company or NACOSS GOLD applicant operates from such premises, the company should expect that NSI will want to discuss the practical arrangements in some detail and will need to be fully satisfied that the arrangements pose no risk of a security breach. In addition, the following safeguards need to be in place:

- (a) The confidential nature of any correspondence regarding security systems creates potential security risk. Thus, a receptionist not directly employed by the company must not deal with its written confidential communications, such as system specifications and contracts. Alternative arrangements will therefore be required.
- (b) It must be made quite clear to the receptionist of the "serviced office complex" that calls for emergency service from customers have to be passed immediately to the installer, and alternative arrangements, if all the company's staff are out of the office, must be clearly understood. This is to preserve the installer's ability to achieve the response to emergencies within the requirements of the NACOSS GOLD Codes of Practice (particularly for intruder alarm installers who have to meet a four hour maximum response time).
- (c) The office accommodation where the company's security screened personnel work (and the place where records are kept) needs to be separate from other occupants, and to be independently alarmed and where staff from other organisations do not have free access.

Please note that it is unlikely that NSI would approve the use of "serviced office complex" premises if another of the enterprises contained within the complex and sharing the same receptionist facility was a non-NSI security system installation business. Such an arrangement would be vulnerable to charges, rightly or wrongly, of providing a joint NACOSS GOLD/non NACOSS GOLD security system installation facility.

9.4 Segregated Area within Residential Premises (for very small companies only)

As indicated in the "guideline" printed beneath criterion 2.1 in the published NACOSS GOLD criteria for approval, it is not absolutely necessary to operate from commercial premises. In the case of *very small* businesses, NSI is prepared (at NSI's discretion) to consider applications from companies operating from a suitably adapted and segregated area within residential premises, or from other non-commercial premises, even though they are not regarded as ideal.

The company will need to review the suitability and adequacy of the premises from time to time as the business grows, or if the business takes on large contracts or block-contracts. At the NACOSS GOLD level of approval, operating from residential premises is appropriate only for very small companies.

Where an applicant-company operates from a segregated area within the proprietor's (or director's) home, or from a separate building within the grounds of the home, the following safeguards need to be complied with:

- (a) The office accommodation must be entirely separate from the ordinary domestic arrangements.

- (b) The office accommodation should have its own separate access. However, access through a porch, lobby, corridor, hallway or foyer of the proprietor's (or director's) home is acceptable if residents use the porch, lobby, corridor, hallway or foyer only to enter and leave the home. Access through a porch, lobby, corridor, hallway or foyer that is used by residents moving around *within* the home is not acceptable. Access through a living room, dining room, kitchen or bedroom is not acceptable. Access via an internal stairway that is also used by residents moving around *within* the home is not acceptable.
- (c) There must be a suitable wc facility and adjacent hand wash facility. Preferably, these facilities should be separate from the *main* bathroom and wc of the home, and preferably they should be accessible from the office accommodation without passing through a living room, or through a kitchen, and without using a stairway that leads up to a bedroom/sleeping area of the home. These facilities must be accessible without passing through a bedroom.
- (d) Current business records should be kept within the office accommodation. Archived records may be stored in another part of the home but should be no less secure than if they were stored within the office accommodation.
- (e) The office accommodation must be alarmed (*see also 5 above*) separately from parts of the home used for domestic purposes (*see NOTE below*), and must be provided with adequate means of ensuring its physical security (*see also 4 above*). The alarm system for the office accommodation should extend to the place where archived records are stored (unless that area is constructed with enhanced physical security such that intrusion is unlikely). Parts of the home used for domestic purposes should also be alarmed.

NOTE: The business accommodation can be treated as an area (or areas) of an alarm system supervising the business and domestic parts of the premises, provided the part (or parts) of the alarm system supervising the business accommodation can be "set" independently of the remainder of the alarm system and further provided that alarm signals originating from the business accommodation are separately identifiable at the alarm receiving centre. In such a case, control equipment and signalling equipment should be located with the businesses accommodation or within an area that is permanently supervised by the alarm system.

- (f) Where the office accommodation is within the proprietor's (or director's) home or is in a separate building (an outbuilding) within the grounds of the proprietor's (or director's) home, the office accommodation should be of permanent construction, and of masonry construction equivalent to the standard of construction for habitable buildings. However, single-brick construction may be acceptable where a former garage has been converted to an office, provided that the access door is suitable and the office is appropriately appointed internally. Portable, transportable or pre-fabricated homes are not acceptable. Portable, transportable or pre-fabricated outbuildings within the grounds of a home are not acceptable as office accommodation. Converted garden sheds, summerhouses, conservatories and the like are not acceptable as office accommodation.

- (g) There should be a tidy and adequate engineering stores facility, which (at the discretion of NSI) may be shared with household items, for example within a garage or utility room. Physical security should be appropriate to the value and nature of the items stored. The store area should be constructed and maintained in such a way that items are not likely to become adversely affected by environmental conditions such as dampness.

10. Duty to Notify Changes

Companies need to be aware that as a condition of continuing any application (and subsequently as a condition of continued approval) they are required to notify NSI within 14 days of any changes of location or any other substantial changes to their premises or the way in which the premises are used.

11. Note Regarding Planning Consent and Business Rating

Matters relating to planning consent and business rates are not central, but ought to be taken into account. It is not the role of NSI to act in any enforcement capacity. Nonetheless, as a recognised approval body NSI would not knowingly grant approval where it was plain that the applicant was operating from premises without an appropriate planning status, or which were not appropriately registered for council tax and rating purposes (e.g. Uniform Business Rate). Quite apart from the ethical aspect, NSI would not wish to grant approval to a company whose continued operation was dependent upon working from premises without proper planning permission or which was not paying its proper business rate. NSI would wish to avoid a situation where enforcement action by the rating or planning authorities might mean that an approved company might suddenly be unable to continue in business.

12. Note Regarding Health and Safety

Attention is drawn to the Health and Safety at Work Act and similar legislation. It is important to appreciate that where a business is run from a home, parts of the home may be deemed to be a workplace to which the provisions of the Act apply.