

Contents

Foreword	xiii
About this Guide	xv
Core Principles and the Roadmap	xxi
1 Introduction	1
1.1 What is an alarm system?	1
1.2 Key design principles.....	2
1.3 Alarm system management philosophy/Company Standard.....	5
1.3.1 Corporate considerations	5
1.3.2 Site considerations	5
1.4 Financial considerations	7
2 Principles of alarm system design	9
2.1 The design process	9
2.2 Where do requirements for alarms come from?	11
2.2.1 Alarms.....	12
2.2.2 Alerts	13
2.2.3 The difference between an alarm, an alert and a prompt.....	14
2.2.4 Alerts as an alternative to control by alarms.....	14
2.2.5 Comparison of alarms, alerts and prompts	15
2.3 Risk assessment	17
2.3.1 The need to identify and minimise risks	17
2.3.2 Risk reduction.....	17
2.3.3 Safety related alarms - principles.....	18
2.3.4 Design and engineering of safety related alarms	19
2.3.5 Proof testing.....	23
2.3.6 Summary	24
2.4 Generation of alarms.....	24
2.4.1 Types of alarms	24
2.4.2 The selection of alarm settings	27
2.5 Structuring of alarms.....	29
2.5.1 Prioritisation	29
2.5.2 Logical processing of alarms.....	32
2.6 User centred design	32
2.6.1 The role of the operator/production staff.....	32
2.6.2 The type of process	34
2.7 Designing for operability	39
2.7.1 Improve the management of alarm overloads.....	40
3 Implementing a system of alarm management	43
3.1 Alarm systems management organisation.....	43
3.1.1 Steering committee	44
3.1.2 Engineering specification	44
3.1.3 Alarm management philosophy document.....	44
3.1.4 The alarm co-ordinator.....	45
3.1.5 Alarm assessments (rationalisation)	45
3.1.6 Alarm database.....	45
3.1.7 Alarm analysis tools.....	49
3.1.8 Measuring alarm metrics	49
3.1.9 Summary alarm metrics	50
3.1.10 Detailed alarm metrics	50

3.1.11 Operations reporting and feedback action.....	50
3.2 Fostering a culture of improvement	50
3.3 The improvement (rationalisation) process for a specific alarm system	51
3.3.1 System capability	51
3.3.2 Problem identification.....	51
3.3.3 Review team/philosophy document	54
3.3.4 Supporting documentation.....	54
3.3.5 Plant area categorisation	55
3.3.6 Unit/plant/site review.....	55
3.3.7 Integration	57
3.3.8 Monitor/improvement	57
3.3.9 System tuning	58
3.4 Assessment of existing alarm system status	58
3.4.1 How useful is the alarm system	59
3.4.2 Gaining the opinions of the users.....	60
3.4.3 Understanding the alarm system performance	60
3.4.4 Determine how well alarms are managed.....	60
3.5 Detailed assessment	60
3.6 Initial assessment of individual alarms	61
3.6.1 Assessment of individual alarms on an existing system	61
3.6.2 Assessment of individual alarms for a new system	62
3.6.3 'What if' questioning	63
3.7 Alarm management philosophy document	63
3.7.1 Allocation of roles and responsibilities for design of the alarm system	64
3.7.2 Identification of the alarm system users and their needs	64
3.7.3 Definition of what an alarm should be.....	64
3.7.4 Definition of the safety role of the alarm system	65
3.7.5 Define how any alarms are to be registered.....	65
3.7.6 Definitions of alarm system performance targets.....	65
3.7.7 Rules for prioritisation of alarms	65
3.7.8 Alarm system configuration.....	66
3.7.9 Checklist for designers on the information to be recorded.....	66
3.7.10 Dictionary of terms and abbreviations to be used in alarm messages	66
3.7.11 Guidance to sub-contractors on the design of alarms	66
3.7.12 Guidance on content and structure of alarm response definitions	67
3.7.13 Guidance on interpreting patterns of alarms	67
3.7.14 Guidance on establishing alarm equipment test frequencies	68
3.8 Training.....	68
4 HCI management techniques	71
4.1 Display options.....	71
4.1.1 Alarm annunciator panels	73
4.1.2 Alarm list displays	74
4.1.3 Graphically embedded alarm objects	75
4.2 Overviews.....	75
4.3 Audio/visual assistance to the graphical interface	76
4.4 Alerts.....	78
5 Alarm configuration	81
5.1 Field derivation of alarms	81
5.2 Alarm processing hardware	81
5.2.1 The commercial environment	81
5.2.2 Reliability issues.....	82
5.2.3 Functionality.....	83

5.2.4 Environmental requirements	83
5.3 Alarm response definition.....	84
5.4 Testing of alarms	85
5.4.1 Management of testing.....	85
5.4.2 Example test methodology.....	87
5.5 Suppression	87
5.5.1 Bulk suppression	87
5.5.2 Logical suppression.....	88
5.5.3 General suppression rules.....	88
5.5.4 Implementation of suppression.....	89
5.5.5 Authorisation and control.....	91
6 Performance monitoring/improvement.....	93
6.1 Introduction	93
6.2 Performance metrics	93
6.3 Benchmark values.....	95
6.3.1 Main benchmark values	96
6.3.2 Steady state usability benchmarks	96
6.3.3 Abnormal (upset) state usability benchmarks	97
6.3.4 General usability benchmarks.....	98
6.3.5 Summary of metrics and benchmark values	98
6.4 Key performance indicators (KPIs)	99
6.4.1 Primary KPIs.....	100
6.4.2 Secondary KPIs.....	101
6.5 Performance levels and alarm system states	102
6.5.1 Performance levels	102
6.5.2 Alarm system states	103
6.6 Validation of metrics.....	112
7 Buying a new alarm system.....	113
7.1 Investment appraisal.....	113
7.2 Hardware.....	113
7.3 Specifying alarm functionality	114
7.4 Specifying engineering.....	115
7.4.1 Specification of design procedures	115
7.4.2 Specification of required performance.....	115
7.5 Contractual implications.....	116
7.5.1 Allocation of activities	116
7.5.2 Scheduling of activities.....	116
7.5.3 Contractual tests of acceptability	116
7.6 Ensuring usability	117
Appendix 1 The costs of poor alarm performance	119
A1.1 Three Mile Island	119
A1.2 Milford Haven Refinery.....	119
A1.3 Channel Tunnel Fire.....	119
A1.4 Tosco Avon Accident.....	119
A1.5 Longford Gas Explosion.....	120
A1.6 Grangemouth Refinery Scotland	120
A1.7 First Chemical Corporation	120
A1.8 Texas City.....	121
A1.9 Buncefield Oil Storage Depot	121
A1.10 IChemE accident database.....	121
A1.11 Nuclear power incident database	121

A1.12 HSE accident analysis	121
A1.13 HSE alarm survey.....	122
A1.14 Abnormal Situation Management Consortium	122
A1.15 Refinery study	123
Appendix 2 Pertinent requirements.....	125
Appendix 3 Prioritisation methods	127
A3.1 Potential severity of consequence	127
A3.2 Time to consequence.....	128
A3.3 Priority distribution of alarms.....	129
A3.4 Prioritisation of safety related alarms	130
A3.5 Example methods for setting of priority	131
A3.5.1 Method 1 - Priority matrix evaluation.....	131
A3.5.2 Method 2 - Summating consequence	135
A3.5.3 Method 3 - Taking maximum consequence	137
A3.5.3 Method 4 - General alarm assessment.....	139
Appendix 4 Logical processing of alarms.....	145
A4.1 General comments	145
A4.2 Grouping	145
A4.3 Suppression	146
A4.3.1 Redundancy logic	146
A4.3.2 Eclipsing.....	146
A4.3.3 Out of service plant	146
A4.3.4 Operating mode	147
A4.3.5 Major event	147
A4.4 Automatic alarm load shedding	148
A4.5 Alarms from equipment under test	149
Appendix 5 Repeating and fleeting alarms	151
A5.1 Why repeating alarms occur	151
A5.2 Engineering of signals.....	152
A5.3 Filtering	152
A5.4 Transient suppression	153
A5.5 Deadband	153
A5.6 De-bounce timer.....	154
A5.7 Counter	155
A5.8 Shelving	156
A5.9 Release ('One-shot' shelving)	157
A5.10 Auto-shelving	157
A5.11 Single line annunciation	158
A5.12 Logging of repeating alarms.....	159
A5.13 Summary	159
Appendix 6 Alarm management in batch plants	161
A6.1 Batch plant operation	161
A6.1.1 Alarm thresholds	162
A6.1.2 Replacement of batch with semi-batch or continuous processes.....	162
A6.2 Operator information	163
A6.3 Alarm rates	163
A6.4 Application of alarm priorities in batch processes	165
A6.5 Design of the alarms	165
A6.6 Generation of alarms	166
A6.7 Management of alarm limits thresholds	166

A6.8 Sources of nuisance alarms	167
A6.9 Sources of alarm floods.....	167
A6.10 Getting information to remote operations	167
Appendix 7 Alarm management in geographically distributed plant.....	169
A7.1 Distributed process operation	169
A7.2 Operator workload	170
A7.3 Alarm system performance and KPIs.....	171
A7.4 Application of alarm priorities in distributed processes.....	171
A7.5 Generation of alarms	172
A7.6 Telemetry issues.....	174
A7.7 Getting information to remote resources	175
Appendix 8 Usefulness questionnaire.....	177
A8.1 How many alarms are useful?	178
Appendix 9 Operator questionnaire.....	181
Appendix 10 Supporting checklists	187
A10.1 Storage and management	187
A10.2 Threshold setting	187
A10.3 Checklist for a good alarm	187
A10.4 Alarm configuration information	188
A10.5 Alarm priority information.....	188
A10.6 HAZOP checklist.....	189
Appendix 11 Design of alarm list displays	191
A11.1 Alarm states	191
A11.2 Content of alarm entry	192
A11.3 Positioning of new alarms	194
A11.4 Alarm acceptance.....	195
A11.5 Movement through the list.....	195
A11.6 Dealing with nuisance alarms	196
A11.7 Display filtering.....	196
Appendix 12 Design of field alarm sensors.....	199
A12.1 Choice of alarm sensor.....	199
A12.2 Measurement of actuator position	200
A12.3 Location of sensors.....	200
A12.4 Sensor range	201
A12.5 Validation of measurements.....	202
A12.6 Signal transmission	203
A12.7 Dependent failures	203
Appendix 13 Example alarm suppression hazard study.....	205
A13.1 Introduction	205
A13.2 Example	205
A13.2.1 Familiarisation.....	206
A13.2.2 Review of operating modes	206
A13.2.3 Review of alarms to be suppressed.....	206
A13.2.4 Reporting	207
A13.2.5 Follow-up	208
Appendix 14 Performance metrics and KPI visualisation	209
A14.1 Operator questionnaires	209

A14.2 Usefulness of alarms.....	209
A14.3 Incident recording	211
A14.4 Number of alarms	211
A14.5 Average alarm rate.....	211
A14.6 Identification of frequent alarms.....	213
A14.7 Number of alarms following a major plant upset	213
A14.8 Number of standing alarms.....	215
A14.9 Priority distribution	216
A14.10 Operator response time.....	217
A14.11 Correlation	217
A14.12 Data analysis tools.....	217
A14.12.1 Specification of alarm logging and analysis tools.....	219
A14.13 KPI improvement visualisation examples.....	220
Appendix 15 Specification checklist - small system.....	223
A15.1 Where dedicated alarm systems are used	223
A15.2 Input handling	223
A15.3 Alarm processing.....	223
A15.4 Alarm display/output	224
A15.5 Environmental	224
Appendix 16 Specification checklist - large system	225
A16.1 Grading of requirements.....	225
Appendix 17 Intelligent fault detection.....	231
A17.1 Pattern recognition	231
A17.2 Neural networks.....	232
A17.3 Fuzzy logic	233
A17.4 Knowledge-based reasoning.....	233
A17.5 Model-based reasoning	234
A17.6 Overview of intelligent fault detection methods.....	235
Appendix 18 Glossary.....	237
Appendix 19 References.....	241
Appendix 20 Bibliography	245

Figures

Figure 1 EEMUA 191 Roadmap selection	xxi
Figure 2 EEMUA 191 Roadmap - Existing system	xxii
Figure 3 EEMUA 191 Roadmap - Conceptual system.....	xxiii
Figure 4 ISA 18.2 Lifecycle model.....	xxiv
Figure 5 HCI, the sensory interface between operator and plant.....	2
Figure 6 Alarm system management overview.....	6
Figure 7 LOPA (Layer of Protection Analysis) diagram	18
Figure 8 Safety related alarm reliability requirements.....	21
Figure 9 Operator response stages	21
Figure 10 Proof testing of safety related alarms	23
Figure 11 An effective and ineffective alarm system	27
Figure 12 The setting of a high alarm.....	28
Figure 13 Operator response to an abnormal situation	33
Figure 14 The operator's role in the different plant states.....	36
Figure 15 Batch process conceptual model.....	37

Figure 16 Typical control architecture model	39
Figure 17 Typical form for loop information	47
Figure 18 Simple data input form	48
Figure 19 Typical alarm recorded information	48
Figure 20 System improvement process	53
Figure 21 Example of Alarm HCI.....	76
Figure 22 Alarm test methodology	86
Figure 23 Alarm suppression implementation	89
Figure 24 Steady state performance levels.....	103
Figure 25 Abnormal condition performance levels	103
Figure 26 Alarm system performance	104
Figure 27 Summary of alarm states	105
Figure 28 Typical plot of Key Performance Indicator	123
Figure 29 Productivity histogram	124
Figure 30 The frequency of loss incidents	124
Figure 31 Layer of protection	132
Figure 32 Alarm priority matrix	133
Figure 33 Possible priority bands to achieve required priority distribution	135
Figure 34 Prioritisation using maximum of individual priorities	137
Figure 35 General alarm assessment.....	140
Figure 36 Safety assessment prioritisation	141
Figure 37 Environmental assessment prioritisation	142
Figure 38 Financial (Asset) Loss Assessment Prioritisation.....	143
Figure 39 Repeating alarms generated by noise on a process signal	151
Figure 40 Transfer function of deadband.....	153
Figure 41 The elimination of repeating alarms using deadband	154
Figure 42 Alarm response - batch plant	164
Figure 43 S88 Model.....	165
Figure 44 Example of a separate set of alarm thresholds.....	166
Figure 45 Geographically distributed processes.....	173
Figure 46 Alarm state transition diagram for static alarm list display.....	192
Figure 47 Individual alarm quality quadrant	210
Figure 48 Example of alarm frequency analysis	213
Figure 49 Example plot of alarms per minute	214
Figure 50 Initial KPI improvements	221
Figure 51 Initiation of improvements in flood rate	221
Figure 52 Final improvements of all KPIs	221
Figure 53 KPI improvements shown as a radar plot.....	222
Figure 54 Plant system with redundant equipment	231
Figure 55 A simple neural network.....	233
Figure 56 A graphical rule definition.....	234

Tables

Table 1 Characteristics of a good alarm	4
Table 2 Activities to be considered in the design of an alarm system.....	10
Table 3 Content of a typical alarm management philosophy document.....	11
Table 4 Comparison of alarms, alerts/prompts and journal only signals.....	16
Table 5 Human reliability requirements	20
Table 6 Elements of an improvement strategy.....	51
Table 7 The objectives of an alarm system review.....	52
Table 8 Characteristics of alarm reviews for normal operation and plant upset ..	56
Table 9 Effective techniques for improving alarm systems.....	59
Table 10 Advantages and disadvantages of display options	72
Table 11 Alarm suppression.....	88
Table 12 Example of bulk alarm suppression	90
Table 13 Summary of possible alarm metrics per operator station	94
Table 14 Long term average alarm rate.....	96
Table 15 Major plant upset alarm	97
Table 16 Priority distribution.....	98
Table 17 Standing alarms.....	98
Table 18 Benchmark values for operator usability metric	98
Table 19 Summary of metrics and benchmark values	99
Table 20 Alarm system performance metrics	104
Table 21 Overloaded alarm state.....	108
Table 22 Reactive alarm state.....	109
Table 23 Stable alarm state	110
Table 24 Robust alarm state	111
Table 25 Alarm system hardware comparisons	114
Table 26 Elements in a user-centred operator interface design	117
Table 27 Priority distribution during system configuration	129
Table 28 Target maximum occurrence rates of alarms of different priorities....	129
Table 29 A proposed Hazard Index grouping	133
Table 30 Priority break points for alarms	137
Table 31 Rules for allocation of safety, environmental and financial priority	138
Table 32 Table of filter time constants.....	153
Table 33 Table of default deadband settings.....	154
Table 34 Table of default de-bounce timer parameters	155
Table 35 Example of weighting of results of usefulness questionnaires	177
Table 36 Proportion of useful alarms.....	179
Table 37 Attributes of a good alarm message.....	193
Table 38 How system size affects design and management	212
Table 39 Benchmarks for assessing average alarm rates.....	213
Table 40 Guidance on alarm rate following an upset.....	215
Table 41 Alarm pattern array	232