

Contents

Contents	v
List of Tables.....	xiv
List of Figures	xv
Foreword	xvi
About this Guide	1
Aim	1
Scope.....	2
Why this Guide is Important	2
Revised Second Edition 2007	3
Revised Third Edition, 2013.....	3
Revised Fourth Edition, 2024.....	3
Relationship between EEMUA 191 and EEMUA 201	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
Quick overview	4
1 Introduction.....	8
1.1 What is an alarm?	8
1.2 What is an alarm system?	8
1.3 Why is alarm design important?.....	9
1.4 Key design principles.....	10
1.5 Practical and organizational issues	12
1.5.1 General approach – PDCA.....	12
1.5.2 Resources required	13
1.5.3 Alarm philosophy	13
1.5.4 Project lifecycle	13
1.5.5 Alarm system lifecycle (IEC 62682).....	14
1.5.6 Alarm database	16
1.5.7 Operator response to alarms.....	16
1.5.8 Fostering a culture of improvement.....	17
1.6 Using this guide.....	17
1.7 Supporting documents.....	18

2	Principles of alarm system design.....	19
2.1	Design goals and objectives.....	19
2.1.1	Human / user centred design.....	19
2.1.2	The role of the operator.....	20
2.1.3	The type of process.....	21
2.1.4	Designing for operability.....	23
2.2	Alarm system design.....	24
2.2.1	Hierarchy of risk control.....	24
2.2.2	Alarm system hardware and software.....	24
2.2.3	Designing individual alarms.....	26
2.2.4	When is it appropriate to provide an alarm?.....	26
2.3	Similar, non-alarm functions.....	27
2.3.1	Alerts.....	27
2.3.2	Events.....	28
2.3.3	Prompts.....	28
2.3.4	Non-alarms.....	29
2.4	Alarm classification.....	29
2.5	Highly Managed Alarm (HMA).....	30
2.5.1	Types of HMA.....	30
2.5.2	Protective layer alarms.....	31
2.5.3	HMA management.....	32
2.6	Summary of alarms, alerts, events and prompts.....	33
2.7	Risk management.....	33
2.7.1	The need to identify and control risks.....	33
2.7.2	Risk reduction using alarms.....	34
2.7.3	Taking credit for alarms.....	35
2.7.4	Operator response times.....	36
2.7.5	Alarm systems contribute to controlling risks.....	37
3	Practical considerations for alarm design	38
3.1	Generation of alarms.....	38
3.1.1	Types of alarm.....	38
3.1.2	First-up alarms.....	39
3.1.3	The selection of alarm settings.....	40
3.1.4	Alarm settings by recipe.....	42
3.2	Field derivation of alarms.....	43
3.2.1	Challenges with switch type sensors.....	44
3.2.2	Measurement of actuator position.....	45
3.2.3	Location of sensors.....	45
3.2.4	Analogue sensor range.....	45
3.2.5	Reliability.....	46

- 3.3 Alarm processing hardware.....46
 - 3.3.1 BPCS processing of alarms.....46
 - 3.3.2 High integrity alarm systems.....47
 - 3.3.3 Combined BPCS and safety systems.....47
 - 3.3.4 Dedicated alarm systems.....47
 - 3.3.5 Reliability issues.....48
 - 3.3.6 Functionality.....49
 - 3.3.7 Environmental requirements.....49
 - 3.3.8 Validation of measurements.....50
 - 3.3.9 Signal transmission.....50
- 3.4 Alarm design for unoccupied and remote control rooms.....51
 - 3.4.1 Getting information to remote operations.....51
 - 3.4.2 Alarm management in geographically distributed plant.....52
 - 3.4.3 The role of field personnel in handling alarms.....53
 - 3.4.4 Telemetry issues.....54
 - 3.4.5 Getting information to remote resources.....55
- 3.5 Alarm identification.....56
 - 3.5.1 Alarm Tag numbers.....56
 - 3.5.2 Alarm messages.....56
- 4 Implementing an alarm management system..... 57**
 - 4.1 Corporate and local arrangements.....57
 - 4.1.1 Corporate considerations.....57
 - 4.1.2 Local requirements and considerations.....58
 - 4.1.3 Corporate and local documents required.....58
 - 4.2 Alarm systems management organization.....59
 - 4.2.1 Leadership.....59
 - 4.2.2 Coordination.....59
 - 4.2.3 Alarm steering committee.....60
 - 4.3 Competence.....60
 - 4.3.1 Operator competence.....60
 - 4.3.2 Supervisors.....61
 - 4.3.3 Control and instrument technicians.....61
 - 4.3.4 Plant managers.....61
 - 4.3.5 Alarm coordinators.....62
 - 4.3.6 Human factors engineers.....62
 - 4.3.7 Non-technical skills.....62
 - 4.4 Alarm philosophy document.....62
 - 4.4.1 Requirements for different stages of a plant lifecycle.....62
 - 4.4.2 Mandatory requirements.....63
 - 4.4.3 Additional content.....63
 - 4.5 Testing of alarms.....64

4.6	Operating with degraded systems	64
4.7	Determining how well alarms are managed.....	65
5	Alarm communication and HMI Design	66
5.1	Human factors	66
5.1.1	Human factors theory in relation to alarms.....	66
5.1.2	Human factors in practice.....	67
5.2	Display options.....	68
5.2.1	Alarm annunciator panels.....	69
5.2.2	Alarm list displays	70
5.2.3	Graphically embedded alarm objects.....	71
5.3	Making sure alarms are noticed.....	72
5.3.1	Audible indications.....	72
5.3.2	Visual indications	73
5.3.3	Alarm priority markers.....	73
5.4	Alerts, events and prompts.....	73
5.5	Design of alarm lists.....	74
5.5.1	Alarm states.....	74
5.5.2	Content of alarm entry	75
5.5.3	Positioning of new alarms on the list	76
5.5.4	Alarm acceptance.....	77
5.5.5	Movement through the list.....	77
5.5.6	Display filtering	77
5.5.7	On screen alarm response definitions	78
5.6	Displaying HMAs	78
5.7	Shelved and suppressed alarms.....	78
5.8	The full alarm list.....	79
6	Practical considerations for alarm system management	80
6.1	Maximising usefulness of alarms	80
6.1.1	Prioritisation.....	81
6.1.2	Special consideration for distributed plant.....	82
6.1.3	Minimising unnecessary and nuisance alarms	83
6.1.4	Avoiding alarm floods.....	84
6.1.5	Logical processing of alarms.....	84
6.1.6	Alarms generated by phase logic or procedure (batch process)	85
6.2	Grouping alarms.....	86
6.3	Alarm suppression.....	86
6.3.1	Bulk suppression	87
6.3.2	Logical suppression.....	87
6.3.3	Implementation of suppression.....	88
6.3.3.1	Specific example of bulk alarm suppression – condition equation.....	90
6.3.3.2	Specific examples of logical suppression.....	90
6.3.4	Authorisation and control	91

6.4	Avoiding repeating alarms	91
6.4.1	Why repeating alarms occur	91
6.4.2	Engineering of signals to minimise noise	92
6.4.3	Filtering	92
6.4.4	Transient suppression	93
6.4.5	Deadband	93
6.4.6	De-bounce timer	94
6.4.7	Counter	95
6.4.8	Single line annunciation	95
6.4.9	Logging of repeating alarms	96
6.4.10	Threshold setting	96
6.5	Alarm shelving	97
6.5.1	Circumstances when shelving is allowable	97
6.5.2	Release ('One-shot' shelving)	98
6.5.3	Alarms from equipment under test	98
6.6	Automatic alarm load shedding	99
6.7	Improving alarms and alarm systems	99
6.7.1	Improving individual alarms (bad actors)	100
6.7.2	Rationalisation to ensure the alarm system is properly configured	100
6.7.3	System replacement	102
6.7.4	General guidance for improving alarms	102
7	Performance monitoring and improvement	104
7.1	Introduction	104
7.2	Measuring what is important	105
7.3	Metrics applied during design	105
7.3.1	Metrics for HMAs	106
7.3.2	Priorities of alarms configured	106
7.3.3	Avoiding standing alarms	106
7.3.4	Performance data generation	107
7.4	Optimizing human Performance Influencing Factors (PIF)	107
7.4.1	Workload and time availability during steady state operation	107
7.4.2	Workload and time availability for non-routine and abnormal operations	107
7.4.3	Clarity of information provided by alarms	107
7.4.4	Benchmark for standing alarms	109
7.4.5	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)	109
7.4.6	Operations reporting and feedback	111
7.4.7	Alarm analysis tools	111
7.4.8	Summary of performance metrics	112
7.4.9	Alarm systems states (robust, stable, reactive, overloaded)	112
7.5	Alarm system audits	119

8 Management of change and projects	120
8.1 Management of change	120
8.1.1 Minor changes.....	121
8.1.2 Significant changes	121
8.1.3 Major projects.....	122
8.1.4 Implementing changes.....	122
8.1.5 Deleting alarms.....	122
8.2 Business case and justifying investment	123
8.2.1 Process improvements	123
8.2.2 Standardisation and consistency	125
8.2.3 Improved operator performance.....	125
8.2.4 Easier training.....	125
8.2.5 Improved security and resilience.....	125
8.2.6 The cost of alarm performance.....	125
Appendix 1 – The costs of poor alarm performance	126
A1.1 Accident summaries.....	126
A1.1.1 Milford Haven refinery.....	126
A1.1.2 Longford gas explosion.....	126
A1.1.3 BP Texas City refinery	126
A1.1.4 Buncefield Oil storage depot.....	127
A1.1.5 Enbridge Incorporated pipeline rupture	127
A1.1.6 Columbia gas pipeline rupture	127
A1.1.7 Pryor Trust well blowout.....	128
A1.1.8 BP-Husky.....	128
A1.2 Costs of poor alarm system performance	128
A1.2.1 HSE alarm survey	128
A1.2.2 Abnormal Situation Management (ASM) consortium	129
A1.2.3 Refinery study.....	129
Appendix 2 – Human Factors Integration Plan (HFIP) for alarms	130
A2.1 Purpose of a HFIP	130
A2.2 Project lifecycle.....	130
A2.3 Suggested content for an alarms HFIP.....	130
A2.4 HFIP introduction	131
A2.5 Concept/Select phase	131
A2.5.1 Users and requirements	131
A2.5.2 Constraints	131
A2.5.3 Learning from experience.....	132
A2.5.4 Responsibilities for alarm management	132
A2.5.5 Ensuring end user involvement.....	133
A2.5.6 Draft alarm philosophy	134
A2.5.7 Basis of design.....	131

- A2.6 Define phase 134
 - A2.6.1 Review output from Concept/Select phase 135
 - A2.6.2 Modes of operation 135
 - A2.6.3 Layers of protection 135
 - A2.6.4 Logical processing 135
 - A2.6.5 Staffing philosophy 135
 - A2.6.6 Human Machine Interface (HMI) design philosophy 136
 - A2.6.7 Remote and repeater systems 136
 - A2.6.8 Working environment considerations 136
 - A2.6.9 Training requirements and facilities 136
 - A2.6.10 User preference 136
 - A2.6.11 Conceptual design 137
 - A2.6.12 Responsibilities for human factors integration 137
 - A2.6.13 Basis of design 137
- A2.7 Develop/Execute phase 137
 - A2.7.1 Review output from Define phase 138
 - A2.7.2 Staffing levels and team working 138
 - A2.7.3 Creating the final alarm database 138
 - A2.7.4 HMI design 139
 - A2.7.5 Plans for commissioning and operation 139
 - A2.7.6 Project close-out 139
- A2.8 Operate phase 140
- Appendix 3 – Prioritisation methods 141**
 - A3.1 Potential severity of consequence 141
 - A3.2 Time to consequence 141
 - A3.3 Priority distribution of alarms 142
 - A3.4 Example methods for setting of priority 142
 - A3.4.1 Method 1 - Priority matrix evaluation 142
 - A3.4.2 Method 2 - Consequence based prioritisation 144
 - A3.4.3 Method 3 - Taking maximum consequence 144
- Appendix 4 – Example alarm philosophy 147**
 - A4.1 Purpose 147
 - A4.2 Definitions 147
 - A4.3 Roles and responsibilities 147
 - A4.4 Alarm design principles 148
 - A4.5 Prioritisation methods and metrics 148
 - A4.6 Alarm class definition 148
 - A4.7 Criteria for identifying Highly Managed Alarms (HMAs) 149
 - A4.8 Rationalization criteria to assess alarms 150
 - A4.9 Alarm documentation 150

A4.10 Alarm design guidance.....	150
A4.11 Human Machine Interface (HMI) design principles.....	150
A4.12 New or changed system implementation	151
A4.13 Alarm response procedure.....	151
A4.14 Training for operators, managers, designers etc.	152
A4.15 Alarm system maintenance and testing	152
A4.16 Alarm system performance monitoring	152
A4.17 Management of Change (MOC).....	153
A4.18 Alarm system audit.....	153
A4.19 Coverage of non-alarms	153
Appendix 5 – Alarm rationalization procedure	154
A5.1 Introduction.....	154
A5.2 Purpose of alarm rationalization.....	154
A5.3 Scope of the study.....	154
A5.4 Establish the team.....	155
A5.5 Collect alarm data	155
A5.6 Review the alarm philosophy vs requirements.....	155
A5.7 Conduct rationalization sessions.....	155
A5.8 Document rationalization findings:	156
A5.9 Identify recommended actions.....	156
A5.10 Suggested terms of reference for a rationalization study	157
Appendix 6 – Usefulness questionnaire	158
A6.1 Introduction.....	158
A6.2 How many alarms are useful?	159
Appendix 7 – Operator questionnaire	161
A7.1 Introduction.....	161
Appendix 8 – Alarm Review Checklists	169
A8.1 Alarm threshold setting.....	169
A8.2 Checklist for a good alarm	169
A8.3 Alarm configuration information	170
A8.4 HAZOP checklist.....	171
A8.5 Alarm sensor design	172
Appendix 9 – Example alarm suppression hazard study.....	173
A9.1 Introduction.....	173
A9.2 Example	173
A9.2.1 Familiarization.....	174
A9.2.2 Review of operating modes.....	174
A9.2.3 Review of alarms to be suppressed	174

A9.2.4 Reporting 175

A9.2.5 Follow-up..... 175

Appendix 10 – Specification checklist - small system 176

A10.1 Where dedicated alarm systems are used..... 176

A10.2 Input handling..... 176

A10.3 Alarm processing..... 176

A10.4 Alarm display/output 177

A10.5 Environmental 177

Appendix 11 – Specification checklist - large system 178

A11.1 Grading of requirements..... 178

A11.2 Input handling..... 178

A11.3 Processing of Alarms 179

A11.4 Display of Alarms 180

A11.5 Logging of Alarms..... 181

A11.6 Engineering of Alarm systems..... 182

Appendix 12 – Intelligent fault detection 183

A12.1 Pattern recognition 183

A12.2 Neural networks 184

A12.3 Fuzzy logic..... 185

A12.4 Knowledge-based reasoning..... 186

A12.5 Model-based reasoning..... 187

A12.6 Overview of intelligent fault detection methods..... 187

Appendix 13 – Glossary and abbreviations 189

Appendix 14 – References..... 195

Appendix 15 – Bibliography 198

EEMUA Publication: feedback Form 200

EEMUA Learning Courses 201

EEMUA Publications Catalogue 203

List of Tables

Table 1 Characteristics of a good alarm.....	12
Table 2 Alarm management lifecycle stages (IEC 62682 vs EEMUA 191).....	15
Table 3 How system size affects design and management.....	25
Table 4 Document suggestions.....	58
Table 5 HMI requirements for support of operators.....	67
Table 6 Alarm display options.....	68
Table 7 Alarm suppression.....	88
Table 8 Example of bulk alarm suppression.....	90
Table 9 Table of filter time constants.....	92
Table 10 Table of default deadband settings.....	94
Table 11 Table of default de-bounce timer parameters.....	95
Table 12 Checklist to assist with setting thresholds.....	96
Table 13 Checklist for evaluating an alarm.....	101
Table 14 Effective techniques for improving alarm systems.....	103
Table 15 Priority distribution.....	106
Table 16 Long term average alarm rate.....	107
Table 17 Major process upset alarm.....	108
Table 18 Target maximum occurrence rates of alarms of different priorities.....	108
Table 19 Standing alarms.....	109
Table 20 Summary of possible alarm metrics per operator station.....	112
Table 21 Alarm system performance metrics.....	113
Table 22 Overloaded alarm state.....	115
Table 23 Reactive alarm state.....	116
Table 24 Stable alarm state.....	117
Table 25 Robust alarm state.....	118
Table 26 Hazard Index grouping for use with an alarm priority matrix.....	143
Table 27 Time to Consequence (TTC) grouping for use with an alarm priority matrix.....	143
Table 28 Alarm priority guide when using an alarm priority matrix.....	143
Table 29 Priority break points for alarms.....	144
Table 30 Rules for allocation of safety, environmental and financial priority.....	146
Table 31 Example of weighting of results of usefulness questionnaires.....	158
Table 32 Proportion of useful alarms.....	160
Table 33 Alarm pattern array.....	184

List of Figures

Figure 1 Relationship between Basic Process Control System (BPCS), Safety Instrumented System (SIS) and alarm displays.....9

Figure 2 PDCA applied to alarm management..... 13

Figure 3 Alarm management activities at project stages..... 14

Figure 4 Lifecycle model (taken from IEC 62682)..... 14

Figure 5 Operator response to an abnormal situation21

Figure 6 Illustration of how alarm settings can vary for batch and continuous processes.....22

Figure 7 Identifying Alerts, Alarms and Prompts.....29

Figure 8 Components of an HMA.....31

Figure 9 Flowchart guide to decide selection of alarms, alerts, prompts and HMAs.....33

Figure 10 Layer of Protection model of risk management..... 34

Figure 11 Engineered and human controls for managing risks depending on operational status.....36

Figure 12 An effective and ineffective alarm system.....40

Figure 13 The setting of a high alarm with an absolute setpoint.....41

Figure 14 Example of a separate set of alarm thresholds.....43

Figure 15 Geographically distributed processes54

Figure 16 Example of a virtual annunciator panel.....70

Figure 17 Alarm state transition diagram for static alarm list display.....75

Figure 18 Example of a flowchart for allocating two levels of prioritisation82

Figure 19 Typical approach to assigning alarms for batch processes
(based on the IEC 61512/ ISA S88 Batch Standard model)85

Figure 20 Alarm suppression implementation.....89

Figure 21 Repeating alarms generated by noise on a process signal91

Figure 22 Transfer function of deadband.....93

Figure 23 The elimination of repeating alarms using deadband.....93

Figure 24 Alarm system performance 113

Figure 25 Typical plot of Key Performance Indicator 124

Figure 26 Productivity histogram..... 124

Figure 27 Alarm priority matrix..... 142

Figure 28 Prioritisation using maximum of individual priorities 145

Figure 29 Plant system with redundant equipment..... 183

Figure 30 A simple neural network..... 185

Figure 31 A graphical rule definition..... 186