

This information sheet provides details about Private Business Radio (PBR). A business radio system is used to pass messages between a base station and mobile sets and mobile to mobile as an aid to conducting business. The different Business Radio licences allow the licensee to operate different types of systems in accordance with licence conditions and Wireless Telegraphy legislation.

Private Business Radio (PBR) Wide-Area Distress Alarm Licence

OfW73 (previously part of Radiocommunications Agency information sheet RA 209)

1. Introduction

Formerly known as the Local Authority Emergency Radio Alarm licence, the PBR Wide-Area Distress Alarm licence was introduced on 19 July 2000. It permits the use of alarms in distress situations to assist with the protection of people and/or property.

Please note, however, that PBR assignments on shared channels **do not have any guarantee of certain communication** with regard to safety of life in an emergency.

Once activated, alarm stations transmit speech and/or data messages to a control station, which may acknowledge and respond to any messages it receives. The licence only permits alarm calls and acknowledgements of them – it is not for routine messages. As well as acknowledging alarm calls, a control station may be used for polling – see Section 4.

2. Who issues licences?

Under the terms of the Wireless Telegraphy (WT) Act 2006, you may not operate a PBR wide-area distress alarm system without a licence. Until December 2003, licences were issued by the Radiocommunications Agency (RA) on behalf of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, but this function has now been transferred to Ofcom (the Office of Communications) under the Communications Act 2003. However, this does not affect the validity of licences issued by RA on the Secretary of State's behalf before 29 December 2003.

To apply for a licence, you must use application form Of21.

3. Licence conditions

Your business radio equipment must at all times be used in accordance with the terms of the licence and the associated schedule. Failure to comply with the licence terms constitutes an offence under Section 1 of the WT Act.

We will assign you simplex channels from VHF Mid and High Band. Typically, your system will be allowed a coverage area of up to 25km, with maximum allocated ERP levels of 5 watts for base stations and 2 watts for alarm stations. We will not normally permit antennas to be sited more than 10m above ground level.

The base station antenna may be located at the control centre or at a site or sites away from the centre that are linked to the centre by land line. The equipment used at the outstation may be permanently fixed or portable.

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Your licence allows you to use speech or data or both. Data alarm calls should be kept to a minimum and must **never** exceed 20 seconds. The number of repeats before the alarm resets must be limited to two (i.e. there must be no more than three transmissions in total before the equipment resets). All speech-only systems must use CTCSS or DCS, complying with MPT 1326 or ETS 300 086.

All new equipment must comply with UK Radio Interface Requirement IR 2001, and any equipment placed on the market before 8 April 2001 must comply with either MPT 1357 or ETS 300 219.

You will be required to make available, upon request, a list of the locations of alarm stations for inspection by Ofcom.

Your alarm system may connect to public switched networks and private circuits leased from public telecommunications operators.

It is your responsibility as licensee to ensure that the appropriate licence fees are paid.

4. Polling

Polling is a technical feature of the equipment, which enables the base station to 'check' each outstation and establish whether an alarm is being raised or whether the equipment is working properly.

To do this, the base station transmitter sends a radio signal for reception at the outstation. The outstation responds by returning a signal which indicates that the equipment is working. If no signal is received at the base station, the central monitor raises an alarm.

Please note that **continuous polling is not permitted**. Within the complete system, polling must be limited to a maximum of 1½ hours in any 24-hour period. The signalling format must conform to at least MPT 1317.

5. Further information on alarms

The application form for a PBR Wide-Area Distress Alarm licence is Of21.

You may also wish to refer to our information leaflets Of20 (*Private Business Radio Manual*), OfW72 (*Alarms on PBR*) and OfW69 (*Short-Range Devices*).

Ofcom's information leaflets, application forms, UK Radio Interface Requirements and other publications are available free of charge on our website (www.ofcom.org.uk).

For any further information please contact:

Ofcom Contact Centre

Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
London
SE1 9HA

Tel: 0845 456 3000

Fax: 0845 456 3333

Email: contact@ofcom.org.uk

Web: www.ofcom.org.uk