



The SF30 is a high speed, light weight laser rangefinder for mapping and obstacle detection by robotic vehicles such as UAVs.

The SF30 can take up to 36633 readings per second and can be incorporated into scanning systems to create 2D SLAM maps or 3D images.

The configurable features and multiple hardware interfaces make the SF30 easy to connect with different types of controllers.

The SF30 uses a time-of-flight system to make very fast and accurate distance measurements to natural or artificial surfaces.

Features:

- *Very fast update rate of 36633 readings per second on all models.*
- *Measuring range > 100 m (SF30/C only).*
- *Serial port, analog voltage, alarm and USB interfaces.*
- *USB port to change the alarm set-point, update rate and resolution.*
- *The host controller can change settings on the fly via the serial port.*
- *Compact and lightweight - 35 grams.*
- *Easy to configure using the built-in menu and LightWare Terminal software.*
- *Fully calibrated and ready to run.*
- *Accurate, reliable measurements in sunlight or dark conditions.*
- *Not affected by: speed; wind; changes in barometric pressure; noise; ambient light; terrain or air temperature.*

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Disclaimer

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1. Overview

The SF30 high speed laser rangefinder is designed to detect obstacles or create maps from moving ground-based or arial vehicles. It works by measuring the time it takes for a very short flash of laser light to travel to a surface and back again. The accuracy of the measurement is not affected by the colour or texture of the surface, nor the angle of incidence of the laser beam. The SF30 is virtually immune to background light, wind and noise, making it an ideal sensor to detect unexpected obstacles.

Operating from a regulated 5 V DC supply, the SF30 includes analog and digital interfaces that can be easily connected to a flight controller or a standard processing platform. Each interface on the SF30 can be configured using a simple software menu that is accessible through the built-in, micro-B USB port. The interfaces are as follows:

Serial port:	Provides distance readings and other communications to an embedded host controller
Synchronisation:	A logic level signal that provides a time marker for the serial port data
Analog port:	An analog voltage proportional to the distance reading
Alarm:	A logic level signal that warns when the distance measured is below a preset value
USB port:	Connects to a Terminal application on a PC to allow settings to be entered.

Readings can be taken as isolated “snapshots” at a moment determined by the update rate setting, or they can be combined using a Kalman filter into a smoothed time series. At the full speed of 36633 readings per second, a single flash of laser light is used to take a measurement. The synchronisation signal marks the instant of the laser flash ensuring that the time of the measurement is known precisely.

There are two members of the SF30 family: the SF30/B has a maximum measuring range of 50 meters; and the SF30/C has a maximum measuring range of 100 meters. Both SF30 models have settings to smooth the distance measurements if higher resolution is required or use the raw results if higher speed is needed.

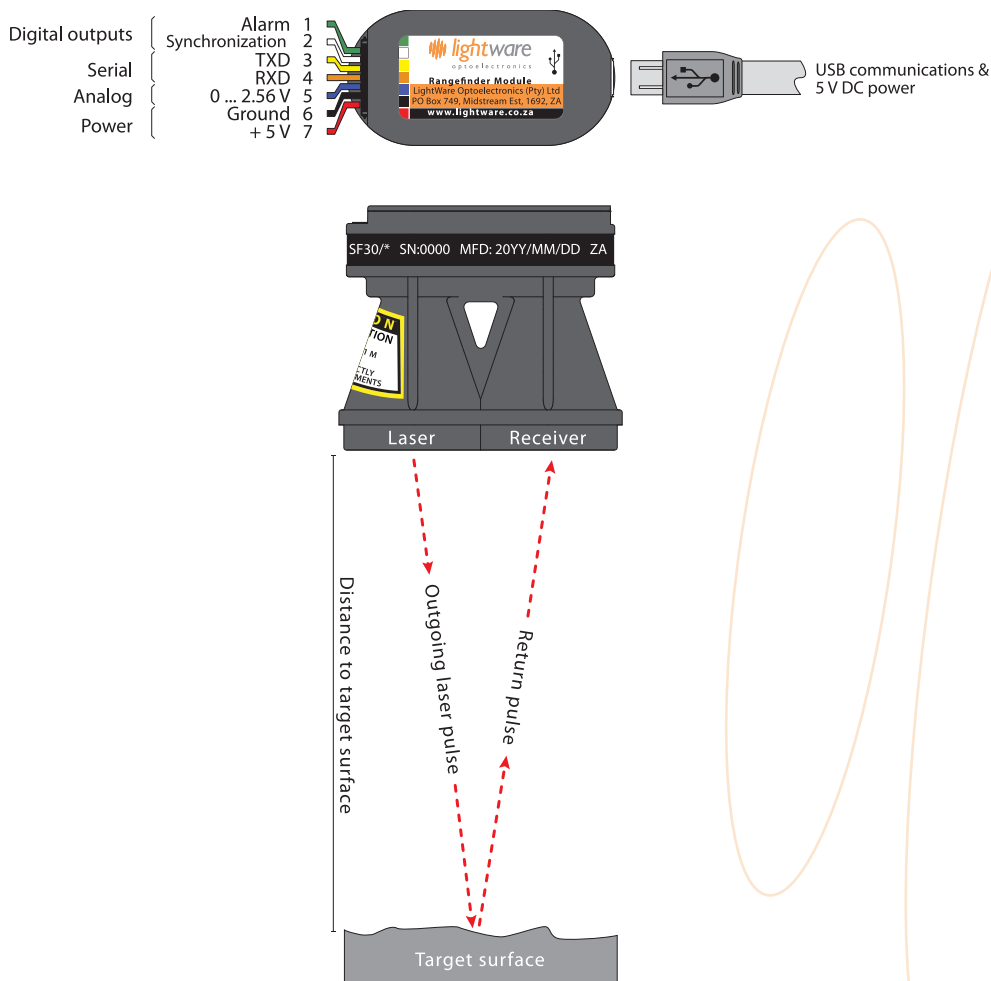


Figure 1 :: The main features of the SF30

2. Quick start guide

1. CAUTION - The SF30 laser rangefinder contains a laser and should never be aimed at a person or an animal. Do not look at the beam directly with optical instruments.
2. Download *LightWare Terminal* software from www.lightware.co.za > Library > Documents > Software onto your PC. Open the installer package and follow the installation instructions. Everything needed for communicating with SF30 will automatically be installed.
3. Plug the “micro-B to type A” USB cable provided into the SF30’s micro USB connector and connect the other end to your PC. This provides both power and communication to the unit.
4. Start the *LightWare Terminal* software and click the “Connect” icon to open a communications port.
5. If the connection isn’t made automatically, click the “Laser” icon and select the correct USB port from the list shown.
6. Press the <SPACE> key to display the main menu. This menu includes a list of all the settings that can be changed in the SF30.
7. Menu item number “1: Active data port” selects which port will output the distance data. The value toggles between “Serial” and “USB”. Set this to “USB” by pressing the <1> key.
8. Press the <SPACE> key to start taking distance measurements. The results will be displayed in the Terminal window.
9. Information regarding the other menu items, and how to use them for your application, is contained in the body of this manual.
10. Press the “Disconnect” icon before unplugging the USB cable.

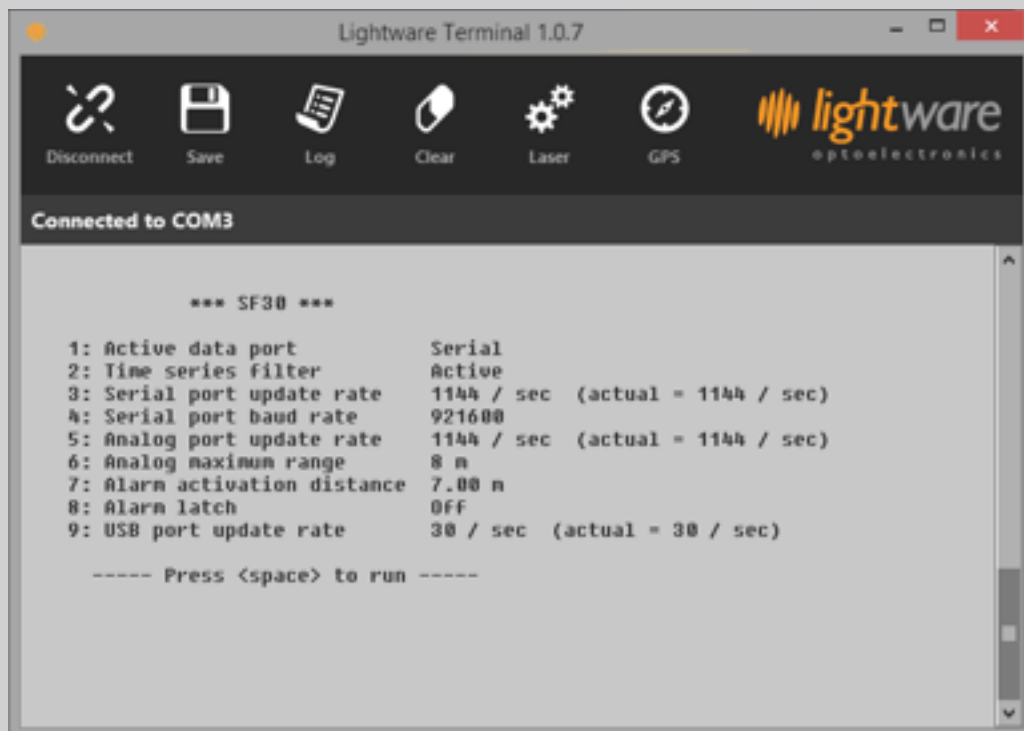


Figure 2 :: *LightWare Terminal* showing menu options

A summary of the settings available through the USB port is given in the table below:

Setting		Values	Description
1: Active data port		Serial <-> USB	Selects the serial or USB port to output distance data.
2: Snapshot resolution / Time series filter		1.00 m ... 0.03 m <-> filter active	Selects the resolution of each reading taken. When selected, the "Time series filter" changes the result from a single snapshot to a recursive Kalman filter output.
3: Serial port update rate	@ 1.00 m	10 ... 36633 / sec	Sets the rate at which new results are output from the serial port when it is selected using "1. Active data port". The actual value may be lower than the entered value depending on the setting "2: Snapshot resolution". Only whole number fractions of 36633 will give an exact match between the entered and actual values.
	@ 0.50 m	10 ... 18316 / sec	
	@ 0.25 m	10 ... 9158 / sec	
	@ 0.03 m	10 ... 1144 / sec	
	@ Filter	10 ... 1144 / sec	
4: Serial port baud rate		9600 ... 921600	Selects the baud rate for the serial port. If the "3. Serial port update rate" setting is too high for the selected baud rate then a warning notice will be displayed.
5: Analog port update rate	@ 1.00 m	10 ... 36633 / sec	Sets the rate at which the analog port and the alarm signal are updated with distance readings. The actual value may be lower than the entered value depending on the setting "2: Snapshot resolution". Only whole number fractions of 36633 will give an exact match between the entered and actual values.
	@ 0.50 m	10 ... 18316 / sec	
	@ 0.25 m	10 ... 9158 / sec	
	@ 0.03 m	10 ... 1144 / sec	
	@ Filter	10 ... 1144 / sec	
6: Analog maximum range		256 m <-> 128 m <-> 64 m <-> 32 <-> 16 m <-> 8 m	Selects the maximum distance that produces 2.56 V on the analog port. This value changes the scale of the analog output.
7: Alarm activation distance		1.5 m ... 254 m	Sets the distance below which the alarm signal will change to a low state. There is hysteresis on this setting equal to the "2: Snapshot resolution" setting or 0.06m whichever is the greater value.
8: Alarm latch		Off <-> Active	Enables the alarm signal latch. This keeps the alarm in the active low state after an alarm event until it is cleared by sending the "x" command to the serial port, or by pressing <X> on the keyboard.
9: USB port update rate		10 ... 1144 / sec	Sets the rate at which new results are output from the USB port when it is selected using "1. Active data port". The maximum value is limited to 1144 readings per second. Only whole number fractions of 36633 will give an exact match between the entered and actual values.

3. Powering up the SF30

The SF30 gets power from either a regulated +5 V DC supply on the main connector or via the USB port when it is connected to a PC. There are a number of digital and analog interfaces on the main connector and either one or a combination of interfaces may be connected to a host controller. The built-in micro-B USB port can be used to input settings and to test the performance of the SF30.

Power supply option 1: USB

The SF30 can be powered directly from the USB port of a PC or laptop. This is particularly useful for testing the SF30 before it is installed in your system and also for changing the settings in readiness for the final application.

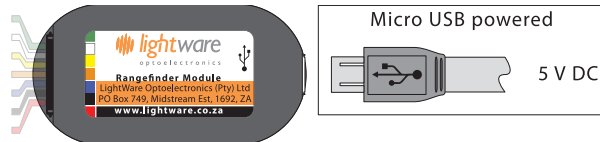


Figure 3 :: Power from the USB port

Power supply option 2: Regulated +5 V DC

The second power supply option is to connect a regulated voltage of $5 \pm 10\%$ V DC to the main connector. If the power wires are more than 30 cm long, we recommend using a decoupling capacitor, or other noise suppression components to reduce the chance interference being picked up or transmitted by the wires.

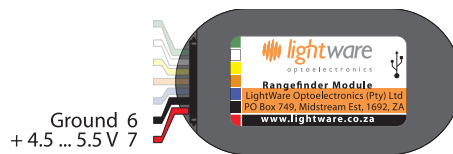


Figure 4 :: Regulated +5 V DC power supply connections

4. Communicating with the USB port

The SF30 has a micro-B USB port that can be used to communicate with *LightWare Terminal* software on a PC. This connection also gives power to the unit providing a quick way to test and configure the SF30. The *LightWare Terminal* software will automatically detect the USB port that is connected to the SF30 and communications can be established by clicking on the “Connect” icon. If more than one compatible device is present, click the “Laser” icon to select which USB port should be active.

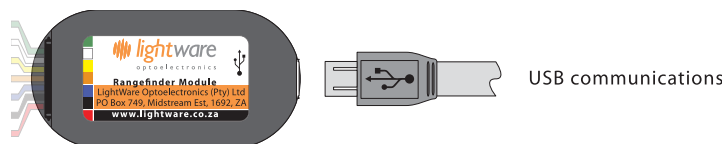


Figure 5 :: USB communications

Once communication has been established, settings can be changed by pressing the <SPACE> key to access the menu and then selecting the menu item that needs changing. Pressing the <SPACE> key again restarts the measuring process. More details of the menu items are discussed in the sections that follow.

If you want to use a different serial emulation program then the USB serial protocol should be set to 115200 baud with 1 stop bit and no parity or handshaking. All communications are in standard ASCII format.

5. System configuration

There are two settings that provide the overall system configuration for the SF30 and these affect the behaviour of each of the interfaces.

Setting	Values	Description
1: Active data port	Serial <-> USB	Selects the serial or USB port to output distance data.
2: Snapshot resolution / Time series filter	1.00 m ... 0.03 m <-> filter active	Selects the resolution of each reading taken. When selected, the “Time series filter” changes the result from a single snapshot to a recursive Kalman filter output.

The “1: Active data port” selection directs the distance results to one of the two available data ports, either the serial port or the USB port. Only one of these ports can be active at a time.

USB option: When connected to a PC with the USB cable, it is convenient to have the distance results displaying in the Terminal window. Select the USB option with the SF30 running and the distance and the output voltage from the analog port are displayed continuously.

Serial option: When connected to a host controller the distance results should be directed to the serial port. The menu system is still available using the USB port but distance readings will not be displayed when the SF30 is running.

The “2: Snapshot resolution / Time series filter” selection affects the way that distance readings are taken and presented to the output ports.

Snapshot resolution: This selection offers 6 alternative resolution settings from 1.0 m down to 0.03 m. The lowest resolution selection allows for the highest speed measurements whilst better resolution reduces the measuring speed. Results are updated on the interface ports at the time specified by their associated update rate settings. Each reading is given as a “snapshot” of the latest result at that time.

Time series filter: This selection switches on a recursive Kalman filter that uses the historical values of previous results to smooth the output. This presents higher resolution and less result-to-result variation but also slows down the rate at which distance readings can change.

6. Communicating with the serial port

The serial port is used to transmit distance readings to an embedded host processor such as the flight controller in a UAV. The hardware interface uses 3.3 V logic levels and can be connected directly to any similar, compatible interface.

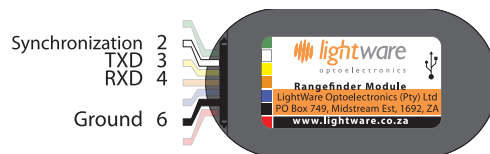


Figure 6 :: Serial interface connections

Distances are output as a single, binary coded byte when the “2: Snapshot resolution” is set to 1 m and as two binary coded bytes at all other resolutions.

Snapshot resolution	Data format	Conversion to distance in meters
1 m	Byte	Distance = Byte
< 1 m	Byte_L,Byte_H	Distance = Byte_H + Byte_L / 256

Setting		Values	Description
3: Serial port update rate	@ 1.00 m	10 ... 36633 / sec	Sets the rate at which new results are output from the serial port when it is selected using “1. Active data port”.
	@ 0.50 m	10 ... 18316 / sec	
	@ 0.25 m	10 ... 9158 / sec	The actual value may be lower than the entered value depending on the setting “2: Snapshot resolution”.
	@ 0.03 m	10 ... 1144 / sec	
	@ Filter	10 ... 1144 / sec	Only whole number fractions of 36633 will give an exact match between the entered and actual values.
4: Serial port baud rate		9600 ... 921600	Selects the baud rate for the serial port. If the “3. Serial port update rate” setting is too high for the selected baud rate then a warning notice will be displayed.

The “3: Serial port update rate” setting allows the output rate of the serial port to be set to any value within the limits imposed by the snapshot resolution. Values will be rounded in order to give whole number divisors of 36633 and limited automatically if they are too high for the resolution selected.

The “4: Serial port baud rate” selection toggles through all the standard baud rates from 9600 to 921600. If the baud rate is set too low, there won’t be enough time for the data to complete a transmission before the next result is ready. A warning notice is given if this situation occurs. Both the transmitted data and any received commands are at the same baud rate.

There is a synchronisation signal that goes into a low state at the instant when a distance measurement is taken. This signal then goes high just before the result is transmitted on the serial port.

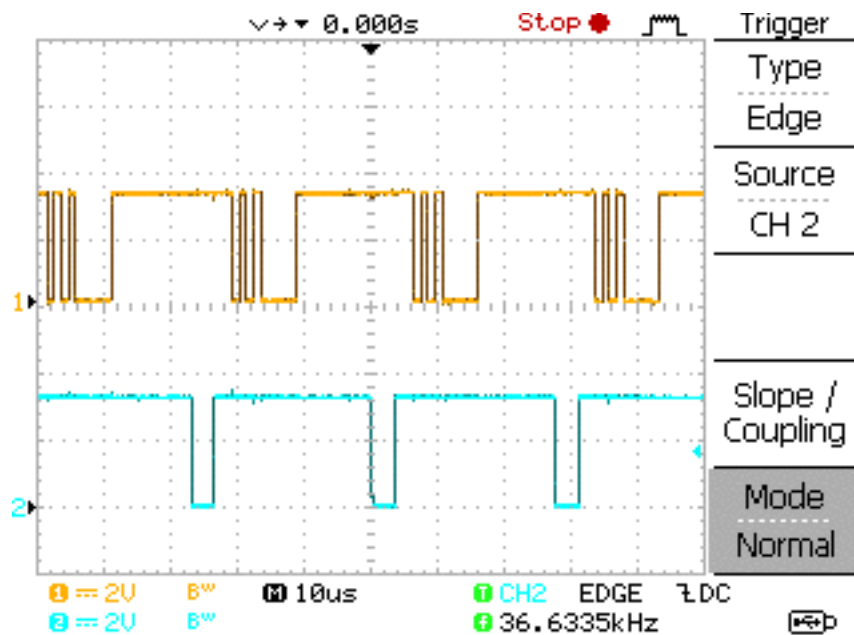


Figure 7 :: An oscilloscope screen capture showing the serial port data on the orange trace and the synchronisation signal on the blue trace

There may be occasions when settings such as the alarm activation distance needs to be changed on the fly and a serial port command set is provided for this purpose. These commands will allow changes to a subset of the settings available through the USB port.

Serial port commands are sent as ASCII encoded characters and are formatted as follows:

#Annnnn:

where:

- # indicates the start of a command
- A indicates the command mnemonic
- nnnnn indicates additional values where necessary
- :

The baud rate of both the transmitted distances and the received commands is controlled by the "4: Serial port baud rate" setting in the main menu. This cannot be changed using serial port commands.

A summary of the commands recognised by the serial port is given in the table below:

Command		n values	Description
#Rn:		0 = 1.00 m 1 = 0.50 m 2 = 0.25 m 3 = 0.12 m 4 = 0.06 m 5 = 0.03 m 6 = Filter active	Selects the resolution of each reading taken. For the value 0 the result is a single byte, for all other values it is two bytes. For values of 0 to 5 the result is provided as a snapshot. For a value of 6, the "Time series filter" changes the results to a recursive Kalman filter output.
#Unnnn:	@ 1.00 m	10 ... 36633	Sets the rate at which new results are output from the serial port. The actual value may be lower than the entered value depending on the setting "#Rx:" resolution. Only whole number fractions of 36633 will give an exact match between the entered and actual values.
	@ 0.50 m	10 ... 18316	
	@ 0.25 m	10 ... 9158	
	@ 0.03 m	10 ... 1144	
	@ Filter	10 ... 1144	
#Vnnnn:	@ 1.00 m	10 ... 36633	Sets the rate at which the analog port and the alarm signal are updated with distance readings. The actual value may be lower than the entered value depending on the setting "#Rx:" resolution. Only whole number fractions of 36633 will give an exact match between the entered and actual values.
	@ 0.50 m	10 ... 18316	
	@ 0.25 m	10 ... 9158	
	@ 0.03 m	10 ... 1144	
	@Filter	10 ... 1144	
#Gn:		0 = 256 m 1 = 128 m 2 = 64 m 3 = 32 m 4 = 16 m 5 = 8 m	Selects the maximum distance that produces 2.56 V on the analog port. This value changes the scale of the analog output.
#Annn:		1.5 ... 254	Sets the distance below which the alarm signal will change to a low state. There is hysteresis on this setting equal to the "#Rx:" resolution setting or 0.06m whichever is the greater value.
#Ln:		0 = Off 1 = Active	Enables the alarm signal latch. This keeps the alarm in the active low state after an alarm event until it is cleared by sending the "#X:" command to the serial port.
#X:		No parameters	Clears the alarm latch if it is enabled using the #L1: command.

7. The analog voltage interface

The analog interface on the main connector produces a linear voltage of between 0.00 V and 2.56 V that is proportional to the measured distance. A distance reading of zero meters always produces a 0 V output.

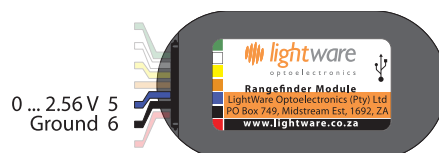


Figure 8 :: Analog voltage connections

Setting		Values	Description
5. Analog port update rate	@ 1.00 m	10 ... 36633 / sec	Sets the rate at which the analog port and the alarm signal are updated with distance readings.
	@ 0.50 m	10 ... 18316 / sec	
	@ 0.25 m	10 ... 9158 / sec	The actual value may be lower than the entered value depending on the setting "2: Snapshot resolution". Only whole number fractions of 36633 will give an exact match between the entered and actual values.
	@ 0.03 m	10 ... 1144 / sec	
	@Filter	10 ... 1144 / sec	
6: Analog maximum range		256 m <-> 128 m <-> 64 m <-> 32 <-> 16 m <-> 8 m	Selects the maximum distance that produces 2.56 V on the analog port. This value changes the scale of the analog output.

The "5: Analog port update rate" setting allows the output rate of the analog port to be set to any value within the limits imposed by the snapshot resolution. Values will be rounded in order to give whole number divisors of 36633 and limited automatically if they are too high for the resolution selected.

The "6: Analog maximum range" selection changes the value in meters that equates to 2.56 V. This can be either: 256 m, 128 m, 64 m, 32 m, 16 m or 8m depending upon the requirements of the application.

8. The alarm interface

The alarm output is a 0 V to 3.3 V signal that becomes active low when the distance reading falls below a preset distance. The distance value used to calculate the alarm state is taken from the analog port settings. However, the maximum range selection of the analog port does not limit the operational range of the alarm.

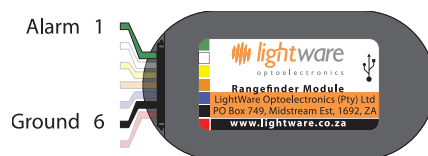


Figure 9 :: Alarm interface connections

Setting	Values	Description
7: Alarm activation distance	1.5 m ... 254 m	Sets the distance below which the alarm signal will change to a low state. There is hysteresis on this setting equal to the “2: Snapshot resolution” setting or 0.06 m whichever is the greater value.
8: Alarm latch	Off <-> Active	Enables the alarm signal latch. This keeps the alarm in the active low state after an alarm event until it is cleared by sending the “#X:” command to the serial port or by pressing <X> on the keyboard.

The “7: Alarm activation distance” setting determines the distance below which the alarm signal becomes active (low). There is hysteresis on this set point equal to the resolution of the reading or 0.06 m, whichever is the larger.

The “8: Alarm latch” selection turns on or off a latching function that keeps the alarm in an active state until a reset command is received. The reset can be from the serial port (#X:) or from the keyboard if the USB cable is connected by pressing the <X> key.

9. USB port settings

The “9: USB port update rate” setting allows the user to adjust the update rate of the distance readings to make them more readable in the Terminal window.

Setting	Values	Description
9: USB port update rate	10 ... 1144 / sec	<p>Sets the rate at which new results are output from the USB port when it is selected using “1. Active data port”.</p> <p>The maximum value is limited to 1144 readings per second.</p> <p>Only whole number fractions of 36633 will give an exact match between the entered and actual values.</p>

10. Instructions for safe use

The SF30 is a laser rangefinder that emits ionizing laser radiation. The level of the laser emission is Class 1M which indicates that the laser beam is safe to look at with the unaided eye but must not be viewed using binoculars or other optical devices at a distance of less than 15 meters. Notwithstanding the safety rating, avoid looking into the beam and switch the unit off when working in the area.

CAUTION -- The use of optical instruments with this product will increase eye hazard.

The SF30 should not be disassembled or modified in any way. The laser eye safety rating depends on the mechanical integrity of the optics and electronics so if these are damaged do not continue using the SF30. There are no user serviceable parts and maintenance or repair must only be carried out by the manufacturer or a qualified service agent.

No regular maintenance is required for the SF30 but if the lenses start to collect dust then they may be wiped with suitable lens cleaning materials. Make sure that the SF30 is switched OFF before looking into the lenses.

The SF30 should be mounted using the four holes provided in the circuit board. Do not hold or clamp the lens tubes as this may cause damage and adversely affect the laser safety rating.

Laser radiation information and labels

Specification	Value / AEL	Notes
Laser wavelength	905 nm	
Pulse width	< 30 ns	
Pulse frequency	< 37 kHz	
Peak power	< 20 W / 25 W	50 millimeter aperture at 2 meters
Average power	<14 mW / 15 mW	7 millimeter aperture
Average energy per pulse	<0.60 nj / 200 nj	
NOHD	<15 m	Distance beyond which binoculars with may be used safely

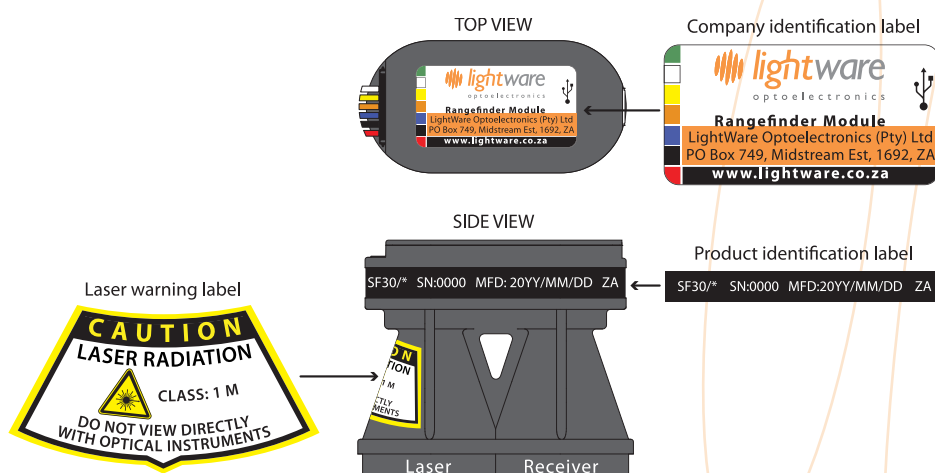


Figure 10 :: Labelling on the SF30

Appendix A :: Specifications

	SF30/B (50 m)	SF30/C (100 m)
Range	0 ... 50 meters (natural targets) 0 ... 175 meters (reflective targets)	0 ... 100 meters (natural targets) 0 ... 175 meters (reflective targets)
Resolution	1.0 m 0.03 m selectable	1.0 m 0.03 m selectable
Update rate	36633 readings per second (max)	36633 readings per second (max)
Accuracy	±0.10 m (70% reflective target @ 20° C)	±0.10 m (70% reflective target @ 20° C)
Power supply voltage	5.0 V ± 0.5 V DC	5.0 V ± 0.5 V DC
Power supply current	250 mA (maximum)	250 mA (maximum)
Outputs & interfaces	Serial & analog	Serial & analog
Dimensions	30 x 55 x 50 millimeters	30 x 55 x 50 millimeters
Weight	35 grams (excluding cables)	35 grams (excluding cables)
Connections	Plug & socket, micro USB	Plug & socket, micro USB
Laser power	20 W (peak), <11 mW (average), Class 1M	20 W (peak), <18 mW (average), Class 1M
Optical aperture	51 millimeters	51 millimeters
Beam divergence	0.2°	0.2°
Operating temp.	0 ... 40° C	0 ... 40° C
Approvals	FDA: Pending	FDA: Pending

Appendix B :: Dimensions

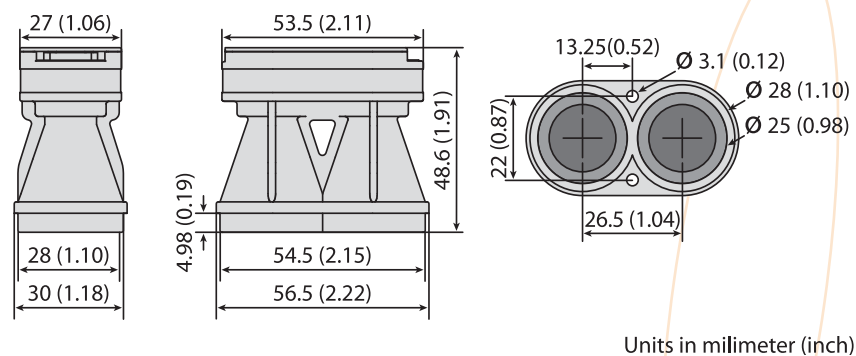
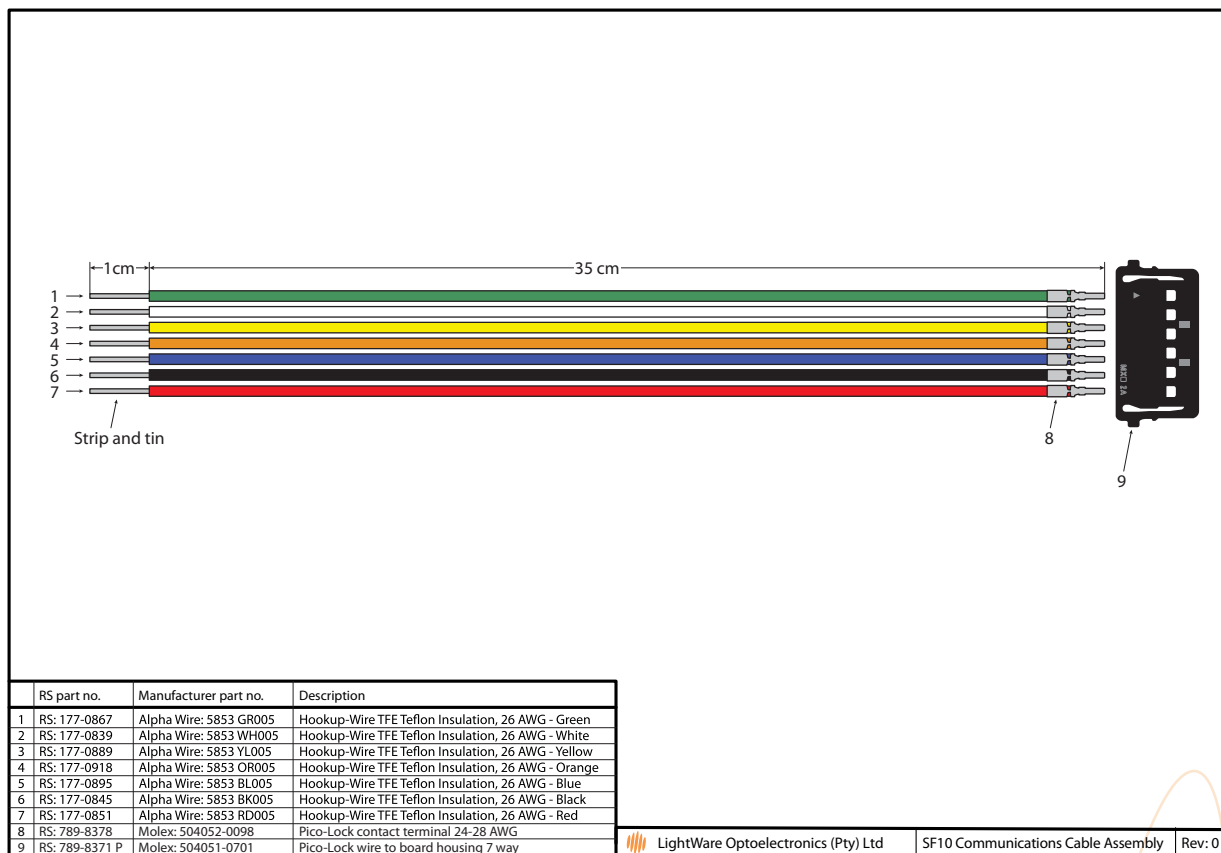


Figure 11 :: Dimension drawings of the SF30

Appendix C :: Communications cable assembly for SF10 and SF30



Revision history

Version	Date	Authors	Comments
Rev 0	2015/05/12	JEP	First edition