FIRE SAFETY:

EMERGENCY LIGHTING:

BRITISH STANDARDS

5266-2016

Version - Updated September 2020

Introduction

British Standard 5266 – Part 1 was revised to accommodate changes to European Standards and UK Legislation. The aim of the recommendations is to encourage uniformity, based on providing adequate safety to building occupants should there be interruption to the normal lighting for any reason. They also take into account hazard levels and the necessary familiarity of building occupants with the premises concerned.

The standard recognises that, as well ensuring a safe unobstructed way of escape from a building at all times, it is essential that emergency lighting enables the immediate location and operation of fi re alarm call points and fire-fighting equipment. BS 5266-1 also aims to minimise the possibility of people panicking in enclosed spaces, such as lifts.

The Main Changes

The latest revision extends the scope of the existing standard by providing guidance on the application and practice of emergency lighting. It highlights that risk assessments are needed for all premises. Also that the risk assessment identifies the risk to people entering a premises and that the measures the assessor is required to take include the provision of safe means of escape, taking into account the needs of people with disabilities including visual impairment. This will enable a competent engineer to produce a safe design for a specific building, instead of being a set of general rules that had to be applied prescriptively. The new format has been designed to help system engineers, users and enforcing authorities to make a more informed judgement of the system needed to keep occupants safe and the building complying with legislation. There is now greater emphasis on who is competent to design, install and maintain emergency lighting. The revised standard underlines the importance of knowledge and experience on the part of those people responsible for emergency lighting. The standard defines a competent person as someone with training and experience appropriate to the task. Emergency lighting design is not a tick-box exercise and the earlier prescriptive methods are no longer fit for purpose.

As with all Fire Safety systems you have a duty to employ competent persons to install and maintain your facilities. Wherever possible it is advised that you ensure that any company you engage to install or maintain is third party accredited. The recently introduced BAFE SP 203-4 scheme is being updated to ensure that registered companies are working to the latest version of the standard. The BAFE scheme helps premises owners and facilities managers demonstrate compliance with the legislation. It covers the design, installation, commissioning, and maintenance of emergency lighting systems.

In an extension to the old standard the latest revision now goes beyond "Escape Lighting" and has provision for "Safety Lighting" and "Standby Lighting".

Safety Lighting is designed to allow occupants to remain in the building. This should be identified by a comprehensive risk assessment and is primarily designed for the care sector whereby persons are unable to evacuate and a comprehensive package of other provisions are in place to ensure their safety.

Standby Lighting is those powered by an alternative power supply source such as a generator and should provide the same lighting conditions as the normal lighting. This is designed to allow for the continued use of the building during a loss of power which is in itself not part of an emergency situation.

There is also provision covering high risk task lighting to provide illumination for the safety of people involved in potentially dangerous processes or situations. This is to enable proper shut-down procedures for the safety of the operator and other occupants of the premises.

The main effect of the changes is that in the revision, the old "A" deviations (0.2 lux) have been removed and have been aligned with the European requirement for 1 lux minimum on the centre line of all escape routes. This is likely to have an impact where Emergency Lighting has been overlaid to create and illuminated exit sign.

The changes to BS 5266-1 also clarify that external illumination needs to cover the route from the outside of the building to a place of safety. This is an extension of the old standard which required an emergency light outside of each final exit door and now has provision for the full route outside of the building to the assembly point. The Standard does take into account that "borrowed" lighting may be available.

In addition, this revision ensures that the wiring requirements within the standard relating to the new revision of the harmonised wiring standard for safety related systems are considered.

As with all British Standards they are a guide containing recommendations and should be interpreted as "best practice". It may be appropriate or desirable to install alternative lighting systems however, these should ideally achieve the same aim as those covered by the British Standard and whilst they may satisfy enforcers during an inspection it would be down to yourselves to justify their suitability and your reasons for deviation to a court in the event of an incident.

Fire and Rescue services advise that you engage with your Emergency Lighting providers to ensure that your systems meet the needs of your premises and that the recommendations incorporated into the 2016 revision are considered and where necessary incorporated into your fi re safety strategy.

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