



## Handy Emergency Lights Guide

Most buildings commercial or not for profit require emergency lights unless you occupy the building during daylight hours only, for example 9am to 3.30pm and all areas in the building have natural light entering all parts of the building.

The Emergency Lighting System or ELS constitutes the backup sources of illumination that become active in the event of a disaster that incapacitates the primary lighting system. To put it simply, the ELS is automatically turned on when the building's main electrical power lines are cut – either due to the disaster related damage or voluntarily to prevent the spreading of fires.

The role of the ELS is to provide visibility in areas of the building in order to assist with the proper evacuation of the personnel on the premises.

There are several different kinds of emergency lights, an example of one is detailed in the picture at the top left of the page, a bulkhead type which is an additional fitting to the normal lighting circuit, or some that appears to be a normal light fitting which has been manufactured to take batteries and works as a normal light in the building.

### Legal context for the Emergency Lighting System

According to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the installation and maintenance of ELSs is compulsory in nearly all business establishments. These protection systems are deemed mandatory for the employers and landlords as well as the current occupants. The legislation requires that the ELS undergo a thorough annual inspection performed by a competent trained professional. However, monthly user checks are recommended in order to ensure that the Emergency Lighting System is functioning optimally and that it is ready in case of an accident. For additional details on the ELS maintenance, refer to BS 5266 standards.

The current RRO – Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 details the requirement for suitable emergency lighting onsite.

### RRO 2005 Article 14 – Emergency routes and exits

#### The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

*(2) The following requirements must be complied with in respect of premises where necessary (whether due to the features of the premises, the activity carried on there, any hazard present or any other relevant circumstances) in order to safeguard the safety of relevant persons—*

*((h) emergency routes and exits requiring illumination must be provided with emergency lighting of adequate intensity in the case of failure of their normal lighting.*

Ultimately the responsibility for the correct type of emergency light and their locations should all be detailed in the fire risk assessment. A person completing a fire risk assessment is now responsible for all the fire systems on site, fire companies are now only duty bound to follow the guidance on the risk assessment. They can give general advice but are no longer legally responsible.

### **So where do I need them?**

BS 5266, gives guidance to the exact locations of these and also your up to date fire risk assessment should detail these for you, however some examples are:

- To illuminate an escape route internally, illumination should be provided on the floor walkway
- Rooms larger than 60 sqm
- In the proximity of every exiting doorway
- Next to the emergency escape signs
- Along the emergency escape route(s)
- In all lifts of the building
- By fire extinguishers
- Next to the break-glass fire call points
- Close to safety machinery or devices that have to be shut down during emergencies
- Outside all exit points of the building to guide persons to a place of safety
- Toilets with no natural lights
- Multi closet toilets
- Showering or washing facilities
- In high task areas such as treatment rooms, dentists rooms, kitchens etc
- Stairs to illuminate all the treads or moving escalators

### **Type of fittings**

There are generally 2 forms of illuminated lights, maintained and non maintained. Maintained are those lights that are on 24 hours a day and would stay illuminated in the case of the lighting circuit being disrupted, non maintained are not normally illuminated and only come on in the case of a power failure.

BS5266 and your risk assessment should advise you what locations you should have maintained or non maintained but examples include:

- where occupants may be unfamiliar with the building
- sleeping accommodation
- Some workplaces require a licence from the Local Authority, including theatres and cinemas, sport stadiums and premises for public entertainment, music, dancing, gambling and the sale of alcohol.

### **User Checks**

It is recommended that all emergency lights are checked onsite at least on a monthly basis. This is quite often known as a flick test. Your current servicing company should have advised you how to do this, however most emergency light systems have test boxes and test keys to use.

If this is not the case, you may need to turn off your lighting circuit at the fuse board. (this route of checking is not acceptable under the current BS5266 standards)

You will need to check each light to ensure that the bulbs and batteries operate and any deficiencies should be reported to your servicing company.

## Servicing - Discharge test

The luminaires must be tested for their full rated duration period and checked for satisfactory operation. The supply must then be restored and the charging indicators rechecked. This test must be performed at least annually and the results logged Note: BS 5266-1: 1999 allows a one hour test to be performed as an alternative every six months for the first 3 years of the system, but the guidance document to the Fire Precaution Regulations calls for the annual test at all stages of equipment life.

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