

Risk Assessments and Emergency Lighting



When emergency lighting is installed in a building, legal requirements are put in place to ensure that this complies with standard procedures. Peter Adams, Support Services Manager of Mackwell outlines the various measures that need to take place in order for a building to be compliant. When planning on implementing emergency lighting, the fire and risk assessment is the first aspect to address.

There is no pre-defined approach to carrying out a risk assessment, but following the below points and taking a pragmatic approach to the task will ensure that the premises has taken as many precautions as possible.

Identify the type of building

The legislative Regulatory Reform or Fire Safety Order of 2005 imposes a duty on a person or persons who have control of premises (e.g. owner of the premises), to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk from fire and make sure that occupants can safely escape in the event of a fire. The order applies to virtually all premises and covers nearly every type of building, structure or open space excluding residential or private homes including individual flats within a block or house.

Identifying the risks

Under the Fire Safety Order, it is defined that a fire-risk assessment has to be carried out to identify any potential dangers and risks and eliminate or reduce them as far as practically possible. The risk assessment has to be carried out by a responsible person (normally someone with control of the premises) although the task can be delegated to a competent person with relevant knowledge and experience (e.g. a health and safety inspector). The final responsibility however stays with the responsible person (even if the task was delegated).

Most premises come with similar hazards, some of which are listed below:

- Site is accessible by the public, which increases the risk of arson.
- Fire exits are blocked or not labelled correctly.
- Flammable liquids or gases are present.

- Certain areas of building over-stocked with build-up of paper, rubbish etc.
- Overloading power sockets.
- Automatically moving machinery that can cause hazards in case of emergency.

When the risk has been reduced as far as possible, any risk which may be left must be assessed to determine whether there are any further measures which need to be implemented to ensure an adequate and reasonable level of fire safety. These measures include the provision of an early warning fire detection system including extinguishers, smoke alarms and sprinkler systems etc. and as well the provision of safe means of escape including clearly signed emergency escape routes and exits. For this particular area, legislation also states that suitable and sufficient emergency lighting must be provided in the event of failure of the normal lighting supply to enable people to evacuate the premises safely.

Emergency Lighting risk assessments

Emergency Lighting is a legal requirement for all commercial premises. Private and domestic dwellings are not included however communal areas in apartment blocks etc. must incorporate emergency lighting.

Prior to the implementation of an emergency lighting scheme a risk assessment must be carried out to ensure compliance. The scheme must follow all relevant industry standards and the premises should be protected in accordance with BS: EN 1838 (Lighting applications – Emergency lighting, and the relevant recommendations given in the emergency lighting code of practice, BS 5266-1). Furthermore, the emergency lighting must be regularly tested and maintained in accordance



ABOVE: Image from Shutterstock courtesy of Mackwell.

with BS: EN 50172 (BS5266-8) - Emergency escape lighting systems to ensure on-going compliance. The definition of the emergency lighting scheme can be done by following the below steps:

- Establish all remaining hazards (after the general risk assessments) and points of emphasis that require emergency lighting.
- Define all escape routes and open areas.
- Establish all other areas (not part of the above two points) that need emergency lighting (e.g. first aid rooms, toilets bigger 8m²).
- Establish all special requirements like high risk areas (e.g. kitchen) or special usage of the premise (e.g. seating area in a auditorium).

Following the above steps by keeping the minimum requirements stated in the applicable norms in mind will lead to a compliant and safe premises. 

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