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Engineering Note 3 - Emergency Lighting Regulations

The Workplace Directive significantly widens the scope of premises that may require emergency lighting escape routes and the provision of exit signs. In the affect, any building where people are employed, or even self-employed, may have to comply with specific emergency lighting and exit sign requirements. Being retrospective it requires that, over time, all places of work will have to be brought up to standard.

The Construction Products Directive has been primarily designed to ensure that in the future all new buildings are safe. It will require that all escape routes are provided with emergency lighting systems and exit signs.

In addition, the Signs Directive (EC Signs Directive 92/58/EEC) calls for the provision of emergency signs in all places of work, and will require that these signs are regularly cleaned, tested and maintained, and visible at all times.

Changes away from text signs like the traditional EXIT sign toward the 'running man' are also part of the harmonisation.

Under the regulations, requirements are given for the following categories: the placement of luminaires, minimum lighting levels, response times, colour diversity or uniformity and disability glare.

Placement of luminaires

It is now incumbent on contractors to be aware of the guidelines for the placement of emergency luminaires, recommendations being set out in the Construction Products Directive interpretative document 'Safety in case of Fire'. Not only should the luminaires provide light, but they should be positioned to emphasise hazards and the provision of safety equipment.

Locations include:

- exit doors and safety signs
- stairs and other changes of level
- changes of direction
- intersections of corridors
- near fire-fighting equipment and alarm call points
- outside and near final exits
- near each first aid point

Additionally, illuminated signs should be provided at all exits intended to be used in an emergency and along escape routes. Where a sign is not directly visible, a directional sign(s) must be provided.

Where people are familiar with the premises, the installed system should change over and provide light after one second reaching 50% of its maxim capability after five seconds and full luminance after 15 seconds, maintaining this level through to the end of duration. Where people are unfamiliar with a building, these times are reduced.

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