
Expert Commentary on BS 5266-1, *Emergency lighting — Code of practice for the emergency lighting of the premises*

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Summary

BS 5266-1 was first published in 1975. This code of practice was used as a basis for development of the European standards [EN 1838](#) and [EN 50172](#).

As a code of practice on emergency lighting, BS 5266-1 covers all aspects of emergency lighting, and gives guidance on the use of the specific application and product standards that provide detailed relevant information.

The government guides on the application of building regulation and fire safety legislation refer specifically to BS 5266-1 as being the appropriate standard to provide illumination to allow the safe escape or continued occupation of the premises in the event of a failure of the normal lighting supply.

BS 5266-1:2016 has had a major change to its scope. Whilst previous issues of the standard provided guidance for the safe escape from buildings, the current issue also provides guidance for the protection of occupants who may be allowed to stay in the building during a mains supply failure. This guidance has been developed as fire safety assessments conducted at many premises are determining that it may not be appropriate or (on occasion), safe to evacuate occupants just because the mains supply has failed. For example, in a care home it may be impracticable for staff to conduct a full evacuation unless an emergency makes it necessary.

There have also been some additions to specific locations requiring emergency lighting. These align with and expand the changes introduced in [EN 1838:2013](#).

Introduction (NEW)

The introduction section of the standard explains that UK legislation imposes a duty on persons, including employers and other persons who have control of the premises, to carry out risk assessments and to take such precautions as necessary to ensure (as far as reasonably practicable) the safety of the occupants.

The standard responds to the increasing recognition of the application of emergency lighting to assist the safety of occupants who stay in the premises during a mains supply failure. The standard now covers the use of emergency lighting in premises where occupants are not evacuated immediately, this is referred to as emergency safety lighting. As well as the system required for conventional emergency escape lighting for evacuation purposes emergency safety lighting may require additional or higher output luminaires to provide increased levels of illumination in these conditions based on an assessment of risk.

The introduction emphasizes the importance of the fire risk assessment, the purpose of which is to reduce the hazards in a building as far as possible. It is performed by the assessor considering all the risks in the premises. These risks should be balanced by appropriate fire protection systems.

The nature of the risks will determine the most effective mix of protection systems, but as nearly all premises will be used outside daylight hours these systems will need to include emergency lighting. Emergency lighting may also be needed to assist the operation of the other safety systems – for