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BS 5266-1:2025



BSI Standards Publication

Emergency lighting

Part 1: Emergency lighting of premises – Code of practice

bsi.

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Summary of pages

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Foreword

Publishing information

This part of BS 5266 is published by BSI Standards Limited, under licence from The British Standards Institution, and came into effect on 31 October 2025. It was prepared by Subcommittee EL/1/1, *Emergency lighting*, under the authority of Technical Committee EL/1, *Light and lighting applications*. A list of organizations represented on these committees can be obtained on request to the committee manager.

Supersession

This part of BS 5266 supersedes [BS 5266-1:2016](#), which is withdrawn.

Relationship with other publications

This part of BS 5266 is intended to be read in conjunction with [BS EN 50172:2024](#) and [BS EN 1838:2024](#).

BS 5266 is published in the following parts:

- Part 1: *Emergency lighting – Part 1: Emergency lighting of premises – Code of practice*.

The following topics are covered in [BS EN 50172:2024](#) and [BS EN 1838:2024](#):

- general requirements for emergency escape lighting;
- escape route lighting;
- open area (anti-panic) lighting;
- high-risk task area lighting;
- local area lighting; and
- standby lighting.

Detailed guidance on fire risk assessments is given in:

- [PAS 79-1](#);
- a series of guides published by the Home Office ([1] to [12]); and
- guidance published by the Justice Department of the Scottish Government ([13] to [17]).

Guidance on risk assessments for health and safety is given in the HSE publication *Managing risks and risk assessment at work* [18].

A summary of the hierarchy of standards covering the different aspects of emergency lighting systems is given in [Annex A](#).

Information about this document

This is a full revision of the document, and introduces the following principal change:

- an expansion of the scope to cover local area lighting and standby lighting, as well as emergency escape lighting.

The aim of this standard is to promote wider understanding of the different types of emergency lighting system which can be employed, and to give guidance on their correct application to the varied requirements of different categories of premises.

The recommendations given in this standard have been drawn up to encourage uniformity of application, based on providing adequate safety to people in the event of interruption of normal lighting, and having due regard to the hazard level and degree of familiarity of occupants with particular premises.

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from the premises at all times, an important function of emergency lighting is to make possible the immediate location and operation of fire alarm call points and firefighting equipment, and another is to minimize the chance of panic arising in enclosed spaces, such as lifts.

This publication can be withdrawn, revised, partially superseded or superseded. Information regarding the status of this publication can be found in the Standards Catalogue on the BSI website at knowledge.bsigroup.com, or by contacting the Customer Services team.

Where websites and webpages have been cited, they are provided for ease of reference and are correct at the time of publication. The location of a webpage or website, or its contents, cannot be guaranteed.

Use of this document

As a code of practice, this part of BS 5266 takes the form of recommendations and guidance. It is not to be quoted as if it were a specification. Users are expected to ensure that claims of compliance are not misleading.

Users may substitute any of the recommendations in this part of BS 5266 with practices of equivalent or better outcome. Any user claiming compliance with this part of BS 5266 is expected to be able to justify any course of action that deviates from its recommendations.

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It has been assumed in the preparation of this part of BS 5266 that the execution of its provisions will be entrusted to appropriately qualified and experienced people, for whose use it has been produced.

Presentational conventions

The provisions of this document are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its recommendations are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is “should”.

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

The word “should” is used to express recommendations of this document. The word “may” is used in the text to express permissibility, e.g. as an alternative to the primary recommendation of the clause. The word “can” is used to express possibility, e.g. a consequence of an action or an event.

Notes and commentaries are provided throughout the text of this document. Notes give references and additional information that are important but do not form part of the recommendations. Commentaries give background information.

Where words have alternative spellings, the preferred spelling of the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* is used (e.g. “organization” rather than “organisation”).

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The recipient is advised to consider seeking professional guidance with respect to its use of this publication.

This publication is not intended to constitute a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.

In particular, attention is drawn to the following specific regulations:

- Building Regulations Approved Document B [19]; and
- its equivalents in Wales [20], Scotland [21] and Northern Ireland [22].

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Introduction

UK legislation imposes a duty on persons, including employers and other persons with control of premises, to carry out risk assessments and to take such precautions as to ensure as far as reasonably practicable the safety of the occupants. These measures include the provision of safe means of escape, including emergency escape routes and exits, together with, where necessary, signs indicating them. Legislation also states that suitable and sufficient emergency lighting needs are to be provided, where people are particularly exposed to danger, in the event of failure of the supply to the normal lighting.

There is increasing recognition of the application of emergency lighting to assist the safety of occupants who stay in a building during a mains supply failure. In many instances, particularly in places with frequently occurring power cuts, it might not be necessary or appropriate to evacuate the premises in the event of failure of the supply to the normal lighting but precautions are necessary to enable occupants to remain on the premises in safety. Borrowed light is not included in this British Standard as it cannot be relied on.

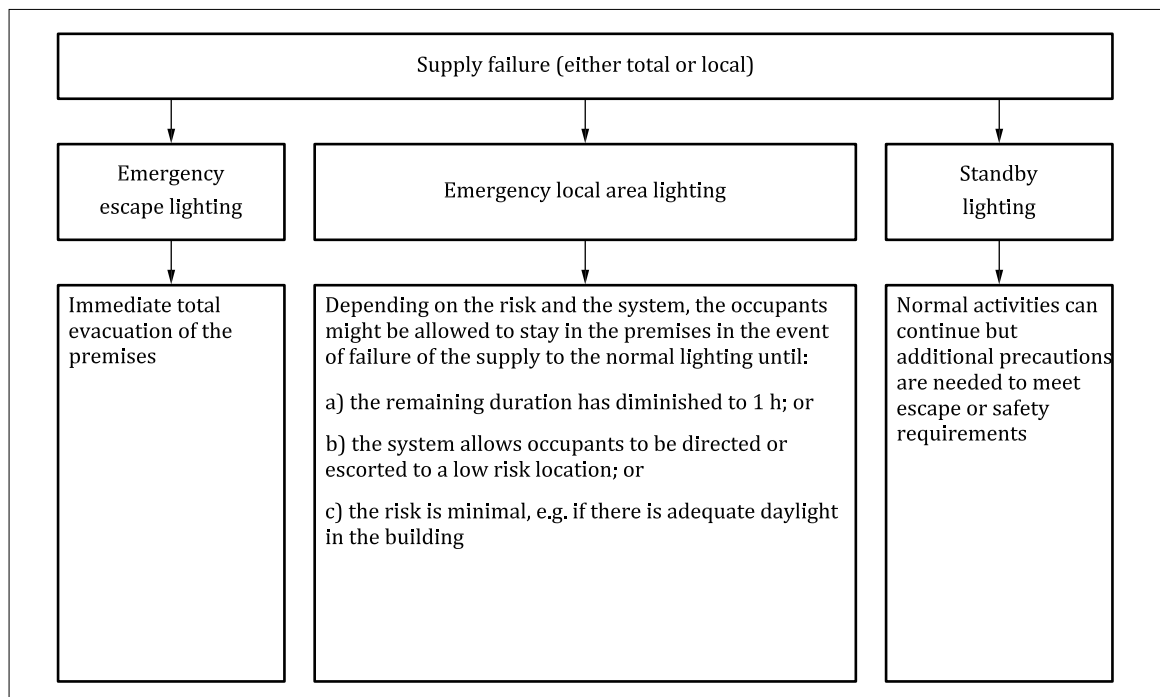
Some guidance on developments in emergency lighting application and technology is given in [Annex B](#).

Emergency lighting can perform the following functions, some of which can be combined into a single system:

- a) emergency escape lighting, which provides illumination of escape routes and signs to assist occupants to evacuate the premises;
- b) emergency escape lighting, which provides illumination of points of emphasis;
- c) emergency local area lighting, which provides lighting for safe movement in the premises when the occupants do not need to evacuate the premises immediately; and
- d) standby lighting, powered by an alternative power supply, which provides sufficient lighting to operate the premises normally in the event of a total failure of the main power supply.

The different types of emergency lighting are illustrated in [Figure 1](#). Guidance on the application of emergency lighting systems is given in [Annex C](#).

Figure 1 — *Types of emergency lighting*



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1 Scope

This part of BS 5266 gives recommendations and guidance on the factors to be taken into account in the design, installation and wiring of electrical emergency lighting systems, in order to provide the lighting performance needed for safety of people in the building in the event of failure of the supply to the normal lighting.

This part of BS 5266 applies to emergency lighting systems used to:

- a) assist occupants to leave a building during an emergency;
- b) help protect occupants if they stay in a building during an emergency; and
- c) help occupants to continue normal operations in the event of failure of the supply to the normal lighting.

This part of BS 5266 also gives recommendations for lighting in areas with fixed seating.

This part of BS 5266 is not applicable to dwellings; however, its provisions are applicable to common access routes within blocks of flats or maisonettes.

This part of BS 5266 does not cover borrowed light.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes provisions, or limits the application, of this document¹⁾. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

[BS 4422](#), *Fire – Vocabulary*

[BS 5499-4:2013](#), *Safety signs – Part 4: Code of practice for escape route signing*

[BS 5499-10:2014+A1:2023](#), *Guidance for the selection and use of safety signs and fire safety notices*

[BS 7273-4](#), *Code of practice for the operation of fire protection measures – Part 4: Actuation of release mechanisms for doors*

[BS 7629-1](#), *Electric cables – Specification for 300/500 V fire resistant, screened, fixed installation cables having low emission of smoke and corrosive gases when affected by fire – Part 1: Multicore cables*

[BS 7671:2018+A3:2024](#), *Requirements for Electrical Installations – IET Wiring Regulations*

[BS 7846](#), *Electric cables – Thermosetting insulated, armoured, fire-resistant cables of rated voltage 600/1 000 V for fixed installations, having low emission of smoke and corrosive gases when affected by fire – Specification*

[BS 8434-2](#), *Methods of test for assessment of the fire integrity of electric cables – Part 2: Test for unprotected small cables for use in emergency circuits – BS EN 50200 with 930 °C flame and with water spray*

[BS 8519:2020](#), *Selection and installation of fire-resistant power and control cable systems for life safety, fire-fighting and other critical applications – Code of practice*

[BS 8592](#), *Electric cables – Thermosetting insulated, non-armoured, fire-resistant, single core non-sheathed cables of rated voltage 450/750 V, having low emission of smoke and corrosive gases when affected by fire – Specification*

[BS 9991](#), *Fire safety in the design, management and use of residential buildings – Code of practice*

¹⁾ Documents that are referred to solely in an informative manner are listed in the Bibliography.