

# American National Standard

*American National Standard  
for Safe Use of Lasers Outdoors*

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**Laser Institute  
of America**  
*Laser Applications and Safety*



ANSI®  
Z136.6 – 2015  
Revision of  
ANSI Z136.6-2005

**American National Standard  
for Safe Use of Lasers Outdoors**

Secretariat  
**Laser Institute of America**

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**American  
National  
Standard**

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**Foreword** (This introduction is not a normative part of ANSI Z136.6-2015, *American National Standard for Safe Use of Lasers Outdoors*.)

In 1968, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) approved the initiation of the Safe Use of Lasers Standards Project under the sponsorship of the Telephone Group.

Prior to 1985, Z136 standards were developed by ANSI Committee Z136 and submitted for approval and issuance as ANSI Z136 standards. Since 1985, Z136 standards have been developed by the ANSI Accredited Standards Committee (ASC) Z136 for Safe Use of Lasers. A copy of the procedures for development of these standards can be obtained from the secretariat, Laser Institute of America, 13501 Ingenuity Drive, Suite 128, Orlando, FL 32826, or viewed at [www.z136.org](http://www.z136.org).

The present scope of ASC Z136 is to protect against hazards associated with the use of lasers and optically radiating diodes.

ASC Z136 is responsible for the development and maintenance of this standard. In addition to the consensus body, ASC Z136 is composed of standards subcommittees (SSC) and technical subcommittees (TSC) involved in Z136 standards development and an editorial working group (EWG). At the time of this printing, the following standards and technical subcommittees were active:

SSC-1	Safe Use of Lasers (parent document)
SSC-2	Safe Use of Lasers and LEDs in Telecommunications Applications
SSC-3	Safe Use of Lasers in Health Care
SSC-4	Measurements and Instrumentation
SSC-5	Safe Use of Lasers in Educational Institutions
SSC-6	Safe Use of Lasers Outdoors
SSC-7	Eyewear and Protective Barriers
SSC-8	Safe Use of Lasers in Research, Development, and Testing
SSC-9	Safe Use of Lasers in Manufacturing Environments
SSC-10	Safe Use of Lasers in Entertainment, Displays, and Exhibitions
TSC-1	Biological Effects and Medical Surveillance
TSC-2	Hazard Evaluation and Classification
TSC-4	Control Measures and Training
TSC-5	Non-Beam Hazards
TSC-7	Analysis and Applications
EWG	Editorial Working Group

The nine standards currently issued are:

ANSI Z136.1-2014, *American National Standard for Safe Use of Lasers*

ANSI Z136.2-2012, *American National Standard for Safe Use of Optical Fiber Communication Systems Utilizing Laser Diode and LED Sources*

ANSI Z136.3-2011, *American National Standard for Safe Use of Lasers in Health Care*

ANSI Z136.4-2010, *American National Standard Recommended Practice for Laser Safety Measurements for Hazard Evaluation*

ANSI Z136.5-2009, *American National Standard for Safe Use of Lasers in Educational Institutions*

ANSI Z136.6-2015, *American National Standard for Safe Use of Lasers Outdoors*

ANSI Z136.7-2008, *American National Standard for Testing and Labeling of Laser Protective Equipment*

ANSI Z136.8-2012, *American National Standard for Safe Use of Lasers in Research, Development, or Testing*

ANSI Z136.9-2013, *American National Standard for Safe Use of Lasers in Manufacturing Environments*

This American National Standard provides guidance for the safe use of lasers and laser systems in an outdoor environment, including laser products that have been granted a variance or exemption from the provisions of the Federal Laser Product Performance Standard (21 CFR 1040). Products and applications covered include laser light shows, lasers used for outdoor scientific research, and military lasers. In addition to injurious levels of optical radiation, which are covered in other ANSI Z136 standards, this standard also covers possible indirect hazards such as visual interference that can be caused by exposure to visible laser radiation, particularly at night.

Development of this standard has been a collaborative effort of members of the SAE G-10 Committee, laser light show industry, DoD, FDA/CDRH, FAA, NASA, laser and laser light show manufacturers, and laser users including scientists and astronomers. This document serves as a companion to the SAE Aerospace Standard AS4970, 21 CFR 040, FAA Order 7400.2 and related FAA documents, Military Standard 1425A, and Military Handbook 828B, for determining the hazards from outdoor laser operations.

This standard provides acceptable levels of irradiation in particular defined zones of navigable airspace in order to minimize visual interference to aircrews. These zones were created to reduce illumination levels of aircrews during critical phases of flight, primarily during takeoff and

landing, in response to numerous incidents of aircraft illuminations that have occurred during the past several years. These defined levels of irradiation may also apply to operators of vehicles other than aircraft. As more powerful commercial off the shelf lasers have become available, the threat to aircraft and other vehicles from illumination by a laser has increased. For visible laser exposure, indirect hazards due to hampered vision have been demonstrated at levels below the levels that would cause permanent eye injury.

This standard has been published as part of the American National Standard Z136 series. The basic document is *American National Standard for Safe Use of Lasers*, ANSI Z136.1. In general, this standard may be used independently of ANSI Z136.1. Instances where additional guidance contained in ANSI Z136.1 is required are noted in this document.

It is expected that this standard will be periodically revised as new information and experience in the use of lasers are gained. Future revisions may have modified content and the use of the most current document is highly recommended.

While there is considerable compatibility among existing laser safety standards, some requirements differ among state, federal, and international standards. These differences may have an effect on the particulars of the applicable control measures.

Occasionally questions may arise regarding the meaning or intent of portions of this standard as it relates to specific applications. When the need for an interpretation is brought to the attention of the secretariat, the secretariat will initiate action to prepare an appropriate response. Since ANSI Z136 standards represent a consensus of concerned interests, it is important to ensure that any interpretation has also received the concurrence of a balance of interests. For this reason, the secretariat is not able to provide an instant response to interpretation requests except in those cases where the matter has previously received formal consideration. Requests for interpretations and suggestions for improvements of the standard are welcome. They should be sent to ASC Z136 Secretariat, Laser Institute of America, 13501 Ingenuity Drive, Suite 128, Orlando, FL 32826.

This standard was developed by Standards Subcommittee 6 (SSC-6) "Safe Use of Lasers Outdoors" and approved by ANSI Accredited Standards Committee (ASC) Z136 for Safe Use of Lasers. Committee approval of the standard does not necessarily imply that all members voted for its approval.

Robert Thomas, Committee Chair  
Sheldon Zimmerman, Committee Vice-Chair  
Ben Edwards, Committee Secretary

**Notice**

(This notice is not a normative part of ANSI Z136.6-2015, *American National Standard for Safe Use of Lasers Outdoors.*)

Z136 standards and recommended practices are developed through a consensus standards development process approved by the American National Standards Institute. The process brings together volunteers representing varied viewpoints and interests to achieve consensus on laser safety related issues. As secretariat to ASC Z136, the Laser Institute of America (LIA) administers the process and provides financial and clerical support to the committee.

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**Participants** At the time it approved this standard, ASC Z136 had the following members:

<i>Organization Represented</i>	<i>Name of Representative</i>
Academy of Laser Dentistry	Scott Benjamin
Altos Photonics, Inc.	Lucian Hand
American Academy of Dermatology	Ray Jalian
American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists	Ira Horowitz
American Dental Association	Harvey Wigdor
American Glaucoma Society	Michael Berlin
American Industrial Hygiene Association	R. Timothy Hitchcock
American Society for Laser Medicine & Surgery	David Sliney
American Society of Safety Engineers	Patti Owens (Alt)
	Thomas V. Fleming
	Walter Nickens (Alt)
American Veterinary Medical Association	Kenneth Sullins
American Welding Society	Mark McLear
Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN)	Evangeline Dennis
Association of Surgical Technologists	Kevin Frey
Buffalo Filter	Daniel Palmerton
Camden County College	Fred Seeber
Daniel Laser Safety	Paul Daniel, Jr.
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)	Ricky Chitwood
Fort Hays State University	C.D. Clark III
Health Physics Society	Ken Barat
	Thomas Johnson (Alt)
High-Rez Diagnostics	Richard Hughes
Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (SCC-39)	Ron Petersen
International Imaging Industry Association (I3A)	Joseph Greco
International Laser Display Association (ILDA)	Patrick Murphy
Kentek Corporation	William Arthur
KLA-Tencor	Karl Umstadter
L*A*I International	Thomas Lieb
Laser Institute of America	Gus Anibarro
Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory	Greta Toncheva
Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory	Robert Ehrlich
Lightwave International	Roberta McHatton
Los Alamos National Laboratory	Connon Odom
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	Guy Camomilli
	Randall Scott (Alt)



<i>Organization Represented</i>	<i>Name of Representative</i>
National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)	Joshua Hadler
North American Association for Laser Therapy (NAALT)	Raymond Lanzafame
Power Technology, Inc.	William Burgess
Rockwell Laser Industries	William Ertle
SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory	Michael Woods
Solta Medical Inc.	George Frangineas
TASC, Inc.	Edward Early
Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.	Peter Boden
University of Chicago, School of Dentistry	Michael D. Colvard
University of Texas, Southwestern Medical Center	John Hoopman
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Devices and Radiological Health	Richard Felten Robert James (Alt)
U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety & Health Administration	Jeffrey Lodwick
U.S. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Research Laboratory	Benjamin Rockwell Robert Thomas (Alt)
U.S. Department of the Air Force, Surgeon General's Office	Edward Kelly Bret Rogers (Alt)
U.S. Department of the Army, Army Public Health Center (APHC)	Jeffrey Pfoutz Penelope Galoff (Alt)
U.S. Department of the Army, Army Institute of Surgical Research	Bruce Stuck
U.S. Department of the Navy, Naval Air Systems Command	James Sheehy
U.S. Department of the Navy, Naval Sea Systems Command	Sheldon Zimmerman Mary Zimmerman (Alt)
<i>Individual Members</i>	Robert Aldrich Richard Crowson Jerome Dennis David Dewey Ben Edwards Mark Festenstein Donald Haes Robert Handren, Jr. Ami Kestenbaum David J. Lund Martin Mainster Wesley Marshall J. Stuart Nelson

*Individual Members cont'd*

Jay Parkinson  
Randolph Paura  
William P. Roach  
Penny J. Smalley  
Nikolay Stoev  
Paul Testagrossa  
Thomas Tierney  
Antonio Triventi  
Anthony Zmorenski

*Emeritus Members*

Prem Batra  
Darrell Seeley  
James Smith  
Robert Weiner  
Myron Wolbarsht

The various subcommittees that participated in developing this standard had the following members:

*Safe Use of Lasers Outdoors, SSC-6*

Robert Aldrich, Chair	Darvis Coper	Connon Odom
Penelope Galoff, Vice-Chair	Jerome Dennis	Jay Parkinson
Paul Sorensen, Secretary	Howard Donovan	Ron Petersen
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	Thomas Johnson	James Sheehy
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	Do-Hyun Kim	Myron Wolbarsht
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*Editorial Working Group, EWG*

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Wesley Marshall, TSC-7 Liaison

Kevin Frey  
Penelope Galoff  
Richard Hughes  
Bill Janssen

Thomas Johnson  
Connon Odom  
Wendy Woehr

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# American National Standard for Safe Use of Lasers Outdoors

## 1. General

### 1.1 Scope.

This standard provides guidance for the safe use of potentially hazardous lasers and laser systems (180 nm to 1 mm), in outdoor environments. It also provides guidance for controlling disability glare from exposure to non-injurious levels of visible laser light (see Appendix D), which might interfere with sensitive or critical tasks, and guidance for the manufacturers of these open-beam laser systems. Lasers used for fixed, terrestrial point-to-point free-space optical telecommunications are not covered in this document.

**1.1.1 Visual Interference.** Visible laser beams used outdoors, especially at night, for display and other purposes may need additional control measures to protect persons potentially exposed to hazards associated with bright light. These hazards include transient visual and psychological effects of laser beams such as afterimage, glare, and startle. These effects can produce indirect safety hazards when people are performing critical visual tasks. Examples of critical tasks include, but are not limited to, operating heavy equipment or motor vehicles, piloting aircraft, or facilitating control tower activities. The FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 made it a federal felony to knowingly point the beam of a laser pointer at an aircraft. Illumination of an aircraft by a visible laser beam may cause interference with the flight crew, which is in violation of federal and/or state law. Therefore, as a general policy, it is recommended never to point or direct visible laser beams at aircraft that may exceed the visual interference levels defined in Table 4<sup>1</sup> and/or the respective Class 1 MPE found in ANSI Z136.1.

For purposes of this standard, visible radiation effects are assumed to occur in the spectral region from 380 nm to 780 nm. The exact divisions between visible and invisible radiation depend on the spectral sensitivity of the individual and other considerations (see Appendix H). Spectral ranges such as 400 nm to 700 nm or 380 nm to 780 nm are defined for convenience and should not be considered as precise delineations between visible and invisible. This standard addresses biological effects, both on vision impairment and on actual injury potential from optical radiation. For the consideration of temporary visual effects, the spectrum of 380 nm to 780 nm is used.

**1.1.2 Product Performance Standards.** Laser systems, which may be used outdoors, that meet the U.S. Federal Laser Product Performance Standard, Title 21 Code of Federal Regulations 1040 (21 CFR 1040), herein referred to as the FLPPS, can be considered as meeting the product performance requirements of this standard. The Food and Drug Administration's Center for Devices and Radiological Health (FDA/CDRH), which administers the FLPPS, has issued a guidance document, Laser Notice 50, that describes the conditions under which laser product manufacturers may introduce into United States commerce laser products that comply with the

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<sup>1</sup> There are a few legitimate applications where aircraft may be targeted with visible laser light that exceeds the levels defined in Table 4, such as rescue operations.