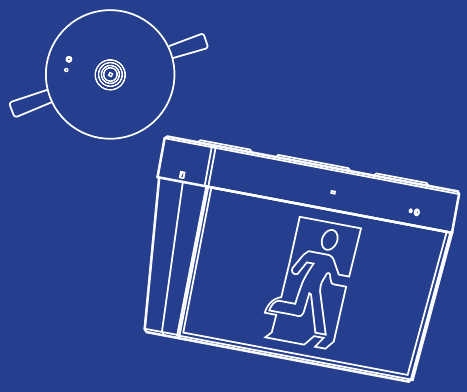
Clevertronics

Emergency Lighting Compliance in the UK

A Simple Guide for Responsible Persons



Key Standards

- **BS 5266-1 – Code of practice for the emergency lighting of premises**
- **BS EN 1838 – Lighting applications – Emergency Lighting**
- **BS EN 50172 – Emergency escape lighting systems**
- **Fire Safety Order 2005 – Your legal duty**

These standards guide where lighting is needed, how bright it should be, and how it must be maintained.

Recent Updates

- Greater emphasis on documented evidence of testing and maintenance
- Increased focus on system performance over time, not just installation
- Stronger expectation that systems are correctly designed and verified
- Growing use of automatic testing systems to reduce manual burden
- Changes to the illuminance levels and areas covered for escape route and open areas with defined and non-defined escape route running through them
- Clarification on some points of emphasis and some additional ones added

Your Responsibility

As the Responsible Person, you are expected to:

- Ensure emergency lighting is installed where required
- Maintain systems so they remain operational
- Keep appropriate records of testing and maintenance
- Ensure safe escape routes are clearly illuminated

Where Emergency Lighting Is Typically Required

- Escape routes (corridors, stairs)
- Open areas (anti-panic)
- High-risk task areas
- Exit signs and final exits

Testing & Maintenance (What Good Looks Like)

Monthly (Functional Test)

- Short duration test (~1 minute “flick test”)
- Confirms operation on power failure

Annually (Duration Test)

- Full 3-hour discharge test (typically)
- Confirms full rated duration

Automatic Test Systems

- Carry out scheduled tests automatically
- Reduce manual effort and disruption
- Provide clear test records
- Still requires periodic review

Ongoing

- Repair faults promptly
- Maintain a logbook (digital or manual)

Documentation You Should Have

- Emergency lighting layout/design plan
- Test records (monthly + annual)
- Maintenance records
- Verification records

What Inspectors Usually Look For

- Systems that are working and maintained
- Evidence of testing and records
- Maintenance records
- Adequate coverage of key areas
- No obvious failures

Practical Tip

Long-life fittings (10+ years) and automatic testing systems can significantly reduce maintenance effort, cost and ongoing disruption over time.

This guide provides a simple overview. Refer to current UK standards and qualified professionals for full compliance requirements.