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Emergency Escape & Anti-Panic lighting used alongside directional signage and photoluminescence

From the perspective of a certified fire risk assessor the provision of (or lack of) correctly designed and appointed escape lighting is always a challenge as it never seems to get the same appreciation as is given to the provision of a fire alarm, and further compounded is the almost total disregard for the use of photoluminescence as a part of the overall evacuation plan.

Appreciations of escape and anti-panic lighting especially in a residential or sleep in site are more important now than ever before and the understanding of people's habits and anticipated actions when asked to evacuate are something that need far more understanding.

Being able to use site specific emergency fittings with the relevant photometrics to validate what is required is now an absolute must post the publication of Hackitt to be able to demonstrate competence and that proposed is fit for purpose.

Added to this is the almost forgotten science of using photoluminescence in support of (but not replacing) directional signage and escape lighting.

In most fire evacuation circumstances those needing to escape are looking at the floor or wall NOT the ceiling or upper areas as that's where the smoke will be, thus the use of high-quality photoluminescence on the floors and stairwells is the best way of enhancing the evacuation plan so that without having to do anything those persons trying to get to a place of safety can follow the arrows which are likely to be clearly visible leading them out.

Emergency lighting has in the past been a casualty of budgets and where cheap low performance fittings were common place and almost pointless as their capabilities were insufficient for the application, poor non unified directional signage likewise has been provided causing confusion and a lack of clarity thus as meeting the requirements of BS 5266 and BS5499 is a mandatory requirement of a building's safety plan additional support should be given no less effort and investment that other life safety provision.

The fact that, non-compliance issues are a mandatory disclosure issue to the clients' buildings insurance provider should focus the minds of those involved in this and other life safety works to ensure the building has what is required through either a certified design or FRA.

Disability and special needs provision within commercial buildings also needs to be considered for then obvious and non-visual SN issues such as photosensitive epilepsy, vertigo and colour blindness along with such issues as Autism and Asperger's discussions on circadian lighting may also be required.

The design elements must take into account what is required or if a site takeover the full take over report and dilapidation notes highlight what the deficiencies are and the action plan to correct those issues identified.

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Steve Dilloway GiFireE, the business owner, is a Graduate member of the Institution of Fire Engineers.
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