EMERGI-SAFE

BS 5266-1:2025

EMERGENCY LIGHTING OF PREMISES



A practical website guide to the principal requirements, changes from BS 5266-1:2016, illuminance, design, verification and ongoing compliance.

PREPARED FOR WEBSITE USE
Emergi-Safe Ltd

This guide summarises important and notable provisions of BS 5266-1:2025. It is deliberately a practical overview and does not reproduce the British Standard.

DESIGN | INSTALLATION | VERIFICATION | ONGOING COMPLIANCE



Edition status: BS 5266-1:2025 was published in October 2025 and came into effect on 31 October 2025. It supersedes and withdraws BS 5266-1:2016. It is intended to be read with BS EN 1838:2024 and BS EN 50172:2024.

IMPORTANT CAVEAT: This document is a guide only. It must not be used instead of BS 5266-1:2025 or any other applicable standard, regulation, statutory guidance, manufacturer instruction or project-specific risk assessment.



BS 5266-1:2025
EMERGENCY LIGHTING OF PREMISES

A practical guide to the principal requirements, changes from BS 5266-1:2016, illuminance, design, verification and ongoing compliance.

EMERGENCY ESCAPE LIGHTING
Assists safe evacuation when normal lighting fails.

EMERGENCY LOCAL AREA LIGHTING
Maintains safe movement where occupants may remain during a normal-lighting failure.

STANDBY LIGHTING
Allows normal activities or essential operations to continue during loss of normal lighting.

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BS 5266-1:2025 is a full revision rather than a minor amendment. Its principal change is the expansion of scope beyond traditional emergency escape lighting to explicitly cover emergency local area lighting and standby lighting. The revision also aligns UK application guidance with BS EN 1838:2024 and BS EN 50172:2024.

What this means in practice

- **Risk-led design:** Determine what areas, hazards, equipment and activities require illumination rather than simply placing luminaires along escape routes.
- **Defined escape routes:** The 1 lux minimum applies across the defined escape-route width, subject to the stated border exclusions.
- **Open areas:** The 0.5 lux criterion remains, with additional clarification where escape routes pass through open areas.
- **High-risk task areas:** 10% of normal illuminance, but not less than 15 lux at the point of risk, with rapid activation.
- **Points of emphasis:** Fire alarm call points, firefighting equipment, stairs, final exits, manual door-release controls and other safety-critical locations receive greater attention.
- **System integrity:** The design should reduce the likelihood that a single luminaire failure leaves a space or route in total darkness.
- **Verification:** Photometric verification is specifically addressed, linked to BS EN 50172:2024, with initial and five-yearly verification within the applicable framework.
- **Documentation:** Stronger design, installation, verification, handover, certificate and logbook arrangements.

BS 5266-1:2025

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THREE LIGHTING FUNCTIONS

EMERGENCY ESCAPE LIGHTING

Assists safe evacuation when normal lighting fails.

Escape routes, open areas, high-risk task areas and points of emphasis.





EMERGENCY LOCAL AREA LIGHTING

Maintains safe movement where occupants may remain during a normal-lighting failure.

Areas identified by risk assessment where continued occupancy needs additional emergency illumination.





STANDBY LIGHTING

Allows normal activities or essential operations to continue during loss of normal lighting.

Specific operational areas where continuity is required and risk assessed.





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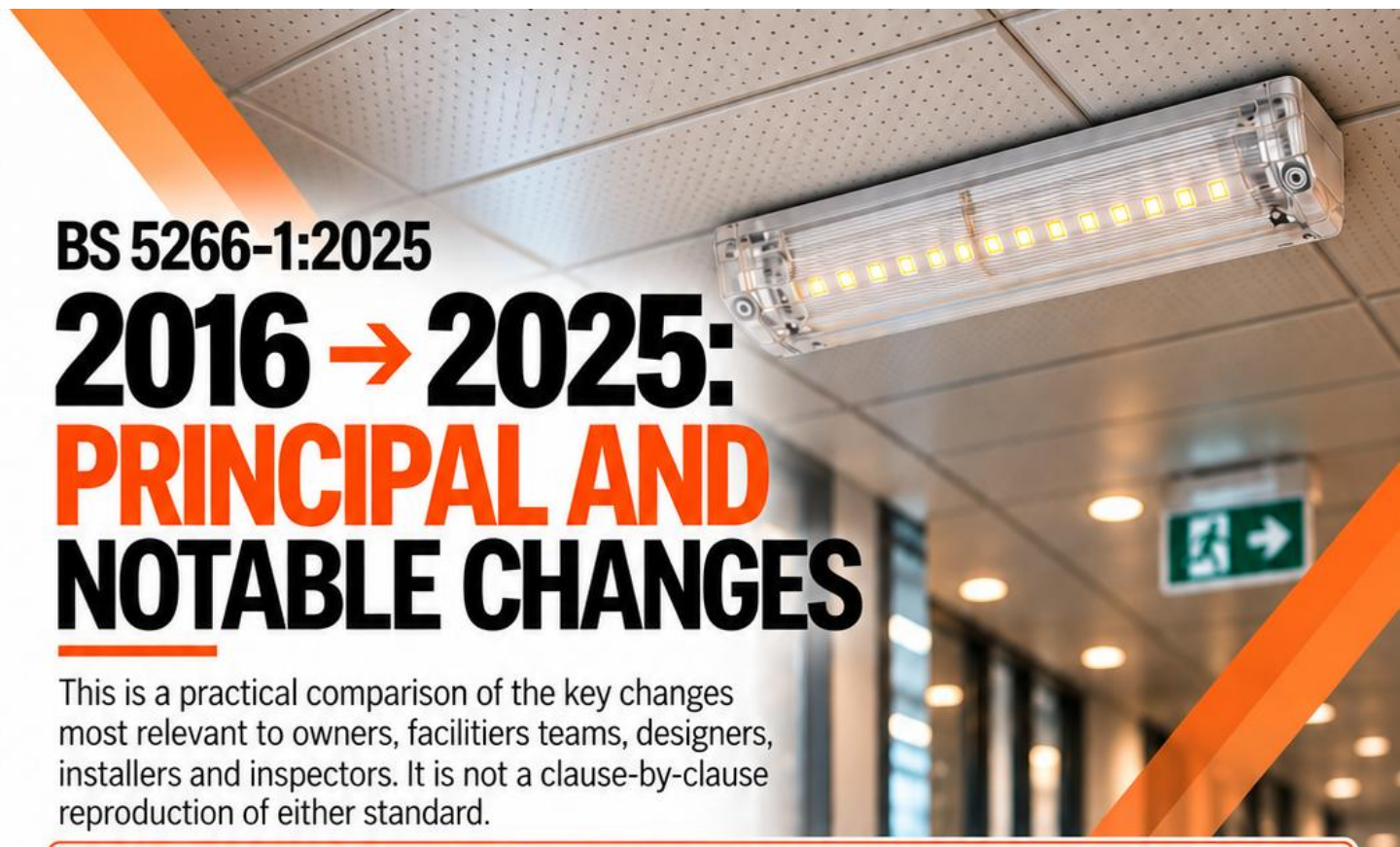


BS 5266-1:2025

2016 → 2025: PRINCIPAL AND NOTABLE CHANGES

A practical comparison of the key changes from BS 5266-1:2016 to BS 5266- 1:2025 and what they mean for your premises.

Topic	2016	2025
Scope	Primarily emergency escape lighting, with provisions for occupants remaining and continuity of activity.	Explicitly expanded to emergency escape lighting, emergency local area lighting and standby lighting.
Supporting standards	Earlier editions of the supporting EN framework.	Intended to be read with BS EN 1838:2024 and BS EN 50172:2024.
Plans	Plans required for design/consultation.	Plans should identify escape routes, open areas, high-risk task areas, safety equipment/signs, normal lighting/controls and special locations.
Defined escape routes	Previous methodology focused on the defined route/centre-line approach.	1 lx minimum across the whole defined escape-route width, subject to permitted border exclusions.
Open areas	0.5 lx for areas over 60 m^2, subject to the standard.	0.5 lx retained; smaller areas may require lighting following risk assessment; escape routes through open areas receive specific treatment.
Toilets/changing	Existing provisions.	More explicit treatment of areas over 8 m^2, lobbies, shower/changing facilities, baby-changing facilities and toilet alarms.



BS 5266-1:2025

2016 → 2025: PRINCIPAL AND NOTABLE CHANGES

This is a practical comparison of the key changes most relevant to owners, facilitiers teams, designers, installers and inspectors. It is not a clause-by-clause reproduction of either standard.

CONTINUED... PART 2 OF 2

Topic	2016	2025
Swimming pools	Less explicit.	Specific provision introduced for public indoor swimming pools and associated areas.
High-risk task areas	10% of normal illuminance.	10% remains, but with a 15 lx minimum at the point of risk; rapid activation is emphasised.
Luminaire failure	System integrity addressed.	Verification that illumination from at least two luminaires/signs is visible in each room/open area and escape route, with doors shut.
Photometric verification	Earlier framework contained verification provisions.	New Clause 11.2 specifically addresses photometric verification and links to BS EN 50172:2024, including five-year intervals.
Handover/ records	Certificates and logbook provisions.	Expanded documentation framework including design/installation/verification declarations and existing-site verification documentation.



BS 5266-1:2025

ILLUMINANCE REQUIREMENTS

THE NUMBERS THAT MATTER

Emergency lighting design should be based on authenticated photometric data and the requirements of BS EN 1838:2024. The figures below are key requirements and typical values from the 2025 framework and must be applied with the relevant clause, risk assessment and project conditions.

Application	Key 2025 level / criterion	Design note
Defined escape route	≥ 1 lx horizontal illuminance on the floor across the whole defined route width.	Up to 0.5 m border may be excluded; for routes under 2 m, borders of ¼ route width may be excluded.
Open area / anti-panic	≥ 0.5 lx horizontal illuminance at floor level.	Applies to rooms <60 m^2 and smaller areas identified by risk assessment; 0.5 m perimeter border excluded.
Escape route through open area	≥ 1 lx at floor level.	If the route is not clearly defined, the open area is treated as an escape route.
High-risk task area	≥ 10% of average normal illuminance, with a minimum of 15 lx at the point of risk.	Full emergency escape lighting should become available within 0.5 s.
Manual release controls	≥ 5 lx vertical illuminance.	Applies to manual release controls for electronically locked doors.
Safety signs	≥ 5 lx vertical illuminance on sign face where emergency illumination is required.	Apply BS EN 1838:2024 and relevant sign-positioning guidance.

BS 5266-1:2025
ILLUMINANCE REQUIREMENTS
THE NUMBERS THAT MATTER

Application	Key 2025 level / criterion	Design note
Toilets/shower/ changing	≥ 1 lx horizontal illuminance in specified areas.	Facilities over 8 m^2 also receive open-area/anti-panic treatment.
Swimming pools	See Annex E examples.	Specific provision introduced for public indoor swimming pools and associated areas.
Toilet alarms	≥ 5 lx vertical illuminance.	Where toilet alarms are provided.
Special locations	See Annex E examples.	Includes kitchens, first aid, treatment, plant/switch rooms, fire alarm panels, reception, panic hardware and swimming pools.
Luminaire failure	System integrity addressed.	Verification that illumination from at least two luminaires/signs is visible in each room/open area and escape route, with doors shut.
Photometric verification	Earlier framework contained verification provisions.	New Clause 11.2 specifically addresses photometric verification and links to BS EN 50172:2024, including five-year intervals.
Handover/records	Certificates and logbook provisions.	Expanded documentation framework including design/installation/verification declarations and existing-site verification documentation.

UNIFORMITY, DIVERSITY AND GLARE

Uniformity and diversity should be considered in accordance with BS EN 1838:2024 to avoid abrupt transitions between bright and dark areas.

Limit glare High-intensity emergency luminaires should be positioned to limit disability glare and preserve observation of escape routes, signs and obstructions.

Account for deterioration Calculations should account for factors such as dirt, dust, lamp ageing and battery ageing as applicable to the design.

Reflection Calculations generally ignore reflectances. For indirect luminaires/lights, the first reflection can be treated as direct output while subsequent reflections are ignored.

Key point: "1 lux" is not simply a target at one point.
Geometry, borders, uniformity, maintenance factors, photometric data and the actual route being protected all matter.



BS 5266-1:2025

SPECIAL LOCATIONS AND POINTS OF EMPHASIS

The 2025 edition places significant emphasis on locations where people need to see, operate or negotiate something safely when normal lighting fails.

Location / feature	2025 design consideration
Final exits	Emergency illumination near each final exit and outside towards a place of ultimate safety.
Stairs	Each flight should receive direct emergency illumination.
Changes of level	Provide emergency illumination near changes in level.
Changes of direction / intersections	Provide illumination at these points for wayfinding.
Fire alarm call points	Position lighting so call points can be readily located and operated.
Fire alarm control equipment	Consider ability to inspect/operate equipment, Annex E provides typical higher-level application.
Firefighting equipment	Lighting should make equipment immediately locatable and usable.
Electronically locked doors	Illuminate manual release controls; 5 lx vertical illuminance is recommended at the control.
Passenger lift alarm call point	Provide illumination near the call point and associated lift arrangements as applicable.
Toilets/changing rooms	Over 8 m²: open-area treatment; specified facilities have 1 lx floor-level requirements.
Accessible toilets	Consider emergency illumination and visibility of relevant facilities/alarms.
Moving stairs/walkways	Treat as part of an escape route for emergency illumination.
Covered car parks	Assess as a specific application under premises provisions and risk assessment.
Public indoor swimming pools	Specific provision introduced for water surface, circulation areas and pool surrounds.



BS 5266-1:2025

EXTERNAL AREAS AND ULTIMATE SAFETY

A notable wording change is the emphasis on a place of ultimate safety. Illumination outside the final exit should be considered as part of the escape arrangement.

Performance recommendations for a place of ultimate safety and onward assembly area should be addressed through the fire risk assessment and evacuation plan. Existing arrangements relying on street lighting should be reassessed to confirm availability when premises are unoccupied.

Risk assessment remains central: Annex E gives examples of typical values, but these are not a substitute for assessing the actual hazard, activity, occupants and evacuation strategy.

BS 5266-1:2025

DESIGN PROCEDURE – FROM SURVEY TO CALCULATION



The 2025 edition provides a structured design procedure. For a competent designer, the practical workflow should look like this:

1.	**Gather information**	Obtain current plans and establish building use, occupancy, escape strategy, fire risk assessment, normal lighting and controls, special locations and existing emergency-lighting records.
2.	**Identify requirements**	Verify escape routes; fire alarm call points/CIE; firefighting equipment; signs; hazards; open areas; external routes; lifts; toilets; plant/switch rooms; car parks; swimming pools; high-risk tasks; standby areas; and local-area lighting requirements.
3.	**Define protected areas**	Mark the actual areas requiring emergency lighting rather than relying solely on a standard luminaire layout.
4.	**Select equipment**	Choose suitable luminaires, batteries/power sources, signs, controls, wiring and test/monitoring arrangements appropriate to the building and design.
5.	**Calculate illuminance**	Use authenticated photometric data or an appropriate calculation method/ programme. Apply relevant maintenance/service factors and consider worst-case conditions.
6.	**Check integrity**	Confirm individual luminaire failure does not create unacceptable darkness. Consider the two-luminaire/sign visibility principle in the 2025 guidance.
7.	**Check electrical design**	Verify circuit protection, cable selection, voltage drop, central-system arrangements where applicable, circuit segregation and resilience.
8.	**Produce design information**	Record luminaire locations, photometric calculations, circuit information, equipment schedules, battery/system details, test arrangements and agreed variations.
9.	**Commission and verify**	Commission the system, complete required inspection/testing and carry out photometric verification in accordance with the applicable requirements.
10.	**Handover and maintain**	Provide drawings, certificates, logbook information, instructions, test records and maintenance arrangements.

Design principle: the 2025 approach makes emergency-lighting design a documented process. A drawing with dots on it is not, by itself, a complete design record.

Photometric design should consider actual luminaire performance, mounting height, spacing, obstruction, battery/lamp condition, dirt and ageing. Where software is used, the designer should ensure the correct photometric file and relevant maintenance assumptions are applied.

BS 5266-1:2025

SYSTEM INTEGRITY, WIRING AND POWER SUPPLIES



The 2025 edition devotes substantial attention to how an emergency lighting system behaves when components or circuits fail. This is particularly important in central power supply systems.

System integrity

- The design should minimise the risk that failure of an individual emergency luminaire leaves occupants in total darkness.
- Verification should establish that illumination from at least two luminaires, or emergency exit signs with a usable downward light component, is visible in each room/open area requiring emergency lighting and along the escape route.
- Verification is made with doors shut, reflecting real-world compartmentation and visibility conditions.
- Individual normal-lighting lamp failure should not normally be relied upon to trigger emergency lighting unless its failure would prejudice safety; maintained emergency luminaires may be appropriate where it would.

Central systems and circuit resilience

The 2025 edition contains more detailed provisions for wiring emergency luminaires supplied from central safety power supply systems, including circuit arrangements, protection and resilience. Designers must consult the actual clauses of BS 5266-1:2025 and BS 7671 for the installation in question rather than applying a generic wiring rule.

Design consideration	Practical question
Circuit failure	What areas/luminaires are lost if a circuit or protective device operates?
High-risk areas	Does the high-risk arrangement have the required resilience and rapid response?
Cable routing	Are distribution cables selected/routed for the required fire and mechanical conditions?
Voltage drop	Does the system maintain required luminaire performance at the most remote point?
Battery / power source	Is the emergency source suitable for duration, load and environment?
Test facilities	Can routine testing be carried out safely and effectively?
Controls	Do normal-lighting controls and emergency controls interact correctly?

Design principle: the 2025 approach makes emergency-lighting design a documented process. A drawing with dots on it is not, by itself, a complete design record.

The final electrical design must also satisfy BS 7671 and applicable equipment standards and manufacturer instructions.

BS 5266-1:2025

VERIFICATION, COMMISSIONING AND HANDOVER



A major practical development in the 2025 edition is the clear treatment of verification and documentation. Clause 11.2 specifically addresses photometric verification and links the process to BS EN 50172:2024.

Photometric verification

Stage	2025 practical expectation
Initial verification	Photometric performance should be verified as part of the complete installation/verification process in accordance with applicable BS EN 50172:2024 requirements.
Ongoing verification	Photometric performance should be verified at intervals not exceeding five years within the applicable framework.
Existing installations	Where initial verification documentation exists, the 2025 guidance provides a sampling approach; where it does not, a more comprehensive assessment is indicated.
Measurement method	Annex D provides guidance on measuring emergency illuminance where authenticated data is not available.
Interpretation	Site measurements do not recreate every worst-case design condition; the competent person should understand ageing, minimum output and maintenance factors.

Verification is not the same as routine testing

Routine tests establish that the system operates and faults can be identified. Photometric verification checks whether the lighting performance remains appropriate. They are complementary activities and should not be treated as interchangeable.

BS 5266-1:2025
VERIFICATION, COMMISSIONING AND HANDOVER PART 2



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Handover documentation

Design drawings	Design drawings and emergency lighting layouts.
Luminaire and equipment schedules	Luminaire and equipment schedules, including system type and battery/power-source information.
Photometric calculations	Photometric calculations and authenticated photometric data where used.
Installation records	Installation and commissioning records.
Design and verification declarations	Design, installation and verification declarations/certificates as applicable.
Commissioning results	Commissioning inspection/test results.
Operating instructions	Operating, testing and maintenance instructions.
Logbook information	Emergency lighting logbook information and agreed variations.
Future information	Information needed for future alterations, extensions, fault investigation and periodic inspection.

Variations

Where a specification or design proposal varies from BS 5266-1, the 2025 guidance says the variation should be clearly identified and documented so the approving person can recognise it. Variations should also be reflected in handover documentation.

Existing-site verification

The 2025 annexes include a model certificate/checklist approach for verification of existing installations, supporting structured assessment of design, component quality, installation, records, test facilities and training.

BS 5266-1:2025
INSPECTION, TESTING, SERVICING AND EXISTING SYSTEMS PART 1



BS 5266-1:2025 should be considered alongside BS EN 50172:2024 for management of emergency escape lighting systems. The responsible person should have a documented approach to routine inspection, testing, fault action and maintenance.

What facilities teams should have under control

Emergency lighting logbook	Maintain current system information, test records, faults and remedial actions.
Routine testing	Carry out testing at required intervals in accordance with the installed system, manufacturer instructions and applicable standards.
Fault management	Defects should be recorded, assessed and rectified within an appropriate timeframe based on risk.
Battery condition	Monitor battery performance and replace components in accordance with system requirements and manufacturer guidance.
Alterations	Building changes, partitions, new equipment, changed escape routes and changed occupancy can invalidate an existing design and should trigger reassessment.
Five-year photometric verification	Include this in planned maintenance where required by the applicable 2025 framework.
Competence	Design, verification, inspection and specialist repairs should be undertaken by appropriately competent persons.

BS 5266-1:2025
INSPECTION, TESTING, SERVICING AND EXISTING SYSTEMS
PART 2



BS 5266-1:2025 should be considered alongside BS EN 50172:2024 for management of emergency escape lighting systems. The responsible person should have a documented approach to routine inspection, testing, fault action and maintenance.

Existing systems — "it passed before" is not the whole question

A building may have an emergency lighting installation designed under an earlieredition. The 2025 edition does not mean every existing luminaire must automatically be replaced solely because the edition has changed. However, when an installation is altered, extended, materially reassessed or found deficient, the current requirements and the building's risk profile should be considered.

Trigger	Recommended action
Building refurbishment	Review escape routes, room use, partitions, lighting calculations and points of emphasis.
Change of occupancy/use	Reassess hazards, occupancy familiarity, local-area/standby lighting and evacuation strategy.
New fire alarm/safety equipment	Check emergency illumination adequately identifies and supports operation.
New doors/access controls	Review manual release points and illumination.
Calculation unavailable	Consider structured verification/assessment rather than relying solely on a historic certificate.
Repeated faults	Investigate root cause, not simply replace individual luminaires repeatedly.
Lighting technology upgrade	Recalculate using actual photometric data and appropriate maintenance factors.

The responsible person should retain enough information to demonstrate how the emergency lighting system is designed, operated, tested and maintained.

BS 5266-1:2025

WEBSITE TAKEAWAY – WHAT CLIENTS SHOULD ASK FOR (CONTINUED)



For estates, facilities and compliance teams, the practical question is not simply "Do we have emergency lights?" The more useful questions are whether the system is appropriately designed, documented, verified, tested and maintained for the building as it is used today.

Ask your emergency-lighting contractor...	Why it matters
What edition of BS 5266-1 is being used?	BS 5266-1:2016 has been superseded; the current edition is BS 5266-1:2025.
Can you provide the design/calculations?	The design should demonstrate required illuminance and consider the actual building layout/equipment.
What photometric data was used?	Calculations should use appropriate authenticated data and correct assumptions.
Have all escape routes and special locations been identified?	The 2025 approach is broader than simply lighting corridors and exits.
How are fire alarm call points and firefighting equipment illuminated?	These are points of emphasis under the emergency escape lighting provisions.
Has photometric verification been carried out?	The 2025 framework specifically addresses verification and five-year intervals.
What happens if one emergency luminaire fails?	System integrity and visibility from multiple luminaires should be considered.
What will I receive at handover?	Drawings, calculations, certificates, test results, instructions and logbook information support a robust handover.
How will the system be maintained?	Testing, fault management, servicing and periodic verification should be planned rather than reactive.

BS 5266-1:2025

WEBSITE TAKEAWAY – WHAT CLIENTS SHOULD ASK FOR (CONTINUED)

Emergi-Safe's Phoenix Monitored Self-Test Emergency Lighting System can provide a practical alternative to manually intensive testing where the application is suitable. Phoenix uses wireless LoRaWAN communication to report luminaire status to a cloud dashboard, supporting central visibility of system conditions, test history and faults. Gateway options can include GSM or Power over Ethernet arrangements, subject to site requirements.



Emergi-Safe and Phoenix monitored emergency lighting

Central visibility	Central visibility of luminaire status and faults.
Automated testing	Automated test scheduling and recorded test history.
Reduced site checks	Reduced need for estates teams to manually walk large buildings for routine status checks.
Compliance support	Dashboard records can support compliance management and fault identification.
Ideal for large estates	Useful for larger or complex estates where manual testing and record compilation consume staff time.
Still need core requirements	Monitoring does not remove the need for correct design, commissioning, photometric verification, periodic inspection, maintenance or competent assessment.

BS 5266-1:2025
IMPORTANT LEGAL AND TECHNICAL CAVEAT



This document is a guide only and must not be used instead of BS 5266-1:2025.
It is intended to provide a practical overview of important and notable requirements and changes for website visitors. It does not reproduce the standard and does not constitute a complete specification, design, compliance certificate or legal advice. Users should obtain and consult the current edition of BS 5266-1:2025 and applicable related standards, including BS EN 1838:2024, BS EN 50172:2024 and BS 7671, together with relevant legislation, statutory guidance, manufacturer instructions and project-specific risk assessments. Where detailed design decisions are required, the applicable current standard and competent professional advice should be followed.

Sources and further reading

Primary reference
BSI, BS 5266-1:2025 Emergency lighting — Part 1: Emergency lighting of premises — Code of practice. BSI confirms that the 2025 edition supersedes BS 5266-1:2016 and is intended to be read with BS EN 50172:2024 and BS EN 1838:2024.

Technical cross-checks
Information used in preparing this guide includes BSI published information, NICEIC technical commentary on the 2025 changes, and the publicly accessible preview material for BS 5266-1:2025. This guide deliberately paraphrases rather than reproduces copyrighted standard text.

Further information
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