

Church security guidance

Installation of floodlighting systems



A large number of churches have installed floodlighting systems. This makes a feature of the church in the night landscape and is also a very strong deterrent to arson, theft and vandalism.

However, careful consideration needs to be given to the design of the system to ensure it is safe and can be easily maintained.

Electrical installation

All electrical wiring should be installed in accordance with the 'Regulations for Electrical Installations' issued by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET), current edition, plus any formal amendments under British Standard BS 7671.

Only electrical contractors enrolled with the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC), or members of the Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA) or the National Association of Professional Inspectors and Testers (NAPIT) should be employed for work in churches. Registration or membership must be on a 'Full Scope' basis.

External floodlighting should be fed from a separate distribution board, switchfuse or circuit breaker which does not feed any other electrical services for the church.

The system should be protected by Residual Current Devices (RCDs).

Whilst mineral insulated copper covered (MICC) cables may be used for wiring fixed to buildings, armoured cables are the most suitable for use when buried in the ground since they will withstand movement and can also be drawn through ducts. Armoured cable should also be used where there is a risk of malicious damage.

Siting of floodlights

Careful consideration should be given to the siting of floodlights both from the point of view of visitors to the church and those who will have the task of carrying out routine maintenance.

The location of floodlighting units in the churchyard will add to the risk of visitors tripping over unless they are set completely below ground level. Floodlighting pits should be covered with metal grilles at ground level. Where floodlighting units protrude above the ground they must be clearly visible and the grass must be cut around them on a regular basis.

The one advantage of siting floodlights at ground level is the ease with which they can be maintained. Siting floodlights at a height will present a risk to those who have to change light bulbs and carry out routine cleaning. A safe system of work will need to be devised. This could mean the use of mobile elevated work platforms (MEWPs), portable scaffold towers or the securing of ladders to anchor points. Where floodlights are located on adjacent buildings the use of a safety harness and safety lines may be necessary.

Consultation

Where lights are to be fixed to adjacent buildings the agreement of the owners and occupiers will have to be obtained and permission will need to be granted if listed buildings are involved. They may also have concerns due to potential light pollution. The local authority may be able to provide guidelines on this issue.

Theft and damage

In the last few years there have been several attacks to floodlighting systems in churches. Most attacks are incidents of vandalism, although some actual thefts have occurred. It is possible that the church may find themselves liable for injuries to visitors caused by broken glass or other damage caused by vandalism if it is not repaired. If it is not possible to locate above ground, then floodlights should be enclosed with high-quality theft-resistant materials, such as expanded metal or weldmesh grilles fixed to angle iron frames. Cables should either be buried or in metal conduit to protect them from damage.

Maintenance

All floodlighting installations must always be isolated for routine maintenance such as cleaning and light bulb changing.

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