Emergency lighting and *decorative* luminaires

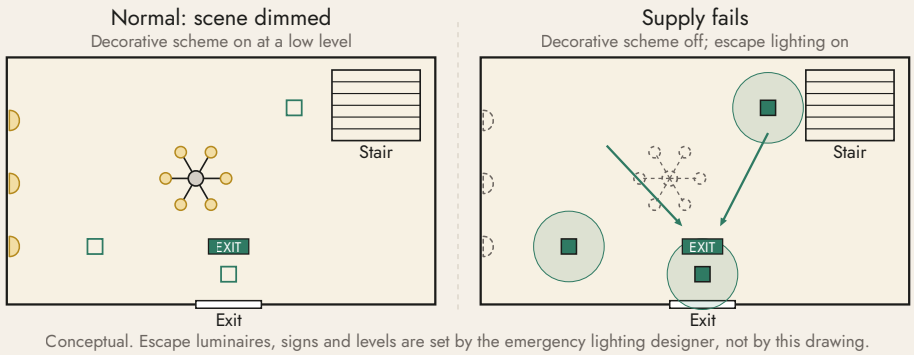
Can decorative lighting count as emergency lighting? The current editions as we saw them listed, the points where a decorative scheme and the escape scheme meet, and the questions to ask. It gives no levels, durations or positions.

Compliance guidance. This is interface guidance for coordination only. It gives no light levels, durations or luminaire positions, which are set by the emergency lighting designer and your fire engineer under the standards and the Fire Safety Order. Standards are named as the editions we saw listed and were not read. This is guidance, not legal or fire-engineering advice: confirm with a competent emergency lighting designer, your fire risk assessor and building control.

AT A GLANCE

Decorative scheme item	Why it matters to the emergency scheme	Who decides	Ask
Feature chandelier on a dimmer	It goes out with the normal supply; the escape luminaires must work without it	Emergency lighting designer; lighting designer	Is any escape luminaire hidden by the chandelier or its glass?
Dimmed or scene-controlled scheme	The room may be at a low level when the supply fails; the escape scheme cannot depend on the scene	Emergency lighting designer; controls designer	Is escape lighting independent of the scene and the dimmer?
Corridors, lobbies, stairs	The escape route and stair must be lit; decorative lights do not count unless designed in as emergency luminaires	Emergency lighting designer; fire engineer	Which luminaires are the escape luminaires on this route?
Decorative fitting that also gives escape light	Possible only as an emergency luminaire designed into the scheme, with its own supply and test evidence	Emergency lighting designer; maker	Is it a certified emergency version, and who tests it?
Exit and direction signs	Signs must stay visible; a pendant, screen or ceiling feature can hide one	Emergency lighting designer; fire engineer	Is each sign visible from the route after the fit-out?
Later changes	A moved or added pendant, a new screen or a painted ceiling can undo the design	Operator; emergency lighting designer	Who re-checks the emergency scheme after each change?

Coordination points, not design rules. The emergency lighting designer decides what is needed and where; the decorative scheme must not hide, replace or override it.



Conceptual. Escape luminaires, signs and levels are set by the emergency lighting designer, not by this drawing.

Conceptual plan of a lobby in normal mode and when the supply fails. Not a layout and not to scale; no levels are implied. Original drawing by Make Bespoke Studio.

SEVEN QUESTIONS FOR THE EMERGENCY LIGHTING DESIGNER

1 Which luminaires are the escape luminaires on each route, lobby and stair? 2 If a decorative fitting counts, which supply and what test evidence? 3 Is the escape lighting independent of scenes and dimmers? 4 Does any pendant, screen or ceiling feature hide a luminaire or sign? 5 What happens when the supply returns? 6 Where are the test points and the log? 7 Who signs off changes after approval?

SPECIFICATION WORDING

COORDINATION STATEMENT

The emergency lighting scheme is designed by [name, role] to [BS 5266-1:2025 and BS EN 1838:2024, or the edition the fire strategy names] and is shown on the drawings [ref]. The decorative lighting is not to be relied on for emergency or escape lighting except where listed on the emergency lighting schedule as an emergency luminaire. No decorative fitting, screen or ceiling feature is to hide an emergency luminaire or exit sign from the escape route.

CONTROL INDEPENDENCE

Escape lighting is to operate independently of the lighting control system, scene presets, dimmers and time clocks [confirmed by the emergency lighting designer and the controls designer], and no scene is to leave an escape luminaire off or reduced. The behaviour of the decorative scheme when supply fails and when it returns is to be as agreed [scene on return:].

DECORATIVE FITTINGS AS EMERGENCY LUMINAIRES

Where a decorative fitting [tag] is to act as an emergency luminaire, the maker is to supply the emergency version, the type of supply [integral battery / central battery / generator], and test evidence to [standard, edition to be named by the designer]. Evidence to be listed in the handover pack.

TEST ACCESS AND CHANGE CONTROL

Every emergency luminaire, including any inside a decorative fitting, is to be reachable for test, battery replacement and repair as shown on the access drawing. Any change to the position or type of a decorative fitting, screen or ceiling feature on an escape route is to be referred to [the emergency lighting designer] before it is made, and the test log kept by [operator].

TERMS USED

Emergency lighting

Lighting that comes on when the normal supply fails; escape lighting is the part that lights the way out. It is separate from decorative lighting.

Escape lighting

The part of emergency lighting provided to ensure that the escape route is illuminated at all material times (Approved Document L Volume 2, 2026, definitions).

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- BS 5266-1:2025 Emergency lighting of premises, code of practice: BSI Knowledge: Current, 29 Oct 2025, a full revision of the 2016 edition; text not read.
- BS EN 1838:2024 Lighting applications, emergency lighting for buildings: listing: current, 18 Dec 2024, supersedes 2013; text not read.
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, article 14(2)(h): read 7 Nov 2026.
- Approved Document L Volume 2, 2026 edition, definitions: read 7 Nov 2026.
- gov.uk, Fire safety risk assessment: sleeping accommodation (2023): sections 3.4.4 and Part 2 section 5 read; England, existing premises.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/emergency-lighting-and-decorative-luminaires. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.