



**Illuminating**  
ENGINEERING SOCIETY

**IES RP-20-14**  
**REVISED**

# Lighting for Parking Facilities



## **Lighting for Parking Facilities**

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**RP-20 is dedicated to Paul C. Box.**

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- 1. Foreword, Part I Paragraph 9, parenthetical note added*
- 2. Foreword, Part I Paragraph 9, new notes added*
- 3. Table 2, Avg: Min values and category deleted*
- 4. Table 2, New notes f, g, h, i added.*
- 5. Table 4, Avg: Min values and category deleted*
- 6. Table 4, new notes f, g, h added*
- 7. Annex B Section B1.0, delete "...average or at a point"*
- 8. Annex B Section B6.0 Determinations of Average Illuminance for a Parking Lot, deleted entirely, including Figure B2 captions and all text in between.*
- 9. Annex B Section B7.2 Isolux Diagram, paragraph 5 deleted.*
- 10. Annex B Section B7.2 last paragraph, delete last sentence "This is the value to compare..."*
- 11. Annex B Section B8.0 Uniformity Ratios, delete paragraph 9, "If the designer is using average illuminance..."*
- 12. Delete Figure B5 and caption*

## Contents

<b>Foreword</b> .....	1
<b>1.0 Introduction</b> .....	2
<b>2.0 Purpose and Scope</b> .....	3
<b>3.0 Types of Parking Facilities and Organization of the Practice</b> .....	3
<b>3.1 Application (Part I)</b> .....	3
<b>3.2 Parking Lots (Part II)</b> .....	3
<b>3.3 Parking Garages (Part III)</b> .....	3
<b>3.4 Organization of the Practice</b> .....	3
<b>PART I – General Background for all Parking Facilities</b> .....	4
<b>4.0 General Background and Common Characteristics</b> .....	4
<b>4.1 Illuminance Metrics</b> .....	4
<b>4.2 Detection and the Visual Tasks</b> .....	4
<b>4.3 Vertical Illuminance</b> .....	5
<b>4.4 High Vehicular Traffic Locations</b> .....	5
<b>4.5 Security Lighting</b> .....	5
<b>4.6 Luminance</b> .....	5
<b>4.7 Lighting Zones</b> .....	6
<b>4.8 Eye Adaption</b> .....	6
<b>4.9 Age factors</b> .....	7
<b>5.0 Light Sources and Characteristics</b> .....	7
<b>5.1 Light Source Types</b> .....	7
<b>5.2 Rated Life</b> .....	7
<b>5.3 Efficacies</b> .....	9
<b>5.4 Configuration of Light Sources</b> .....	9
<b>5.5 Manufacturer Information</b> .....	9
<b>5.6 Ambient Temperature Conditions</b> .....	10
<b>5.7 Lighting Maintenance</b> .....	11
5.7.1 Basic Relamping Practices and Choices .....	11
5.7.2 Lamp Lumen Depreciation (LLD) .....	12
5.7.3 Luminaire Dirt Depreciation (LDD) and General Maintenance Recommendations .....	13
5.7.4 Line Voltage .....	13
5.7.5 Leveling, Alignment, and Socket Settings .....	14
<b>6.0 Lighting Quality</b> .....	14
<b>6.1 Color Rendition</b> .....	15
<b>6.2 Color Temperature</b> .....	15
<b>6.3 Glare</b> .....	15
<b>6.4 Obtrusive Light</b> .....	15
<b>PART II – Parking Lots Part II - Parking Lots and Top (Open) Parking Decks of Garages</b> .....	16
<b>7.0 Illuminance Recommendations for Parking Lots</b> .....	16
<b>7.1 Horizontal Illuminance</b> .....	16
<b>7.2 Vertical Illuminance</b> .....	17
<b>8.0 Luminaire Equipment for Parking Lots</b> .....	18
<b>8.1 Luminaire Classification System</b> .....	18
8.1.1 Backlight, Uplight, and Glare (BUG) Rating System .....	19
<b>8.2 Area Lighting Luminaires</b> .....	19
8.2.1 Architectural .....	19
8.2.2 Post Top .....	19

8.2.3	Wall Mounted	20
8.2.4	High Mast	20
8.2.5	Roadway Lighting Luminaires	20
8.2.6	Floodlighting Luminaires	20
<b>8.3</b>	<b>Energy Conservation</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>8.4</b>	<b>Lighting Controls</b>	<b>21</b>
8.4.1	Photocontrols	21
8.4.2	Time Clocks and Part Night Photocontrols	21
8.4.3	Astronomical Time Clocks	21
8.4.4	Networked (Remote) Control and Monitoring	21
8.4.4.1	Wired or Wireless	22
8.4.5	Dimming	22
<b>9.0</b>	<b>Maintenance of Parking Lot Lighting</b>	<b>22</b>
9.1	General	22
9.2	Obstruction of Light by Trees	22
<b>10.0</b>	<b>Parking Lot Applications</b>	<b>23</b>
10.1	Requirements	23
10.2	Location of Luminaires	24
10.3	Vandalism	24
<b>PART III – Parking Garages</b>		<b>25</b>
<b>11.0</b>	<b>Illuminance Recommendations for Parking Garages</b>	<b>25</b>
11.1	General	25
11.2	Ramps and Entrances	27
11.3	Uniformity	27
11.4	Stairways	28
11.5	Emergency Lighting	28
11.6	Special Lighting	29
11.7	Glare	29
<b>12.0</b>	<b>Lighting Equipment</b>	<b>29</b>
12.1	General	29
12.2	Shielded Luminaires	29
12.3	Non-Shielded Luminaires	29
<b>13.0</b>	<b>Energy Conservation</b>	<b>29</b>
13.1	Use of Daylight (Daylighting)	30
13.2	Lighting controls	30
13.2.1	Time Clocks and Part-Night Photocontrols	30
13.2.2	Motion Detectors	30
13.2.3	Networked (Remote) Control and Monitoring	30
13.2.3.1	Wired or Wireless	30
13.2.4	Dimming	31
<b>14.0</b>	<b>Parking Garage Applications</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>15.0</b>	<b>Special Maintenance Issues for Parking Garages</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>References</b>		<b>32</b>
<b>Annex A</b>	<b>Tabular Comparison of Common Lamp Types</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Annex B</b>	<b>General Procedure for Calculating Maintained Illuminance in Parking Lots and Garages</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Annex C</b>	<b>Visibility-Based Analysis of Parking Facility Lighting</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Annex D</b>	<b>SI (Metric) Conversions</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Annex E</b>	<b>Ingress Protection Ratings</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Annex F</b>	<b>Luminaire Distribution Types</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Annex G</b>	<b>Age and Vision Considerations</b>	<b>49</b>

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## FOREWORD

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The following is a summary history on the evolution of this document (RP-20). It describes the progress leading to the current RP-20.

A *Recommended Practice of Outdoor Parking Area Lighting* was prepared in 1960 by an IESNA Committee.<sup>1</sup> This document specified as a basic value 11 lux (1 fc)\*\* average maintained horizontal illuminance, with a 4:1 or better average/minimum uniformity ratio [minimum point illuminance  $\geq$  2.5 lux ( 0.25 fc)]. A doubling of these values was recommended at parking area entrances and exits.

In 1974, the IESNA Roadway Lighting Committee produced recommendations for lighting safety rest areas along limited access highways.<sup>2</sup> A value of 11 lux (1 fc) was specified for major activity sections, with a 3:1 or better average to minimum uniformity. For lower activity zones (picnic areas, shelters), a 5 lux (0.5 fc) illuminance and a 6:1 uniformity were recommended. These values were carried forward to the *IESNA Lighting Handbook*, Eighth Edition<sup>3</sup> and correspond to minimum illuminance values of 0.8 to 3.3 lux (0.08 to 0.33 fc).

In 1984, a new IESNA Recommended Practice, IES RP-20-84, *Lighting for Parking Facilities* was published.<sup>4</sup> This document contained separate recommendations for lots and garages. Values were based on average illuminance for vehicle-use-only areas of lots and for all areas of garages. For general parking and pedestrian areas of lots, the recommendations were for minimum illuminance values of 2 to 10 lux (0.2 to 1 fc). Maximum average-to-minimum uniformity ratios of 4:1 were specified in most applications, producing average illuminance values of up to 40 lux (4 fc) when designed to this ratio. Differences in assumed levels of activity for various land uses formed the basis for setting the range in recommended minimum illuminance values. This version of RP-20 also added vertical illuminance recommendations, which were as important as the horizontal values, measured at 1.5 meters (5 ft) above the pavement (for facial recognition).

IES RP-20-84 was not based upon surveys or field measurements of existing parking facilities; it was based on state-of-the-art prevailing practice. Subsequent to its publication, reports surfaced of field measurements finding significantly lower levels in typical uses. A sampling survey of cities in 1991 found only one-fifth to be applying the IES RP-20-84 document in checking construction plans for private parking facilities, which constituted the vast majority of lots and garages.

The IESNA document dealing with airport parking areas (IESNA RP-17-87) was prepared as a guide for the application of fixed outdoor lighting in and around the airport environment with respect to the airport's special requirements. These requirements included:

- Height restrictions such as obstructions affecting navigable airspace as defined by the governing civil aviation authorities
- The ability to distinguish color of light for visual cues
- Restriction of light trespass that might interfere with visibility for of Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) controllers or pilots.

The *Recommended Building Code Provisions for Open Parking Structures*<sup>8</sup>, published by the National Parking Association in 1987, specified 65 lux (6.0 fc) average at 75 cm (30 in.) above the floor, with a maximum uniformity ratio of 3:1. An earlier publication, *Parking in the City Center*, commissioned by the Automobile Manufacturers Association, recommended 33 to 54 lux (3.3 to 5.4 fc) in garage parking areas.

The IES RP-20-84 publication was revised in 1998 based on field surveys of actual illumination found in existing parking facilities. *Rather than specify an average illuminance criterion, a minimum illuminance criterion was established.* The minimum basic requirement in parking lots was 2 lux (0.2 fc), with a minimum of 5 lux (0.5 fc) where enhanced security was an issue. The uniformity ratio was then redefined in terms of a maximum to minimum ratio of less than 20:1 rather than an average to minimum ratio, as the eye was thought to adapt to the brightest pavement (i.e., paved surface) in the field of view, not the average light level. The maximum to minimum uniformity ratio was limited in order to allow one to see into the darkest areas from the brightest areas. The uniformity ratio for enhanced security was 15:1.

This Max/Min ratio was chosen for two reasons:

- 1) The better-quality HID luminaires (generally with horizontal lamps) were able to achieve these results (as are today's LED luminaires). Desiring a "best practice" approach to this document, a consensus was achieved.

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\*\* Within the general notes of *The Lighting Handbook*, 10th ed. (IES 2011), for each Illuminance Recommendation Table, note C specifies that "Footcandle conversions of any values cited in this table should be made at 1 fc = 10 lx."