

OBSTRUCTION LIGHTING COMPLIANCE

Certified vs Complaint & Photometric Output



Introduction

As our skies grow ever more crowded with aircraft and obstacles, marking these obstacles becomes increasingly more vital. International organizations, such as ICAO and FAA, and individual countries regulate and maintain standards for the marking of obstacle/obstruction lighting. Aircraft operators rely on the compliance to standards to enable them to conduct aircraft operations safely.

Standards change over time as improvements are identified and adopted. Indeed, the ICAO Annex 14, Volume 1 was updated in June 2013 (Sixth Edition) and made compulsory in November 2013. Low Intensity Obstruction Lights Type A (10cd) and B (32cd) were affected by this revision to the standard. For example, minimum intensity for the Type A and B in the 2009 edition was only required between elevation angles 6° to 10°. The 2013 edition requires the minimum intensity be between elevation angles 2° to 10°. This change ensures that the minimum intensity is maintained over a wider elevation angle; making the light output more visible to aircraft operators. To meet this requirement, manufacturers in almost all cases needed to modify existing products to ensure compliance.

How can owners and operators of obstacles be sure that the obstruction lighting they purchase actually meets the current standard? The best way to ensure a product meets the latest standard is to insist on a 3rd party Certificate of Compliance from an accredited testing laboratory or at the very least require the manufacturer to provide photometric test reports showing that the standard's photometric output has been met. Manufacturers who stand behind their products will be willing to provide the appropriate documentation.

Unmarked or incorrectly marked obstacles which are located in areas that require marking can and should be subject to fines or penalties. Regulatory bodies globally are increasing enforcement of regulations with the levy of fines and/or penalties for non-compliance ranging into millions of dollars - but of course far worse is the risk of an aircraft accident.

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