National Lighting Contractors Association of America

Lighting Controls: Types, Terms & Methods

A plain-English reference of lighting control terms, types and methods — and how they relate to California Title 24 acceptance testing.

Occupancy sensor

A control that automatically turns lights on when it detects presence and off (or down) when the space is vacant.

Vacancy sensor

Similar to an occupancy sensor but manual-on / automatic-off — the occupant switches lights on, and the sensor turns them off when the space empties.

Daylight harvesting TITLE 24

Using photosensors to automatically dim or switch electric lighting in response to the amount of available daylight, reducing energy use near windows and skylights.

Photosensor (photocell)

A device that measures ambient light level and feeds that reading to daylighting controls so they can respond to real conditions.

Time-clock / scheduling control

Turns lighting on and off based on a programmed time schedule — for example, off after business hours.

Multi-level / step dimming

Controls that let lighting operate at more than one light level — stepped or continuous dimming — rather than simple on/off.

Institutional tuning (high-end trim)

Setting a maximum light output below 100% to save energy while still meeting design light levels.

Demand responsive control TITLE 24

Automatically reduces lighting power in response to a utility demand-response signal during peak periods.

Automatic shut-off control TITLE 24

A control that turns off lighting automatically during unoccupied periods, via schedule or occupancy.

Manual area control

A readily accessible manual switch or dimmer that controls the lighting in a given area.

Acceptance testing

Field verification that installed lighting controls operate correctly per Title 24 — performed and documented by a certified Acceptance Test Technician (ATT).

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