

## **SHEDDING SOME LIGHT ON ILLUMINATION**

### **The important role that lighting plays in signs and displays**



For businesses and organizations that need to alert motorists and passersby to their location or promote a product or service, illuminated signage and displays are critical. The benefits of illumination are obvious at night and in low-light conditions such as twilight or during overcast days and storms. But even throughout daylight hours, a lighted sign or display alerts consumers to the fact that, “Yes, we are open.”

Of course, obtaining the best lighting solution shouldn’t be left to the last minute. Considering illumination at the design stage of your sign or display ensures you’ll achieve optimal results.

#### **Important factors to consider when discussing lighting**

- **Light output:** The most common measure of any light output is the lumen. A 40-watt fluorescent lamp, for example, might have a rating of 3,050 lumens. Keep in mind that as lamps and fixtures age and get dirty, their lumen output decreases. It’s best to keep the lamps clean to maintain consistent lighting, and monitor them regularly for burn out.
- **Light level:** Illuminance or light level is the amount of light energy reaching a certain point on a defined surface. It is important to know what the light level of the source is and how it compares to the surface that will be illuminated.
- **Brightness:** Another measurement of light is brightness, sometimes called luminance. This measures light leaving a surface in a particular direction.
- **Glare:** Glare is a sensation caused by lights—or reflective backgrounds—that are simply too bright. It can be reduced by adhering to (and not exceeding) suggested light levels.
- **Over-lighting:** Too much illumination can not only waste energy, it can also reduce the overall quality of a sign or display’s presentation by making it too difficult to read.
- **Color rendering index (CRI):** Light sources vary in their ability to bring out the true colors of a sign or display. Defined on a scale of 0 to 100, the CRI compares the effect of a light source on color; a higher rating means better color rendering or less color shift:
  - Excellent: 76-100
  - Good: 66-75
  - Fair: 56-65
  - Poor: 0-55

#### **Additional lighting terms you might encounter**

Here are other terms that may come up when you are discussing illuminated signs and displays with your signage resource:

- Visual comfort probability (VCP) shows the percentage of people who are comfortable with the glare from a fixture
- Spacing criteria (SC) refers to the maximum recommended distance between fixtures to ensure uniformity

## The two most common types of lighting

A popular option for illuminating signs and displays, fluorescent lights are now losing ground to light-emitting diodes (LEDs) for several key reasons. While often more expensive at the outset, LEDs can pay for themselves over time by lasting longer and reducing your maintenance expenses.

LEDs do not flicker or make noise the way that fluorescent lights sometimes do. Many folks also prefer the quality of LED illumination over fluorescent bulbs, which tend to bathe everything in a harsh light.



### For more information—or expert assistance—contact Image360

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