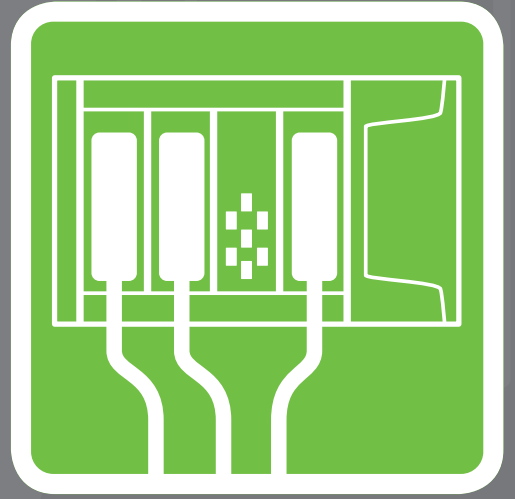


White Paper

Part 3/4

Prefabricated Wiring System Specification Explained



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Executive Summary

The increase in demand for office accommodation in our cities puts a greater demand on building or refurbishing buildings quickly. Construction projects are increasingly benefitting from offsite, factory built assemblies or modular building techniques. This has also affected lighting connection and control, offering clear benefits to electrical contractors saving time on site and reducing on site labour costs.

Prefabricated wiring systems may be referred to in generic terms such as: “modular wiring” or “plug and play”. However, the key question for any prefabricated wiring system is, does it comply with the appropriate safety requirements as a complete system?

This document expands upon some of the key requirements when specifying prefabricated wiring systems, such as system safety standards and achieving conformity with BS 7671 (Wiring Regulations).

You should be aware that this document does not ensure compliance with legal requirements, standards or regulations. You should always consult the relevant documents to ensure compliance.

The need for a safety standard

Specifiers and installers have, for a number of years, been keen to exploit the benefits of prefabricated wiring systems as an alternate to conventional fixed wiring methods.

Some prefabricated wiring systems have been associated with serious safety issues. Reversed polarity, under rated couplers and incorrectly sized wiring sections have been areas of concern.

The absence of a system standard that specified safety requirements, together with associated testing, was discussed by the technical committee responsible for the BS 7671 (Wiring Regulations). It was agreed that there was a need for a Product Standard. Consequently, the appropriate BSI committee developed a new British Standard: BS 8488-1, which was published February 2009 and amended November 2010 to become: BS 8488:2009+A1:2010. In this document, reference to BS 8488 means BS8488:2009+A1:2010. BS 8488 is specified in BS 7671 under section 521; types of wiring system.

Importantly, appendix 1, which lists British Standards to which reference is made in the Regulations, identifies the 2010 version of BS 8488 as the appropriate version to specify.

System safety standard specification

BS 7671 recognises equipment complying with an appropriate British Standard or Harmonised Standard without further qualification. This approach means that the person responsible for specifying the prefabricated wiring system must, identify the “appropriate” standard.

BS 8488 specifies safety requirements, together with associated tests, for prefabricated wiring systems incorporating installation couplers conforming to BS EN 61535 (BS EN 61535 has replaced BS 61535).

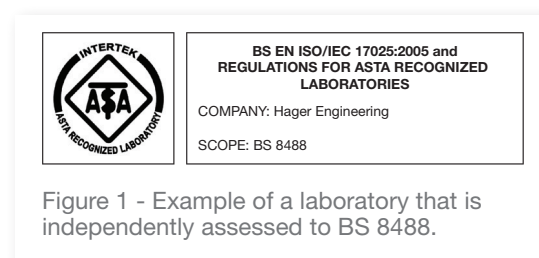
Some key safety requirements and tests prescribed in BS 8488 are:

- Protection against electric shock
- Insulation resistance and electric strength
- Clearances and creepage distances
- Resistance to heat, fire and tracking
- Routine tests (during and/or after manufacture)

Competency to certify conformity with BS 8488

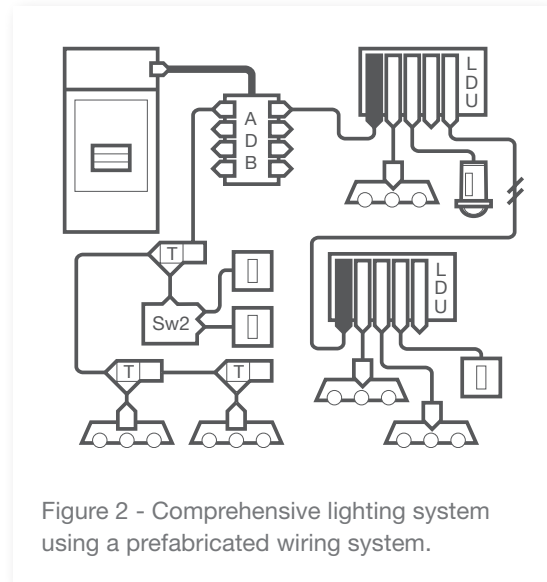
One aspect that must not be overlooked by the person responsible for specifying the prefabricated wiring system is evidence of competency to test and issue certificates of conformity. This can be overcome, by specifying that the laboratory must, be independently recognized to BS EN ISO/IEC 17025 for BS 8488 (see figure 1).

BS 8488 identifies that prefabricated wiring systems are for permanent connection in fixed installations and the associated installation couplers are intended to be engaged or disengaged during first installation, during maintenance or during re-configuration of the installation. Prefabricated wiring systems are intended to be installed by instructed or skilled persons, including the connection and disconnection of installation couplers.



Application of the system

Prefabricated wiring systems can be used in suspended floors and ceilings, which are commonly used in buildings or structures. By using prefabricated wiring systems, the installation work becomes quicker than using traditional methods as they are designed to provide rapid & correct connection. An example is where separate luminaires can be easily linked to form a comprehensive lighting system by using a prefabricated wiring system (see figure 2).



System design to BS 7671

BS 8488 requires the following details to be provided with each prefabricated wiring section, if they are necessary to ensure safe use and maintenance:

Instructions for safe use:

- System design information, validating conformity with BS 7671. The information can be a system design and not provided with each wiring section
- Information required to facilitate inspection and testing for conformity with BS 7671. The information can be for the complete system and not provided with each wiring section.

Prefabricated wiring systems are an alternative to conventional fixed wiring methods; however, BS 8488 identifies the need for system design, installation & verification for conformity with BS 7671. Design elements of the system to be verified for conformity with BS 7671, includes the following fundamentals:

Fundamentals in the BS 7671 design process

Design current

The design current for discharge lighting must take into account control gear losses and harmonic current.

Overcurrent protective devices

The characteristics of the overcurrent protective device must take into account inrush and starting currents e.g. those associated with transformers and discharge lighting.

Cross sectional area of live conductors

BS 8488 prescribes that the rated current shall be assigned according to a reference method defined by the manufacturer from BS 7671:2008, Table 4A2. Also, the rated current and cross-sectional area of the wiring section conductors shall be determined on the following basis:

- The number of loaded cores defined by the manufacturer. A loaded core is where the conductor carries more than 30% of its rating, after applying the rating factor for the total number of current carrying cores
- Not being grouped with other wiring systems or cables
- Not being in contact with thermal insulation
- The ambient temperature not exceeding 30 °C
- The frequency of operating being not greater than 61 Hz.

Marking of a wiring section rated current conductors

BS 8488 requires the rated current (A) and corresponding reference method from BS 7671:2008, Table 4A2 to be distinctly and durably marked on each individual section (see figure 3.). BS 8488 states that the required current-carrying capacity of a system section should be determined by the system designer by applying rating factors for the specific installation conditions. This current carrying capacity may be different from the rated current.

All applicable rating factors must be applied, including those for grouping, ambient temperature and thermal insulation. Assuming overload protection and simultaneous overload can occur, this would be the familiar equation from BS 7671 appendix 4 shown in figure 4.

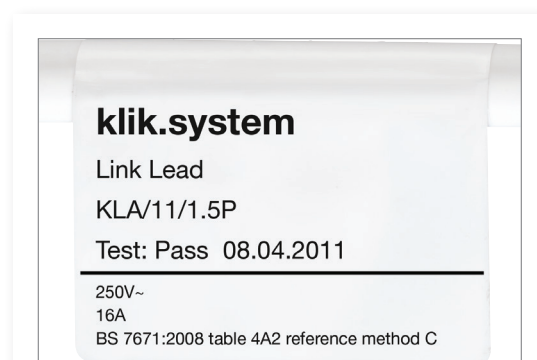


Figure 3 - Example of rated current marking on each individual section.

$$I_t \geq \frac{I_n}{C_g C_a C_s C_d C_i C_f C_c}$$

Figure 4 - Equation 2 from BS 7671 appendix 4 to determine the size of cable to be used.

Current-carrying capacity & loaded core factor

BS 8488 identifies that prefabricated wiring systems may employ flexible cables. It should be noted that the calculations related to flexible cables require particular attention.

The current-carrying capacities tabulated in appendix 4 of BS 7671 are based on cables having solid conductors (Class 1), or stranded conductors (Class 2), except for Tables 4F1A to 4F3B. Therefore, to obtain the correct current-carrying capacity for cable types similar to those covered by Tables 4D1, 4D2, 4E1 and 4E2 but with flexible conductors (Class 5), the tabulated values in 4D1 etc are multiplied by factors. The factor for up to and including 16mm² is shown in Table 1.

An important design aspect identified by BS 8488 is the loaded core factor, which is critical to the correct design of say a multicore SWA cable used for home runs.

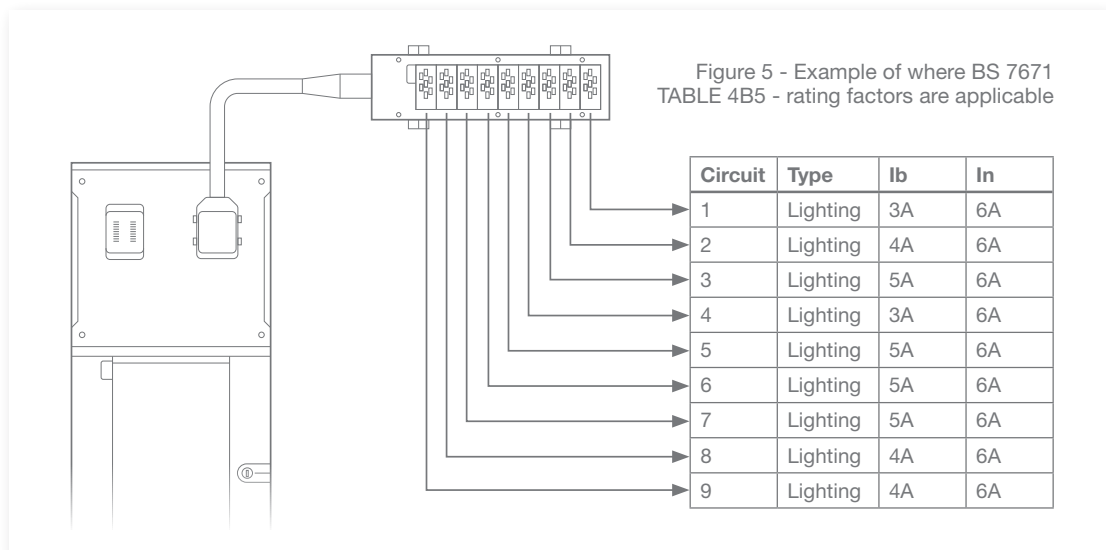
Cable Size	Current-carrying capacity factor
≤ 16.0mm ²	0.95

Table 1 Current-carrying capacity factor

A loaded core is where the conductor carries more than 30% of its rating, after applying the rating factor for the total number of current carrying cores.

This was specifically addressed in amendment 1 to BS 7671: 2008 with the introduction of TABLE 4B5 – Rating factors for cables having more than 4 loaded cores and the equation: $I_{zlc} = I_{t2c} \times C_{gN}$. It is important to note, that for single phase circuits, more than “3 loaded cores” applies; regulations 523.6.1 and 523.6.2 refer.

This means that the current carrying capacity of the multicore cable is derived by applying the rating factor for the number of loaded cores C_{gN} to the tabulated current-carrying capacity of the equivalent 2-core cable. When the exact number of loaded cores is not identified in table 4B5, the next higher number of loaded cores is used.



Voltage drop & flexible cables

To avoid an over engineered and unreliable system, key aspects to be accounted for include:

- The voltage drop is determined for individual loads, including any line conductors passing through a switch / control device. The total voltage drop being calculated for each part of the circuit respectively.
- Suitable adjustment for reduced conductor temperature, where the design current of a circuit is less than the effective current-carrying capacity of the cable.
- Suitable adjustment for load power factor.
- Suitable adjustment for influence of connector contact resistance.

BS 8488 identifies that prefabricated wiring systems may employ flexible cables, however because the nominal resistance of flexible conductors is higher than that for solid or stranded conductors a suitable factor must be applied when basing the flexible cables on the reference methods in appendix 4.

BS 7671 appendix 4 identifies that to obtain the correct voltage drop for cable types similar to those covered by tables 4D1 etc but with Class 5, flexible conductors, the tabulated values are multiplied by the relevant factor. The factor for cables up to and including 16mm² is shown in Table 2.

Cable size	Voltage drop factor
≤16.0mm ²	1.10

Table 2

Earth fault loop impedance for protection against electric shock (fault protection)

When Steel Wire Armour is used (e.g. home run cable), it is important that a suitable multiplier is applied to its tabulated value of resistance at 20°C. This accounts for the magnetic effect of the steel armour.

Again, the influence of connector contact resistance must be accounted for.

Protective conductor cross-sectional area for protection against earth fault current

Where the assumptions of Regulation 435.1 cannot be made, the cross-sectional area of the circuit protective conductors have to meet the adiabatic equation by selection or calculation.

The calculations, should take into account minimum and maximum fault currents, so as to ensure the highest energy let-through (I^2t) is taken into account. This is essential, as I^2t is proportional to the thermal energy let through by the protective device under fault conditions.

High protective conductor currents

Regulation 543.7.1.103 stipulates that, when the cumulative protective conductor current of the circuit is likely to exceed 10 mA, it shall have a high integrity protective connection complying with one or more of the five listed options.

Therefore, the designer should evaluate the likely protective conductor currents in relevant parts of the prefabricated wiring system, including those supplying luminaires. This is because it is recognized, that some luminaires can produce currents in the protective conductor e.g. high-frequency fluorescent luminaires. When a significant number of luminaires are supplied from a common system, the protective conductor current may exceed 10 mA. Wherever possible, protective conductor current should be determined by consulting information provided by the luminaire manufacturer.

A protective conductor current not exceeding 10 mA may be difficult to avoid in particular sections of a prefabricated wiring system e.g. the home run cable and link lead to a Lighting Distribution Unit (LDU) therefore, a high integrity protective connection would be required. However, the system arrangement after the home run / LDU link lead could be configured using LDUs supplying a suitable number of luminaires, thus avoiding cumulative protective conductor currents above 10 mA. Table 3 provides examples of luminaire leakage current values.

Example	Luminaire type	Maximum protective conductor current (mA, r.m.s.)
BS EN 60598-1:2008	Class I intended for permanent connection. Supply current ≤ 7 A.	3.5
Test result for specific luminaire	Fluorescent with HF ballast	0.2
Manufacturers data	Per fluorescent HF ballast	0.5
Manufacturers data	LED driver: output power 150 W	0.7

Table 3 - Examples of leakage current values for conventional luminaires

RCD protected circuits & protective conductor current

The operating range of RCDs is normally from $0.5 I_{\Delta n}$ to $1 I_{\Delta n}$. An *international technical report for the correct use of RCDs recommends that, to avoid unwanted tripping, the protective conductor current in a circuit should not exceed $0.3 I_{\Delta n}$ of the RCD at the rated frequency. For example, this would be a limit of 9 mA protective conductor current for a 30 mA RCD ($0.3 \times 30 \text{ mA} = 9 \text{ mA}$).

When RCD protection is employed, the prefabricated wiring system may require appropriate subdivision into several circuits, so as to avoid unwanted tripping.

*PD IEC/TR 62350 Guidance for the correct use of residual current operated protective devices (RCDs) for household and similar use.

Software

To avoid an over engineered system and most importantly, have the capability to demonstrate a safe system, dedicated calculation software may be considered essential. One aspect that must not be overlooked is the validity of the approach and calculation methods set out in the specification for the design software. This can be overcome, by specifying that the calculation methods used by the software have been validated by an independent specialist, e.g. ERA Technology Ltd (see Figure 6).

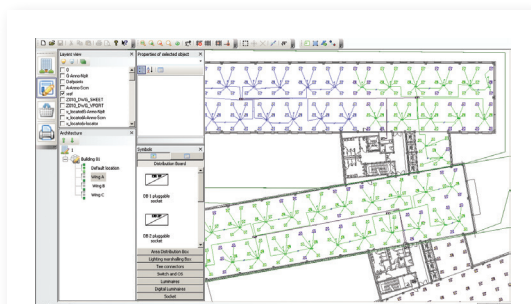


Figure 6 - Example of dedicated calculation software that has been independently validated

System distribution board

BS 8488 specifies that a wiring system comprising a number of circuits connected to separate overcurrent protection shall emanate from an LV switchgear and controlgear assembly, complying with the relevant part of BS EN 60439, BS EN 61439 or BS EN 61534. An appropriate standard for the system distribution board can be BS EN 60439-3, which is known as an MCB distribution board.

BS 8488 requires that where the LV switchgear and controlgear assembly contains the wiring system overcurrent protection, the connector to the assembly shall conform to BS EN 61984 and the installation coupler shall conform to BS EN 61535.

In particular, the specifier for the prefabricated wiring system must ensure that LV assembly e.g. distribution board, has suitable ratings that include the incorporated connector and / or installation coupler. For example, conditional fault current rating (short-circuit) and rated current (temperature rise) (see Figure 7).



Figure 7 - System distribution board to BS EN 60439-3 with connectors to BS EN 61984.

Area distribution box

BS 8488 prescribes the applicable standards for the assembly containing couplers intended for the through connection of circuits that emanate from separate overcurrent protection e.g. circuit-breakers. One example of this arrangement is a multiple circuit distribution cable (known as a home run) originating from a distribution board and terminating at an assembly of couplers (known as an Area Distribution Box “ADB”) (see Figure 8).

Depending upon the configuration of the assembly of couplers for through connection, BS 8488 requires conformity with BS 5733 or the relevant part of BS EN 60439, BS EN 61439 or BS EN 61534.

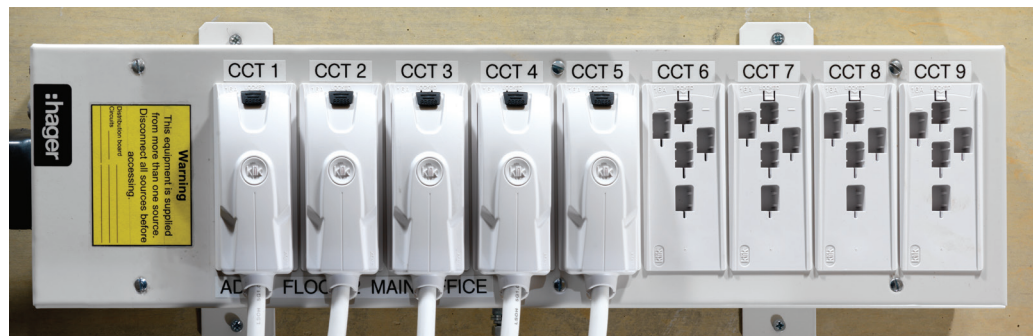


Figure 8 - An assembly of couplers (ADB) complying with BS EN 61439-2

Lighting Distribution Unit

Connection to the fixed wiring

BS 7671 specifies the products that may be used to facilitate connection to each fixed lighting point. A plug-in lighting distribution unit to BS 5733 is identified as an appropriate product, particularly in suspended ceilings, where one plug-in lighting distribution unit may be used for a number of luminaires.

Where a wiring system comprising of a single circuit terminates at an assembly containing couplers intended for branching of a circuit, the assembly is required by BS 8488 to comply with specific standards depending on the assembly designation. Where the assembly containing couplers is specifically designated for the connection of luminaires, it is classified as a lighting distribution unit and must comply with BS 5733 (see Figure 9).

Lighting distribution unit safety standard

BS 8488 states that “for dated references, only the edition cited applies.” BS 5733 is dated as 2010. This means that where BS 5733 is specified e.g. “it shall conform to BS 5733 and be classified as a lighting distribution unit as defined in BS 5733” it is a requirement that the product complies with the BS 5733: 2010.

Conformity with BS 5733:2010 is of particular significance for an LDU, as a critical characteristic, is the suitability of the LDU for electrical stresses associated with lighting loads. The amendment to BS 5733 July 2010 acknowledged these stresses and introduced new testing requirements. Therefore, it is a requirement of BS 8488 that an LDU complies with BS 5733: 2010 (see Figure 9).

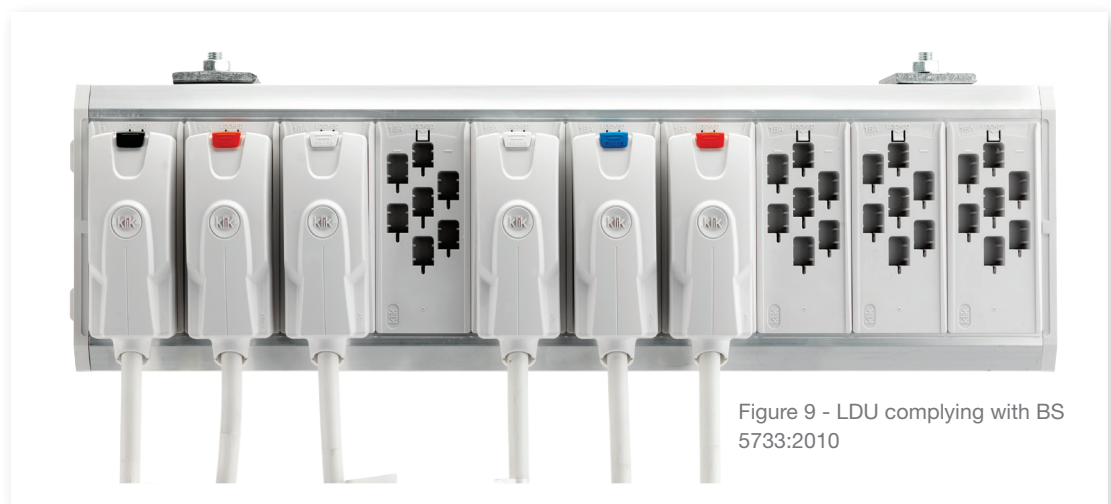


Figure 9 - LDU complying with BS 5733:2010

Installation Couplers

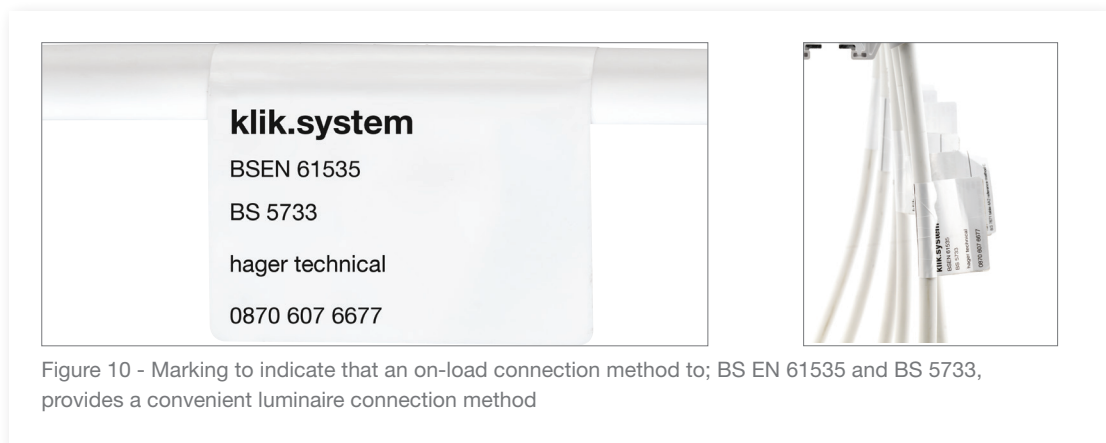
BS 8488 requires that prefabricated wiring systems shall incorporate installation couplers that conform to BS EN 61535. (BS EN 61535 has replaced BS 61535). The installation coupler is defined as being not intended to be engaged or disengaged under load or to be engaged or disengaged other than during first installation, during maintenance or during re-configuration of the installation

Installation couplers complying with BS EN 61535 provide confidence that they are designed and constructed so that, in normal use, their performance is reliable and without danger to the user or damage to the surroundings.

BS 8488 lists a number of products that Installation couplers are not intended to be used in place of e.g. luminaire supporting couplers and on load connecting devices to BS 5733.

A prefabricated wiring system will frequently require arrangements to facilitate convenient on-load isolation and switching off for mechanical maintenance of luminaires. The use of computer controlled luminaires and other automatic lighting control systems has introduced further complications to the safety issues related to isolation and mechanical maintenance. It is essential that the on-load connection device for luminaires is suitable for the prescribed load characteristics e.g. inductive and tungsten loads. A connection device that complies with BS 5733, including its inductive and tungsten load tests would be appropriate.

Therefore, it is an advantage to use a system which provides a convenient on-load connection method that complies with both BS EN 61535 and BS 5733 (see Figure 10). However, it is not necessary for the home run distribution connector to be suitable for on-load operation and additionally comply with BS 5733, as home run disconnection is liable to create unacceptable disruption to the system.



Summary

Therefore, to meet the increase in demand for office accommodation, the specifier is now having to consider ways to improve efficiencies in construction, speed up projects and lower overall costs.

A prefabricated system that meets offers confidence that

More and more of a construction project is benefitting from offsite, factory built assemblies or modular building techniques. This has also affected lighting connection and control, offering clear benefits to electrician contractors saving time on site and reducing on site labour costs.

To understand more on how prefabricated wiring and lighting control can be achieved, please visit hager.co.uk/klik

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