

Enhancing Building Safety: A Guide to EN 13637 and Electrically Controlled Exit Systems

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Raising Standards
Advancing Safety

Insight from the DHF

In the field of building safety and security, adherence to standards is paramount. One such standard is EN 13637:2015, a guideline crafted by the CEN (The European standards organisation) and subsequently adopted by BSI as a British Standard. EN 13637 pertains to electrically controlled exit systems, offering additional options for security and delayed exit, which play a crucial role in ensuring the well-being of building occupants.

However, it's important to note that EN 13637 is not harmonised in the EU or designated in GB to the Construction Products Regulations, which means it cannot be employed for CE or UKCA marking against the essential characteristics of the standard. Nonetheless, it stands as a valuable voluntary performance standard, allowing architects, builders, and property owners to bolster building safety and security. It is however harmonised (designated) to other directives, hence a conformity mark (CE or UKCA) may be in place on the product, albeit not against its fire escape performance.

When it comes to exit doors in various settings, specific compliance standards are in place. For instance, EN 1125 covers panic exit doors in public environments, where more than 60 people may be unfamiliar with the door's operation. On the other hand, EN 179 addresses emergency exit doors in smaller settings with less than 60 individuals, who are typically trained in operating these doors. These are primary requirements that ensure safe egress during emergencies.

EN 13637 comes into play when additional specific requirements are necessary without resorting to options that might hinder or prevent a swift escape, such as extra key-operated locks. This standard

emphasizes the need for a complete electrically controlled exit system, consisting of:

- An initiating element for requesting an escape.
- An electrical locking system to secure the door.
- A control unit that facilitates the unlocking of the system in accordance with the chosen mode.

Importantly, compliance with the standard can only be achieved by the entire system; individual components cannot be brought together, irrespective of whether they have been included in a test with other products and claim to provide a system compliant with EN 13637.

This standard introduces various exit options to cater to different security needs:

Grade 0 no time delay – where a building user may require additional security but does not wish to affect egress.

Grade 1 15 second time delay – where a building owner may wish to delay exit for security reasons, possibly linked to a localised alarm to enable staff to be aware that egress has occurred and react if necessary.

Grade 2 double time delay of up to 180 seconds – where security of the premises may require additional delay.

Denied Access – can be used in conjunction with a grade 2 system only where the exit function is linked to a central management system, enabling security staff to prevent access via a particular area due to safety concerns or danger on the specific escape route.

Implementing such a system would require close cooperation between the building owner, designer and a competent contractor to ensure that the requirements of Building Regulations and Fire Safety Legislation have been complied with and ultimately fostering a safer environment for building occupants.

For those seeking more detailed information on EN 13637 and electrically controlled exit systems, two documents serve as valuable resources:

- DHF Best Practice Guide for Electrically Controlled Exit Systems
- DHF & GAI Technical Briefing for Access Control on Escape Doors

EN 13637:2015 is a vital standard for enhancing fire safety and security in buildings. Compliance with such standards is a significant step toward safeguarding lives and property.

To download a copy of the documents mentioned above visit the DHF website <http://bit.ly/2MeEOI3>