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## Lighting in a retail environment

We recently had Tom from Safecall Electrical Services pay us a visit to share his industry knowledge on lighting in a retail environment.

### Who is Safecall Electrical Services?

Safecall Electrical Services is an electrical contractor operating throughout Adelaide in the domestic and commercial sector, specialising in domestic new builds, maintenance for businesses as well as shop fit outs and office spaces.

### What is LED lighting? Why is it better?

LED (Light Emitting Diode) is a semiconductor allowing current to flow in one direction, converting electricity into light. Basically revolutionising the industry, LED lighting uses around 85% less energy than traditional types of lighting, including halogen, incandescent and fluorescent. To break it down, LEDs have a lifespan of 30,000–100,000 hours whereas fluorescents have a lifespan of 10,000–20,000 hours, halogen downlights 5,000–10,000 hours and incandescent 1,000 hours.

Not only are LEDs more energy efficient, due to the extended lifespan lights won't need to be replaced as often, saving money on hiring an electrician to replace the lights. When LEDs reach the end of their lifespan they don't just die, instead run at 70%.

### Do I need a lighting designer or can I use an electrician?

Depending on the size of the store, you might need a lighting designer or simply an electrical contractor. If it's a large store e.g. a national chain, a lighting designer will be necessary to look at the different levels of lighting and regulatory minimums (lumens per square metre). They'll also allow for the fact that, as mentioned, the lights start at 100% but in five-ten years time will reduce to 70%. This means a brand new store is initially going to be brighter than it needs to be. For smaller stores e.g. a concept store, the knowledge of an electrical contractor should suffice.

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### What are the different levels of lighting?

If you consider a massage parlour for example, they might have a retail and POS section at the front of the store and a service section at the back – this requires different levels of lighting. So what are different levels of lighting?

**General, or ambient, lighting** is the store's main lighting (broad spectrum light). You want your staff and customers to feel comfortable. Staff need to complete general tasks such as stock shelves and clean and customers need to be able to navigate your store and see products and read signs and labels easily. In saying this, you don't want to overdo it as it might give off a clinical feel and put customers off.

**Accent lighting** is used to highlight and showcase particular features or products by drawing the customer's attention. Accent lighting can be used for window lights, banners or light boxes for a particularly special product in bespoke stores.

**Accent lighting** should luminate twice as much light as the general lighting and it's important for the lighting to have a high CRI (Colour Rendering Index) to show products in their true form. We will go into more detail on this further down.

**Task lighting** is focused light used in mixed use retail spaces. It's lighting used for specific tasks, for example back of house pharmacy, a phone repair shop or optometrist rooms for testing eyesight. These are places where a higher level of lighting is necessary for the task. Generally, task lighting should luminate three times more than the general lighting.

**Decorative lighting** is the fun lighting. This is where you can show your store or brand's personality using feature lighting such as pendant lights. The purpose is to create a welcoming space while creating a statement. You want to attract people into your store by having a really brightly lit entrance and a great feature display at the front or an impressive pendant over the point of sale.

It's how you blend the four types of lighting that will set you apart from other stores. It's about layering the different lighting and creating contrast using different illuminate levels. It's the industry knowledge that will help you achieve these levels of lighting. For example, washing the walls with light and lighting up racks down an aisle using downlights to encourage people to walk to the end. It's about creating a flow to the store and guiding people where you want them to go.

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### Brand Knowledge.

When it comes to brands, sometimes the cheaper products end up being more expensive as they can be harder to install therefore the labour cost increases. In contrast, sometimes light fittings specified by designers are great fittings but are hard to install so an electrical contractor might have an equivalent product from a preferred brand – again, this is why industry knowledge is key. Different lights serve different purposes and talking to the experts, whether that's a designer or electrician, will ensure you'll get the right product for your space. Tom recommends Unios products as they're good for CRI, mid range in price and have a warranty of 3–7 years. They're solidly built and great for heat dissipation. Haneco is also another quality product, more upmarket than Unios and designed for longevity. If you're in Adelaide Tom recommends visiting Troy from LED Outdoor in Kent Town or Inlite on Fullarton Road.

### The future is...

Technology. As everything is, when it comes to lighting things are of course getting more technologically advanced. For example, the use of control systems including a new system called Bluetooth mesh – utilising wireless communication instead of manually wiring fittings together. It can also be managed from a smartphone.

Dimmers, timers and lux sensors – although they've been around for a while, they are convenient, cost effective and better for the environment. Dimmers are useful for a constant level of luminance e.g. if you've got a nice level of natural light at a specific time during the day then you don't need LED on full at that time.

The digital age – as online shopping grows stores need the wow factor to give people a reason to visit. It's important to create an experience that leaves customers wanting to come back.

Thanks to Tom from Safecall Electrical Services for sharing his in-depth industry knowledge. If you have any more questions regarding lighting design or another topic about interior construction please get in touch with us at [hello@croudaceconstructs.com](mailto:hello@croudaceconstructs.com)

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