

Ask an Industry Leader

Hervey Lavoie and Dag Lee discuss standards for lighting and

Q: “Are there any industry standards for fitness center lighting? Type of lights and brightness? Also are there any recommendations for types of ceiling tiles?”

A: Industry standards for lighting are widely published. ACSM (The American College of Sports Medicine), for example, publishes a book of design and operational standards that includes recommended illumination levels for a variety of uses.

While lighting standards are useful as a reference for a desired quantity of light (as measured by foot-candles) it should not become the sole determinant of a lighting design solution. It is not advisable to become overly focused on light quantities as measured by scientific instruments. The Human eye is not a scientific instrument and is more amenable to quality of light than quantity of light. Indirect lighting, for example, will often be perceived by the eye as brighter than direct lighting, even though an equivalent amount of direct lighting will always measure out at a higher level of foot candles. When the eye can see the full brightness of a light source, it is like an automatic camera, closing down the lens aperture to keep excess light from “blinding” the film.....thus everything else, except the light source, appears darkened. The benefits of energy efficient, purpose driven lighting design are considerable and easily warrant the involvement of licensed design professionals.

Ceiling tiles should be selected to optimize their functionality as a reflector of light and an absorber of sound..... in some applications there is a case to be made for eliminating the ceiling tiles altogether and leaving an exposed structure visible through an open grid.

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