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| IALA Guideline  Updated in ENG8 |

G1133

Marine signal lights - Calculation of Luminous intensity and range

Edition x.x

Document date

Revisions to this IALA document are to be noted in the table prior to the issue of a revised document.

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# Introduction

A suitable luminous intensity is one of the basic features of a light. The intensity should be high enough to ensure that the light is visible for navigation as required. It should not be too bright to avoid glare.

Normally the operating expense is strongly influenced by the luminous intensity. A 10-cd-light can be realized by a cheap and small lantern immediately available from stock of a manufacturer. A sector light of about 1 000 000 cd will require a special design and will be produced for a single position.

# Physical basics

## Luminous intensity

The brightness of the light emitted by a signal lantern is expressed with the luminous intensity . The unit is candela (cd [1]). ‘Luminous intensity‘ and ‘luminous range’ are abbreviated to ‘intensity’ and ‘range’ in some chapters of this guideline. Unless otherwise stated, all intensities referred to in this document are effective intensities. The effective intensity considers the flash duration, shape and how they are perceived by human observers. For more information, please refer to Recommendation R0204 and Guideline G1135.

## Illuminance

Illuminance, ,is the amount of light falling on a surface, which, in this guideline, is the eye of the observer. The unit is lux (lx [1]).

## Meteorological visibility

The light emitted is attenuated by absorption and scattering in the atmosphere. This attenuation is specified by the ‘meteorological visibility’. Its unit is metres or nautical miles (1 852 metres = 1 nautical mile).

Although meteorological visibility is described by a distance or length, its value does not represent a range to determine the useful distance of a light or a daymark.

There are other ways to describe the attenuation of the atmosphere. These are shown in the Annex.

## Allard’s law

Allard’s law allows the calculation of the illuminance as a function of distance, luminous intensity and the meteorological visibility.

Equation 1 Allard’s law

Where:

is the illuminance at the eye of the observer

is the luminous intensity

is the meteorological visibility (IALA dictionary 2-1-280)



Figure 1 Quantities for Allard’s law

* 1. **Luminous intensity calculations**

Rearranging Equation 1 (Allard’s Law) gives an equation to calculate the luminous intensity of a marine signal light.

***Equation 2 Luminous intensity calculation***

The required intensity (I) for a light depends on the zone of utilisation, some fixed values for the illuminance at the eye of the observer and the meteorological visibility.



***Figure 2 Example of a zone of utilisation (red striped)***

The zone of utilisation is usually limited by the maximum and minimum useful distances and .

The maximum distance determines the minimum luminous intensity the light should have. When approaching the light, the illuminance at the eye becomes greater. If the illuminance becomes too high at minimum viewing distance , glare can occur. can therefore be used to calculate a maximum luminous intensity for a light.

* + 1. **Minimum luminous intensity**

The calculation of the required luminous intensity of a marine signal light is based on the input of

* the maximum distance the light will be used,
* the required minimum illuminance at the eye of the observer at ; and
* a local conditions value for the meteorological visibility .

The luminous intensity calculated will be the minimum required luminous intensity .

***Equation 3 Minimum luminous intensity***

Whereas the maximum distance varies with each light and its position to the waterway, there are values recommended for the illuminance and the meteorological visibility.

* + 1. **Maximum luminous intensity**

At a short distance a light may appear very bright and it may even cause glare. To avoid this, a maximum luminous intensity should be defined. This can be calculated by Allard’s law and

* the minimum distance the light will be used,
* the maximum acceptable illuminance at the eye of the observer to avoid glare at  ; and
* a maximum value for the meteorological visibility .

***Equation 4 Maximum luminous intensity***

* + 1. **Design intensity**

The calculation of the minimum and maximum luminous intensity normally gives an interval . The design intensity , the intensity that defines the published range of the light, should be between:

In many cases the interval is very large . For practical purposes, it is advised to link the intended luminous intensity during design procedure of a light to the minimum value . However, due to equipment tolerances, an optional factor may be applied to the minimum intensity . For example, if a factor of 1.2 is used, then the equation is written as:

***Equation 5 Design luminous intensity***

In a few cases the calculated minimum may become larger than the maximum . In that case it must be decided whether glare at a near position of the observer is accepted or the intensity may be reduced.

### Photometric intensity

Photometric Intensity,, is the intensity as would be measured at a light testing facility. Unlike the design intensity, it does not consider the service condition factor and losses due to glazing and astragals and will therefore have a higher value than the design intensity.

# Key calculation parameters

For the Aid to Navigation to be effective to the mariner, several factors need to be considered to calculate the design intensity and photometric intensity.

## Minimum illuminance at the observer’s eye

For many years, marine signal lights were designed for situations without any additional disturbing lights. The situation has changed and additional lights, interfering with the signal light, must be considered. The influence of additional lighting is termed as background lighting and can be divided in two different types:

* background luminance: smooth halo of light produced by scattered light; and
* rival lights: appearing as point lights, seen directly by the observer.



background luminance

rival

lights

leading line

buoys

Figure 3 Marine signal lights, background lighting\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*Leading lights to be covered in a separate document

The influence of background luminance is covered by adjusting the minimum illuminance at the eye of the observer.

Rival lights are treated in this document at a later step (See Chapter 4).

The minimum illuminance at the eye of the observer depends on the background luminance found at the position of the light. The values in Table 1 are used to define the minimum illuminance [3].

Table 1 Minimum illuminance at the eye of the observer

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Background | Relevant lights |  |
| Lights for night-time use |  |  |
| - no background luminance | all lights except leading lights |  |
| - no background luminance | leading lights |  |
| - minor background luminance | all lights |  |
| - substantial background luminance | all lights |  |
| Lights for daytime use | all lights |  |

Although it is still acceptable to use the table, there are two aspects, which may require a more detailed investigation.

* The definition of the background is not based on physical quantities and cannot be measured. It is only based on the estimation of an observer (mariner).
* The ratio between the different values for the illuminance is 10 and therefore the minimum luminous intensity may increase by a factor 10 or 100, when it is assumed to have background illumination. This may lead to very intense and expensive lights. This can be solved by using the equation 6.

A formula for the calculation of the required illuminance as a function of the background luminance has already been used for many years [4]. Its main purpose was for daytime lights only. However, the values of the formula fit very well to the existing values, so it can be interpreted as an interpolation of these values.

Equation 6 as a function background luminance

Where:

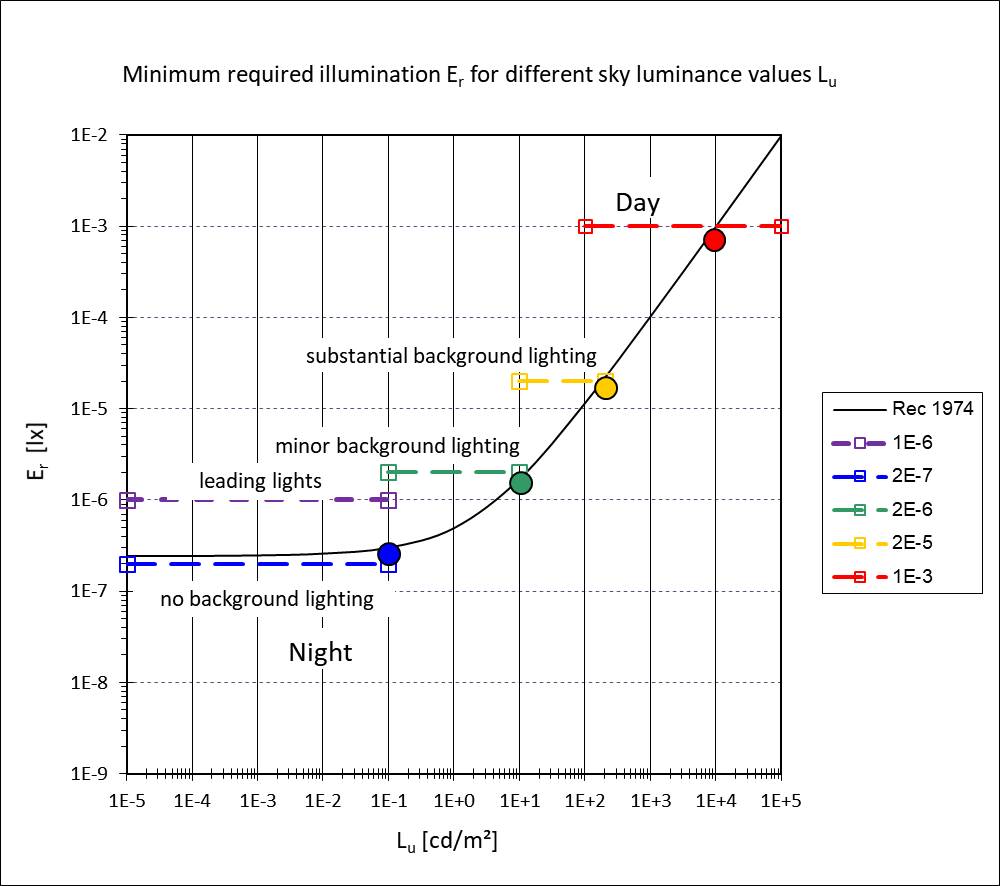
is the minimum Illuminance at the eye of the observer in []

is the background luminance near the light in

Remarks:

There is a difference of about 20% when the value is calculated from Equation 6 with or drawn from Table 1. It is suggested that with no background illumination the value is used and if background illumination is considered and can be measured () Equation 6. If the illumination cannot be measured the values of table 1 should be used.

The chart below shows the minimum required illumination for different sky luminance values.



### Measuring background luminance

The background luminance can be measured with a luminance meter. A luminance meter has an ocular where the object to be measured is marked by a circular reticle. The luminance of the surface inside the reticle is measured.



reticle

leading line

halo

Figure 4 Measuring background luminance (restarted here)

Measurement procedure should consider that:

* the meteorological visibility should be greater than 4 M during measurement;
* the measuring field (reticle) should:
  + be placed nearby the signal light;
  + not contain rival lights (point lights);
  + be illuminated uniformly; and
* the measurement distance should be near the minimum distance .

## Maximum illuminance at the eye of the observer

The maximum illuminance is defined in Table 2 with two values depending on background luminance.

Table 2 Maximum illuminance at the eye of the observer

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| background luminance |  |
| * none | 0.01 |
| * present | 0.1 |

## Minimum meteorological visibility

The nominal range of a light is defined for a meteorological visibility of 10 nautical miles (18 520 m). However, in many regions this visibility is a rare occurrence, so the light may not always be visible at the nominal range.

To improve the visual performance of a light, it is recommended to select a visibility value, , based on local conditions, for the intensity calculations, which may be lower than 10 M.

The competent authority should choose a percentile value from the historical meteorological data depending on the degree of risk associated with the light. For example, a light with a nominal range of 15 M is unlikely to be seen at nominal range with a visibility of less than 10 M. The likelihood of the light being seen will depend on distance and the statistical variation of visibility for a given location in time.

with a meteorological visibility of 18 M or greater for 90% of the time may be appropriate for a location. This may result in a light with a published nominal range of 19 M.

At locations where navigation is more difficult (higher degree of risk) a meteorological visibility of 18 M or greater for 50% of the time might be more appropriate. This may result in a light with a published nominal range of 20 M.

An example for the relative frequency of the meteorological visibility is shown in Figure 5. It is based on meteorological historical data [5]. The meteorological visibility of 10 M or higher occurs approximately 50% of the time (Position 1 in the figure). Therefore, a light, which is calculated with a minimum visibility of 10 M, is visible at a maximum distance, , only 50% of the time.



Figure 5 Relative frequency of meteorological visibility (Example1 )

To improve this the minimum visibility for intensity calculation is lowered. If the light should be visible for 75% of the time should be approx. 4.3 M (pos. 2) and for 85% is approx. 2.3 M (pos. 3).

Table 3 Relative frequency of meteorological visibility (Example 2)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Visibility (Spain) | | |
| PLACE | >70% days per year (M) | >90% days per year (M) |
| Cantabric coast and Galicia | 6.2 | 3.9 |
| Huelva - Cadiz | 7.5 | 5.2 |
| Ceuta | 5.8 | 3.8 |
| Mediterranean coast- and Balear islands | 8.2 | 5.8 |
| Canary islands | 11.7 | 8.5 |

## Maximum meteorological visibility

The maximum visibility is used to estimate glare from a near position. In a ‘worst case scenario’ this calculation should be done for a very good meteorological visibility.

is the preferred value for this purpose.

Some administrations use ‘infinity’ instead (). In this case Allard’s law cannot be used, but .

## Service condition factor

Alwyn + Dave

## Flash profile

Alwyn + Dave

## Glazing and Astragals

Alwyn

# Rival lights

With the calculation described in chapter 2 and 3, an intensity for the marine signal light is determined. However, there may be other lights (rival lights) near the marine signal light, showing the same or a higher intensity.

This may influence the recognition of the marine signal light.

Rival lights may be:

* illumination of ports, roads and buildings,
* navigation lights on vessels,
* aeronautical lights,
* road traffic lights,
* other marine signal lights.

## Illumination of areas, roads and buildings

These lights should have a light cone (luminous intensity distribution) which covers the illuminated surface only. When done properly, there will be no direct light into the direction of the waterway. Only scattered light should be visible, which is added to the background illumination (halo).

However, in many situations there will be some direct light pointing into the direction of the waterway and interfering with a marine signal light (Figure 6).



Figure 6 A rival light

In that case the operator of the illumination equipment should be contacted and measures should be taken to remove the direct light.

This can be done either by rotating the lantern to move the light cone away from the waterway or by introducing cut-off-screens (Figure 7).



Figure 7 Using a cut-off-screen to remove direct light

## Navigation lights on vessels

The navigation lights on vessels are defined by IMO COLREGs, Rule 22 and Annex I [6]. In many situations navigation lights (on a vessel) and marine signal lights (lighthouse, beacon, buoy) may be easily distinguished by the flash characters, as navigation lights normally are steady burning lights and signal lights are flashing.

However, this is not always true and therefore it makes sense to look at the intensities of the navigation lights and harmonize them with the signal lights.

The top light of a navigation light is the most intense light on a vessel and its luminous intensity is linked to the length of a vessel.

Table 4 Luminous intensity of navigation lights on vessels

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| length of a vessel | luminous intensity (white, top) | luminous intensity (green, red) |
| L < 12 m | approx. 4.3 cd | 0.9 cd |
| 12 m ≤ L < 50 m | 12 - 52 cd | 4.3 cd |
| L ≥ 50 m | approx. 94 cd | 12 cd |

To compete with navigation lights, there should be a minimum luminous intensity defined for a marine signal light.

It may be considered that the luminous intensity of a marine signal light should not be less than the minimum value given in Table 5. For example, when a minimum intensity for a lighted buoy is calculated, the value should be replaced with .

Table 5 Minimum luminous intensity of a marine signal light

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Type of light | minimum luminous intensity |
| Lights on a buoy | 5 cd |
| Beacon / Lighthouse | 10 cd |
| Leading Light | 50 cd |

## Other signal lights

Aeronautical lights, road traffic signal lights and other marine signal lights may cause confusion with the signal light, the calculations are done for.

If it is not possible to remove direct light, which is going to the waterway, the intensity of the marine signal light may be increased beyond the design intensity (chapter 2.5.3).

An example is shown in Figure 8. The marine light is a sector light with three sectors. The coloured area shows the positions the sector light is used by the mariners. Next to the marine light there is a high intensity aeronautical light.



Figure 8 Intensity check for a rival aeronautical light

To ensure that the marine signal light will compete with the aeronautical light, the illuminance of the marine light should be at least the same as for the aeronautical light. The calculation should be done with Allard’s law with the local conditions visibility chosen in chapter 3.4. and some relevant positions.

In the example the observer is on a vessel in the white sector. The distance to the sector light is (marine light) and to the aeronautical light is (rival light).

The illuminance at the eye of the observer produced by the marine light at minimum visibility is:

.

The illuminance at the eye of the observer produced by the aeronautical light at minimum visibility is:

.

The illuminance produced by the marine light should be equal or greater than the illuminance of the aeronautical light:

.

This gives the inequation:

.

Rearranging the formula gives a minimum value for the luminous intensity of the marine signal light.

Equation 7 Inequation for the intensity of a marine light considering a rival light

.

The luminous intensity of the rival light has to be reported by the operator.

Some typical values are given in Table 6.

Table 6 Intensity of road traffic and aeronautical signal lights at night

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Purpose | Type | Luminous intensity | Characteristics |
| Aeronautical obstacle lights [7] | Low-intensity, Type A, red, fixed | 10 cd | omnidirectional |
| Low-intensity, Type B, red, fixed | 30 cd | omnidirectional |
| Medium intensity, Type A, white, flashing | 2000 cd | omnidirectional |
| Medium intensity, Type B,  red, flashing | 2000 cd | omnidirectional |
| Road traffic lights [8] | Green, Red, Yellow | 25 - 200 cd | pencil beam |

# Photometric luminous intensity

## In-ServiCe- and photometric intensity

The luminous intensity calculated in the chapters above is an intensity, which should be guaranteed, when the light is in operation. It is called in-service-intensity .

It is not the luminous intensity, which is measured in a light laboratory. The measured intensity is now called photometric intensity .

Factors relevant for calculation.

* A service condition factor   
  This factor includes the degradation of the luminous intensity caused by the aging of the light source, and dirt or salting of the lanterns.  
  The service condition factor is used for the minimum intensity values only. The maximum intensity is estimated for a ‘worst-case-scenario’ (avoid glare) and therefore it should estimated that the lantern was not aged and has the full intensity.  
  For many years IALA proposed to assume that the intensity reduction should be taken as 25% of the measured value in a laboratory ().
* The flash characters

effective intensity (IALA R0204)

peak intensity (IALA R0204)

* Glazing and astragals

Many lights are measured with fixed light and operated with different flashes. As the effective intensity depends on the flash character, it has to be calculated from the variation in time of the luminous intensity.

The measured luminous intensity of a signal light is now called photometric luminous intensity . It may vary with the horizontal and vertical angle and with time .

viewing distance

*D*

Allard’s Law

in-situ-

intensity *Iins*

service condition

flash profile

photometric

intensity *Iph*

Figure 9 Calculation process from distance to photometric intensity

## Steady burning lights

For steady burning lights the in-situ-intensity can be calculated from the nominal photometric intensity with:

Equation 8 In-situ-intensity, steady burning lights, design values

Equation 9 In-situ-intensity, steady burning lights, minimum values

(with intensity reduction, service condition)

As stated before the maximum value for the intensity is based on a ‘worst-case-scenario’, which assumes that the lantern is new. Therefore the service condition factor is not included or taken as ‘1’.

Equation 10 In-situ-intensity, steady burning lights, maximum values

(without intensity reduction)

## Fast switching lights

For a fast switching light the flash profile has a rectangular shape. For example, a flashing light shows two flashes (1) and (2) with different size (Figure 10).



Figure 10 Rectangular flash shape

The length of the shortest flash in seconds is used to calculate the effective intensity and then the in-situ-intensity of the light (the formula uses a time constant ).

Equation 11 In-situ-intensity, fast switching light, minimum values

Equation 12 In-situ-intensity, fast switching light, maximum values

## Arbitrary flash profile

For an arbitrary flash profile the profile function must be known. There are tools (link to the new recommendation and guideline) to calculate the in-situ-intensity from the profile function.

# Luminous intensity and range calculation

The calculations described above have the aim to determine the photometric luminous intensity of a light from the required viewing distances . Range calculation is just the opposite way.

viewing distance

parameters

background illumination

rival lights

luminous intensity

in-situ / photometric

intensity calculation

Figure 11 Intensity calculation

measured luminous

intensity

Parameters

Flash profile

parametric range

nominal range

Figure 12 Range calculation

There are two purposes for a range calculation.

* Calculation of the nominal range for the list of lights and the nautical charts,
* Calculation of a parametric luminous range depending on meteorological visibilty and background illumination.

The initial value for all range calculation is the measured or calculated effective luminous intensity of the existing lantern. The service condition factor is considered in any case, so all calculations are based on .

# Luminous intensity calculations

## Minimum luminous intensity

The calculation of the required luminous intensity of a marine signal light is based on the input of

* the maximum distance the light will be used,
* the required minimum illuminance at the eye of the observer at ,
* and a local conditions value for the meteorological visibility .

The luminous intensity calculated will be the minimum required luminous intensity .

Equation 3 Minimum luminous intensity

Whereas the maximum distance varies with each light and its position to the waterway, there are values recommended for the illuminance and the meteorological visibility.

## Maximum luminous intensity

At a short distance a light may appear very bright and it may even cause glare. To avoid this, a maximum luminous intensity should be defined. This can be calculated by Allard’s law and

* the minimum distance the light will be used,
* the maximum acceptable illuminance at the eye of the observer to avoid glare at
* and a maximum value for the meteorological visibilty .

Equation 4 Maximum luminous intensity

## Design intensity

The calculation of the minimum and maximum luminous intensity normally gives an interval the real intensity should be between:

In many cases the interval is very large . To reduce the expense for a light it is recommended to link the intended luminous intensity during design procedure of a light to the minimum value . However, due to equipment tolerances a factor may be added to the minimum intensity . It is suggested that this factor is 1.2x.

Equation 5 Design luminous intensity

In a few cases the calculated minimum may become larger than the maximum . In that case it has to be decided whether glare at a near position of the observer is accepted or the intensity may be reduced.























## Standard design methodology

The standard procedure to derive the required luminous intensity or intensity distribution from the nautical requirements is shown in this chapter.

When a light has sectors with different distances and , it may be useful to repeat the calculations for each sector. When the differences between the sectors are not too large, the calculation may be done with the largest value of and the lowest for .

### Step 1

Find the nautical requirements of light, which are described by

* the flash (minimum flash duration is ),
* the minimum distance ,
* the maximum distance ,

### Step 2

Fix the essential parameters for calculation.

* minimum illuminance at the eye of the observer
* maximum illuminance at the eye of the observer
* minimum meteorological visibility

### Step 3

Calculate the in-situ-intensity with Allard’s law.

* minimum :
* maximum : with ()
* design :

### Step 4

Check for rival lights. If rival lights have to be considered, estimate a new minimum intensity according to chapter 4.

### Step 5

Calculate the photometric intensity.

#### Steady burning light

with .

#### Fast switching light (rectangular flash profile, LED)

with and .

#### Lights with arbitrary flash profile

Use the concept of effective intensity to estimate the photometric luminous intensity.

## Examples for intensity calculations

### Example 1

A light with a maximum viewing distance of about has to be designed. There is no background illumination an the minimum visibility is assumed to be . The flash character is Iso 3s.

#### STEP 1

* the flash character Iso 3s has and an eclipse of
* the minimum distance is ,
* the maximum distance is .

#### STEP 2

As there is no background light the following values for the illuminance at the eye of the observer are chosen.

* minimum illuminance
* maximum illuminance
* minimum visibility .

#### STEP 3

Calculate the in-situ-intensity with Allard’s law.

* minimum :
* maximum :
* design :

#### Step 4

At the fairway no rival lights were to be considered and therefore the intensity is not adjusted.

#### Step 5

Photometric luminous intensity:

With and the photometric values are:

* minimum :
* maximum :
* design:

#### Result

The lantern should have a photometric luminous intensity of approx. . The required minimum intensity is .

### Example 2

A lantern for a small light buoy should be defined by its luminous intensity. The fairway is used by small vessels only and the required viewing distance is about 1 M. There is no background illumination. The flash character is Fl 4s and fast switching LED should be used.

#### STEP 1

* the flash character Fl 4s will be realized with and an eclipse of
* the minimum distance is ,
* the maximum distance is .

#### STEP 2

As there is no background light the following values for the illuminance at the eye of the observer are chosen.

* minimum illuminance
* maximum illuminance

As the fairway is of minor importance the minimum visibility for calculation is set to

* (see 3).

#### STEP 3

Calculate the in-situ-intensity with Allard’s law.

* minimum :
* maximum :
* design :

#### STEP 4

Check for rival lights . The calculated intensity of is low compared to the relevant navigation lights of a passing vessel.

According to 4.2 and Table 5 the minimum intensity is set to

and in consequence the design intensity becomes

The maximum intensity stays unchanged.

#### STEP 5

Photometric luminous intensity:

With and the photometric values are:

* minimum :
* maximum :
* design:

#### Result

The lantern should have a photometric luminous intensity of approx. . The required minimum intensity is .

# 

# Luminous range calculation

## Calculation process

Allard’s law cannot be rearranged to calculate a distance directly . So the calculation of a range requires a numerical approximation, which is done by an iterative process.

Equation 13 Allard’s Law

### Newton-Raphson method

To determine the range from Allard’s law the Newton-Raphson method can be used. Therefore a function is defined as:

Equation 14 Function F

and the range is the root of the function .

Equation 15 Range as the root of function F

The iteration process is started with an initial guess of the range called .

A better approximation is then found with the value:

Equation 16 First step

This process is continued:

Equation 17 Step n+1

When the sequence of values do not differ much from each other, the process can be stopped and the last value of is found to be a good approximation for the range.

Equation 18 Final step

with a small value.

The derivative of is

Equation 19 Derivative

### Application to luminous range calculation

For range calculation the input values should be restricted to specific intervals to ensure that the iteration works (converges).

Practical limitations are:

Illuminance:

Visibility: ( to )

Luminous intensity:

For the initial guess should be set to .

The accuracy may be chosen as: .

Iteration:

* Start with
* Next value: -
* Loop until:
* Result : The last value of iteration process is the luminous range.

## Nominal range

The nominal range is calculated with fixed values for visibility and illuminance.

Nominal range is defined for night and day time (link to new recommendation required).

* Nominal range for night time :  
  Visibility   
  Illuminance
* Nominal range for day time :  
  Visibility   
  Illuminance

The calculation is based on the effective intensity and considers a service condition factor of .

## Parametric luminous range

Any calculated luminous range, which is not a nominal range, should be named as a parametric range . As this value depends on the values for visibility and illuminance chosen, it is necessary to name these values when publishing a parametric range.

## Examples

A light was measured with an effective intensity of . Applying the service condition factor the in-situ-intensity will be .

Therefor the lantern has the following ranges:

* Night time nominal range:
* Day time nominal range :
* Parametric range for and a Visibility :

# Definitions

* In-situ luminous intensity  
  luminous intensity, which is used for luminous range calculation (effective intensity calculations and service condition factor are included)
* Parametric luminous range  
  a calculated luminous range which depends on special values for the minimum illuminance at the eye of the observer and the minimum meteorological visibilty
* Photometric luminous intensity  
  luminous intensity, which is measured in a laboratory or outdoor
* Rival light  
  A visible light nearby the marine signal light regarded, which may disturb the visual perception of the marine signal light

# Acronyms

maximum useful distance

minimum useful distance

maximum illuminance at the eye of the observer

illuminance at the eye of the observer produced by a marine light

minimum illuminance at the eye of the observer

illuminance at the eye of the observer produced by a rival light

design luminous intensity

in-situ luminous intensity

in-situ luminous intensity, design value

in-situ luminous intensity, maximum value

in-situ luminous intensity, minimum value

maximum luminous intensity

minimum luminous intensity

luminous intensity of a marine light

photometric luminous intensity

luminous intensity of a rival light

background luminance

meteorological visibility based on local conditions

maximum meteorological visibility

minimum meteorological visibility

distance between marine light and observer

distance between rival light and observer

service condition factor

1. Alternative Presentations of Allard’s Law

All calculations are based on Allard’s law. It calculates the illuminance of a signal light at the observer’s eye depending on the meteorological visibility and the distance between the light and the observer.

However very different presentations of this law are published. To avoid errors these different presentations are shown in the following sections.

The preferred version nowadays should use SI-units (International System of Units).

* 1. Physical presentation

A physical presentation of Allard’s law is given in Equation 20.

Equation 20 Allard’s Law, physical presentation

Where:

*E(d)* Illuminance at the eye of the observer

*I* Luminous intensity of the light

*z* exponential factor describing atmospheric absorption and scattering (extiction)

*d* distance between light and observer

In practice, there are alternative ways of characterizing the prevailing atmosphere as follows.

* 1. Allard’s lay using atmospheric transmissivity T

Atmospheric transmissivity (T) is defined as the ratio of the luminous flux transmitted by the atmosphere over a unit distance to the luminous flux which would be transmitted along the same path in a vacuum.

Equation 21 Transmissivity (luminous flux)

Where:

T atmospheric transmissivity (dimensionless)

luminous flux at the unit distance after passing through the atmosphere

theoretical luminous flux at the unit distance after passing through a vacuum

unit distance

Because the ratio of the luminous fluxes in Equation 21 is the same as the ratio of the corresponding illuminance values, Equation 21 can be rewritten as

Equation 22 Transmissivity (illuminance)

Where:

illuminance at the unit distance after passing through the atmosphere

theoretical illuminance at the unit distance after passing through a vacuum

Inserting expressions for and from Equation 20 into Equation 22, and noting that for , Equation 22 becomes

Equation 23 Transmissivity and exponential factor

Combining Equation 20 and Equation 23 yields

Equation 24 Allard’s law using transmissivity

* 1. Allard's law using the transmissivity TM for 1 nautical mile

The unit distance for transmissivity is chosen to be one nautical mile. Expressed in all metric units equation 5 takes the form

Equation 25 Allard's law using the transmissivity TM for 1 nautical mile

Where:

*E(d)* illuminance at distance d in metres

*I* luminous intensity in candela

*TM* atmospheric transmissivity [dimensionless] for 1 nautical mile

*d* distance in metres

*dU* unit distance that corresponds to the transmissivity [here: 1852 m]

In older publications the distance *d* is expressed in nautical miles. Using the fact that one nautical mile equals 1852 metres and suppressing the unit distance in the exponent Equation 25 can be written as

Equation 26

Where d is the distance in nautical miles.

Simplifying and suppressing all units yields

Equation 27 Allard’s law using nautical miles for the distance

Where:

*E(d)*  illuminance at the eye of the observer in lm/m2 [lx]

*I* luminous intensity of the light [cd]

*TM* transmissivity for one nautical mile of the atmosphere

*d* numerical value of the distance in nautical miles

* 1. Meteorological Visibility

The meteorological visibility is an alternative way to describe the extinction of the atmosphere, which in the development above is quantitatively characterised by the atmospheric transmissivity.

Meteorological visibility is the greatest distance at which a black object of suitable dimensions can be seen and recognized by day against the horizon sky, or, in the case of night observations, could be seen and recognized if the general illumination were raised to daylight level.

By definition the relationship between the meteorological visibility (*V*) and the transmissivity *TM* is

Equation 28 Meteorological visibility

Where:

*V* meteorological visibility in nautical miles

*TM* transmissivity [dimensionless] for one nautical mile

*dU* unit distance of 1 nautical mile

*ln* natural logarithm

Suppressing the unit distance yields:

Equation 29 Meteorological visibility in nautical miles

* 1. Allard’s Law based on Meteorological Visibility

It is recommended in the IALA dictionary that the atmospheric extinction be described by using meteorological visibility V rather than the transmissivity TM.

Allard's law can be expressed using meteorological visibility V by combining Equation 25 and Equation 28.

Equation 30 Allard’s law using meteorological visibility

Where:

*E(d)*  illuminance at the eye of the observer [lx]

*I* luminous intensity of the light [cd]

*d* distance in metres [m]

*V* meteorological visibility in metres [m]

In older publications the distance *d* and the visibility *V* are expressed in nautical miles. Equation 30 then becomes

Equation 31 Allard’s law using meteorological visibility and nautical miles

Where:

*E(d)* illuminance at the eye of the observer [lx]

*I* luminous intensity of the light [cd]

*d* distance in nautical miles

*V* meteorological visibility in nautical miles

the units (not shown) associated with (3.43×106) are m2/M2

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