

# Approved Document M

## Access and the use of buildings by *Don Holmes*

How electrical installation work in new buildings should be carried out to meet the specified requirements of Approved Document M

This article sets out to explain how electrical installation work in new buildings should be carried out to meet the specified requirements of Approved Document M, which came into force on the 1st May 2004. The first part of the article deals with buildings other than dwellings, which will be of interest to electricians involved with commercial installations. The last part looks at dwellings.

Part M of the Building Regulations 2000 requires reasonable provision to be made to enable people to gain access to and use a building and its facilities. It includes guidance for people with visual and physical disabilities.

### Buildings and other dwellings

Let's start by looking at Section 4 of Approved Document M, which covers facilities in buildings other than dwellings, such as:

- lecture and conference facilities
- entertainment and leisure
- social venues

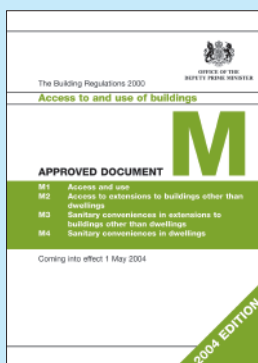
- refreshment facilities and bars
- a proportion of sleeping accommodation, e.g. hotels, motels and student accommodation

**Within this section a part is devoted to the position of switches, outlets and controls.**

When an electrical installation is being designed and installed, consideration must be given to the ease of identification and use, without obstruction of switches, socket outlets, other outlet points, such as TV and telephone, thermostats and programmers for heating systems, door intercoms and doorbell pushes.

*Note: It is important that all users, including those with visual and physical impairment, should be able to locate a control, recognise the settings and be able to use it without inadvertently making a change to the setting.*

The following table sets out the required installation heights of switches, outlets and controls.



**Table 1 Properties other than a dwelling**

#### Wall-mounted accessories and controls

#### Installation height above floor level

Socket-outlets	400 mm to 1000 mm
TV outlets	400 mm to 1000 mm
Telephone points	400 mm to 1000 mm
Switches for permanently wired appliances, e.g. cooker	400 mm to 1200 mm
Simple push button controls	1200 mm
Controls requiring precise hand movement	750 mm to 1200 mm
Controls requiring close supervision, e.g. heating system programmers and thermostats (thermostats to be fitted at the higher level)	1200 mm to 1400 mm
Light switches used by the general public, to be aligned with door handles	900 mm to 1100 mm
Pull cords	Cord set above floor level
For lighting circuits (fitted with a 50mm bangle), visually contrasting with location, background and any emergency system pull cord	900 mm to 1100 mm
For emergency alarm systems	800 mm to 1000 mm
Shall be coloured red, located close to a wall and have two red 50mm bangles set at 100mm	800 mm to 1000 mm

In the case of persons who are visually impaired controls should contrast with their surroundings. Any switches that need operating should be large push pad types. The use of and should be avoided for use as on/off indicators. When panels are used with individual switches they should be well separated to avoid the operation of any adjacent switch in error.

*Note 1: When socket outlets are set in the floor, as is often the case in open plan offices, then the height restrictions do not apply.*

*Note 2: Socket outlets should be no nearer to doorways than 350mm.*

### Dwellings

Section 8 of Approved Document M deals with accessories, switches and socket outlets in dwellings. The section sets out the heights from floor level of wall-mounted switches, socket-outlets and any other equipment in habitable rooms, to enable persons with physical disabilities who have limited reach to be able to operate them.

Part M does not apply to an extension of, or material alteration to a dwelling. However on completion, it must be no worse with respect to Part M.

This is achieved by ensuring the requirements of the following table are met.

Table 1 Dwellings	
Wall-mounted accessory and controls	Installation height above floor level
Switches	450 mm to 1200 mm
Socket-outlets	Above 450 mm
TV outlets	Above 450 mm
Telephone points	Above 450 mm
Thermostats	450 mm to 1200 mm
Programmers	450 mm to 1200 mm
Door entry phone	450 mm to 1200 mm
Doorbell	450 mm to 1200 mm

The illustration below indicates these requirements and concludes this article on Approved Document M.

