5.7 Outdoor lighting and power, sheds and garages

Outdoor lighting and power, and electrical installations in sheds, garages and greenhouses are within the scope of Part P of the Building Regulations. Furthermore, outdoor lighting and outdoor power circuits are not allowed the minor works relaxation. The addition of a lighting point or socket-outlet to an existing outdoor lighting or power circuit is notifiable work.

5.7.1 The risk

The general rules for outdoor circuits and equipment apply to all gardens including domestic gardens. Outdoor installations are subject to additional requirements including:

i a socket-outlet rated at 32 A or less is to be additionally protected by a 30 mA RCD
ii an item of portable equipment rated at less than 32 A and connected via a flex outlet is required to be protected by a 30 mA RCD.

5.7.2 Fixed cables

Cables must be protected against direct exposure to sunlight. Cables must be permanently fixed in a protected location or mechanically protected or buried.

Cables buried in the ground have to be buried at a sufficient depth to avoid damage by any disturbance of the ground reasonably likely to occur. As a general rule the minimum depth in all locations should be 500 mm. Double digging is likely to occur in a vegetable plot and if cable is laid in such a location should be at least 600 mm deep.

A buried cable is to be marked by cable covers or a suitable marking tape. It must be remembered that the layout of a garden can be changed and care should be taken to install cables where they are not likely to be damaged or disturbed; such as by laying the cable around the edge of the plot and at sufficient depth. A buried cable route should be identified by a route markers and recorded on drawings retained with the completion certificate. Cables should be buried at least 500 mm, preferably deeper, below the lowest ground level and route marker tape used, laid along the cable route approximately 150 mm below the surface. Buried cables are to be steel wire armoured or metal sheathed or enclosed in a conduit or duct.

Cables need to be shielded against prolonged exposure to direct sunlight, particularly grey and white pvc cables. Cables with a black or rubber sheath are recommended if direct exposure cannot be avoided. Ultraviolet light from the sun will degrade pvc and unless shielded will shorten the life. Black PVC and rubber cables have a reasonable life outdoors.

5.7.3 Socket-outlets

Socket-outlets installed out of doors must be of a weatherproof construction (minimum IP54) and must be protected by a 30 mA RCD.

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