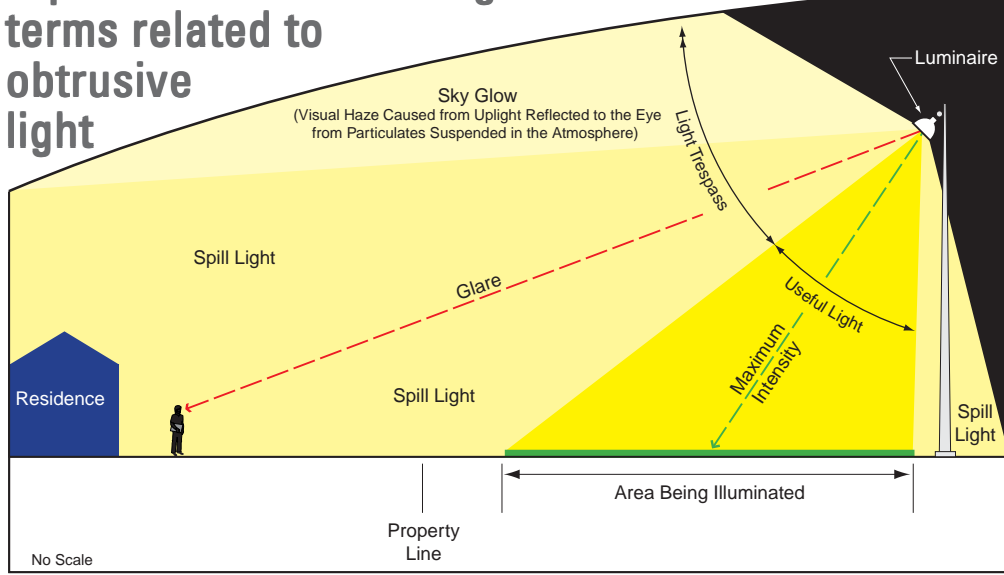


# Obtrusive Light Vocabulary

A primer on the meanings of common terms related to obtrusive light



Even professionals get confused when it comes to the terms related to obtrusive light. This was evident when a recent project meeting degraded into a heated discussion between two participants about whether the term “light pollution” referred to light falling off the project site or being cast into the sky.

Obtrusive light is any light which, because of quantitative, directional, or spectral attributes in a given context, causes annoyance, discomfort, distraction, or a reduction in the ability to see essential information. For classification purposes, obtrusive light is divided into three categories.

## Spill Light

Spill is illuminance falling beyond the area that is being lighted. Spill light is easily measured using an illuminance meter and is expressed in lux or footcandles (fc). Designers can calculate the amount of spill light an installation will produce if a number of variables are known. *Spill light may also be called overspill or light trespass.*

## Glare

Glare is the presence of luminous intensity that bothers the human eye. Glare occurs when the amount of light observed is significantly more than that to which the eye is adapted. Glare is expressed as candelas per meter squared ( $\text{cd}^2$ ), and can be calculated. Measurement of glare

requires expensive specialized equipment. Engineers classify glare according to its effect on the human experience, including the following.

*Disability Glare* is the presence of an amount of glare so significant that it prevents adequate vision. Objects in the field of vision are obscured and the individual is disabled from performing a visual task.

*Discomfort Glare* is a sufficient amount of glare to cause discomfort. Visual tasks can be performed, but the experience is unpleasant.

*Nuisance Glare* is the presence of a sufficient amount of glare as to be bothersome or attract attention, but not enough to cause discomfort or prevent the performance of visual tasks.

## Sky Glow

Sky glow is the visible haze or glow seen above lighted areas that reduces the ability to view the darkened nighttime sky. Sky glow is created when light being emitted from fixtures and being cast upwards off of surfaces such as roadways is reflected to the eye off particulates suspended in the atmosphere. There is no established means to calculate or measure it. Sky glow is a legitimate major concern for astronomers is also called *light pollution*. Sky glow may be considered *light trespass*.

# Advisor

An e-newsletter keeping owners and design professionals informed of advances in technology and practice

## Issue 1-04

This issue of the Advisor may be of interest to the following individuals

- Architects
- Landscape Architects
- Civil Engineers
- Traffic Engineers
- Environmental Specialists
- Public Officials

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