



Job Title: Lighting Desk Operator
Department: Lighting Department

Overview of role

Working with the Gaffer and Director of Photography, the Lighting Desk Operator in high-end TV and scripted film is responsible for the design, programming and operation of the lighting control desk for productions. They are also responsible for documenting changes to control system designs, keeping records of scenes and storing show files.

On larger projects, the Lighting Desk Operator may engage other Desk Operators or dedicated Network Technicians to install and manage lighting control systems, especially across multiple sites.

Core responsibilities:

These core responsibilities are provided as a guide and are not exhaustive. The exact responsibilities on a particular production will vary depending on the scale and budget band.

1. Design and build lighting control systems

- Identify control system requirements and any specific looks or effects from lighting plots, practical plots, scripts, breakdowns, scripted effects, and from the Director of Photography, Gaffer and other relevant departments
- Consider integration of emergency lighting by discussion with appropriate Heads of Department
- Create (or adopt) a mutually agreeable labelling system to identify fixed, temporary and dimmed circuits
- Use an uninterruptible power supply system for the Lighting Desk and control network when required
- Design and select the appropriate control platform and assess the requirements of a back up system
- Create a drawing of labelled components, network cable runs and power requirements relative to the plot or floorplan
- Create the patch and label the plot with the fixture address numbers
- Use pre-vis software to build a virtual rig
- Program rough "looks" that can be modified or built upon later
- Develop grouping, shortcut controls and multiple command macros to maximise efficiency
- Agree verbal shortcuts to regularly used instructions with the Director of Photography and the Gaffer

2. Use digital and physical filing systems

- Agree record keeping methods for levels and looks for scenes, slates or set ups
- Document all changes to control system designs
- Save show-files regularly, and in multiple locations
- Always ensure most recent versions are being used
- Keep all documentation and show files safe post shoot, for later reshoots or pick-ups

3. Install designed lighting control systems

- Install data networking items and access points
- Ensure network ip and DMX addresses do not clash and are correctly assigned to each component
- Create a path or gain access to shared digital show files and share patch information with rigging team
- Ensure firmware and software components use the most up to date stable versions
- Ensure lighting control plan is followed with all items and cables correctly labelled
- Update drawings with circuit numbers and other relevant information
- Test installed lighting control system
- Adjust lighting fixtures as per instructions
- Fine tune the overall look(s)
- Save desired looks from prelights

4. Operate control platform during shooting

- Enforce wireless transmission protocols to avoid radio interference between systems in use by other departments
- Request live feed from camera to aid in setup and triggering cues
- Make changes to positioning, direction, colour, colour temperature or intensity to achieve desired effects in consultation with the Director of Photography and Gaffer
- Inform Director of Photography and 1st Assistant Director how long it will take to achieve prescribed changes
- Create cues, chases and effects for playback as required
- Devise clear trigger cues on command, this could be verbal, taking cues from the action or integrating remote or in vision switches.
- Monitor any feedback from lighting control system to identify potential issues
- Communicate issues with rigging or networking teams for investigation or repair when system is not in use

5. Deal with equipment failure

- Where faults are non-control issues, assist lighting team to rectify
- Where faults are caused by control issues, methodically check programming to ensure patch, cues, triggers and so on are correct
- Identify and isolate the causes of faults
- Update others on how long it will take to rectify
- Fix faults where possible by making changes, using back-up systems, or “rolling back” to a previous show file
- Remove faulty equipment from service when faults cannot be fixed
- Request, fit and test replacement equipment or parts when required
- Inform Gaffer when issue is rectified
- Change future working practices, software and firmware to avoid similar future faults

6. Derig lighting control systems

- Return all fixtures to their “home” position
- Dismantle, clean and box up control system components
- Pack away control platform for transportation
- Write reports on any equipment that may need analysis

7. Follow health, safety and welfare requirements

- Work in line with Industry recognised, and production specific health and safety practices
- Follow regulations and policy when using display screen equipment
- Dress appropriately and use required personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Familiarise self with latest versions of risk assessment method statements (RAMS)
- Identify team medic and location of hospital from call sheets or signage

- Keep facilities and workstation clean and tidy
- Identify and report any close calls, accidents or breaches to health and safety, rectifying issues to prevent reoccurrence when applicable
- Report any safety items used so they can be replaced
- Follow policies and report any bullying, harassment or mental health issues
- Enforce policy and guidance relating to remote lighting effects such as strobing, ultra violet and smoke
- Report any issues to supervisor

Role specific skills:

- Designing and building lighting control systems
- Calculating fixture numbers, DMX channels, IP addresses etc. to ensure full control of individual heads, or groups of heads, including cue timings and saving for recall as required.
- Adjusting and operating lighting control systems to achieve desired look
- Advising others on interactions between systems and expected results of changes to systems

Other / Transferable Skills:

- Communication. Liaising with other departments about their lighting requirements and the implications of lighting work on them and following radio etiquette when using the radio
- Organisation. Following call sheets and movement orders, keeping timesheets and preparing and submitting invoices
- Problem-solving. Methodically identifying the causes of faults in equipment
- Securing work. Collating proof of competency and experience, establishing and negotiating rate, and clarifying and approving deal memo and contract
- Driving. Driving production-controlled vehicles and operating licenced machines, keeping logs of operation and reporting defects and accidents.

On larger projects

- People management. Assigning duties and overseeing work of network teams and additional Rigging Desk Operators

Attributes

- Resilience, Enthusiasm and Curiosity - Adapts positively to changing work priorities and patterns, ensuring deadlines continue to be met. Is proactive and explores new ideas and non-standard ways of working which will enhance and deliver the best results for the production
- Productivity - Organises work effectively and achieves required results within deadlines. Demonstrates the drive and energy to get things done in pressurised situations and escalates appropriately when necessary.
- Ethics and Integrity - Honest and principled in all their actions and interactions. They will be respectful and inclusive of others, and meet the ethical requirements of their profession.
- Flexibility - Willing to both listen and respond to changing priorities and working requirements as required, while at all times maintaining high standards in a constantly changing production environment.