

What's my scene?

LIGHTING IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE TRULY AUTOMATED HOME. **HARRY SIMIDIS** EXPLAINS THE IMPORTANCE OF LIGHTING SCENES AND WHAT THEY CAN ADD TO AN INSTALLATION.

One of the many benefits that lighting control systems afford their owners is the elegance of scenes, such as 'Welcome Home', 'Goodbye' and 'Goodnight'.

Scenes empower the home-owner to orchestrate all the systems with one touch of a button. They also serve to enhance the functionality of other sub-systems, such as security and access control, by lighting up the home when there's a security threat or illuminating a path into the home upon arrival.

This article will examine some typical lighting scenarios commonly found in many homes that feature lighting control systems.

Possibly one of the most identifiable scenes is that of 'Welcome Home'. The intent behind this scene is to light up the home upon arrival, instilling a sense of warmth and welcome. The homes' architectural features are accentuated and dark corners are illuminated, also providing a sense of security. This scene may sometimes be extended to include motorised window treatments, such as curtains and blinds, in addition to other connected sub-systems such as air conditioning and floor heating. Control through to multi-room audio systems is also possible, further personalising the Welcome Home scene to the individual

who has disarmed the system and activated the sequence.

In order for the Welcome Home scene to be most useful, it's necessary that it takes into account environmental conditions at the time of activation. Some factors to be considered include the following:

- Time of day (or using daylight sensors to determine the ambient light levels)
- Location (at the front door, at the garage entry)
- Trigger (directly from the user, from security system)

Scenarios such as Welcome Home typically affect the majority of the home, so prevention measures should be included to reduce the likelihood of an accidental activation. One of the simplest ways to implement this is to ensure activation can only be achieved by depressing the button for an extended period of time – this will avoid tripping the scene when searching for a simple light button for that room alone. I find that a delay in the order of two to three seconds is usually adequate.

It is also not usually necessary to light up the entire home. Typically, the most immediate areas are illuminated at acceptable levels, including pathways to upper or lower floors. On projects where the living areas connect to outdoor

entertaining I've also been requested to light up darker parts of the rear garden that could easily harbour would-be intruders.

In addition to switching lights on, some consideration should also be given to switching lights off after a certain amount of time. This is relevant in instances where the Welcome Home scene has been triggered from the basement garage, and areas on that floor are illuminated for easier access to the upper living areas. After a nominated period of time, the system then assumes that the occupant has moved to the upper floors and proceeds to switch the lights off. The primary benefit of doing this is to conserve energy that would be wasted by lights forgotten on, downstairs. This concept can also be applied to the Panic, Goodnight and Goodbye scenes.

The Panic (or Duress) scene is usually associated with providing immediate lighting when an alarm is triggered. Panic scenes can instantly light up both the interior and exterior of the home, exposing any criminal activity thus making it harder to disguise. This can provide another line of defence against intruders, and peace of mind for the occupant.

In one instance we were requested to





make all the internal and external lights of the home flash on and off when the security alarm was triggered intending to draw as much attention to the home as possible. Any functionality such as this, however, needs to be tempered with the operating ability of the activated equipment to perform in this manner. For instance, flashing lights on and off over prolonged periods of time will inevitably affect their mortality rates.

The Panic scene can also be tied in with equipment such as smoke detectors. In the instance where a fire alert occurs, the system could be made to illuminate all egress pathways such as halls and corridors, much like a commercial installation. Motorised curtains and blinds could also be incorporated in the scenario.

In our experience, Panic buttons are most suitably located bedside, in the master bedroom, although I have implemented the facility in bathroom areas where the likelihood of medical alert was considered most probable. Again, a longer than normal press to activate this type of functionality is usually a good idea.

The Goodnight and Goodbye scenes closely resemble each other in that they both switch lights off. The major difference between the two is that instead of switching all lights off, the Goodnight scene program needs to take into account

additional parties within the home, such as a student studying for exams or perhaps someone enjoying a book in the privacy of their room. Accordingly, it's probably a good idea to exclude the bedrooms and bathrooms from this scene. Allowing the lights in corridors to dim to off over, say, 10 minutes may also prove to be very useful.

The Goodbye scene usually switches off all lights in the home. On occasions we've been requested to also activate an 'Away' scenario. In such instances the lights throughout the home play out a sequence of operation closely resembling day to day activity, thus making the home appear occupied during periods of absence.

There are many ways to implement this, one of which involves the use of timers while another involves the physical capture of activity on the system over a period of time then replaying this back, with obvious exclusions such as garage doors opening and closing.

Blinds opening and closing on the other hand have been found to be very popular inclusions in these types of scenes.

One of the most important features of an integrated approach to scenarios is to ensure that the occupant is made aware of what activity is happening at any given instance and its duration. A more commonly referred to term for this is 'feedback'.

Feedback can be implemented in many ways, one of which is the flashing of the scene indicator button in operation at the time until it completes. Further, some consideration should also be given to excluding multiple system-wide scenes being activated simultaneously.

Although very sophisticated functionality can be achieved through the power of lighting control systems, what's actually implemented should almost always be kept very simple at first, or at least until the occupant develops a familiarity, understanding and, above all, confidence with their system.

In addition to solid documentation, as a minimum the installer should consider walking the occupant through the home briefly explaining the control regime. It's fair to say that a well designed and implemented system shouldn't require too much time to explain, as its operation and usage should largely be intuitive.

Further, some form of training can save the installer countless hours in return visits on account of complaints about "why the lights switch themselves off?" **CHA**

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