

Building Control bulletin

Implementation of Approved Document P 'Electrical Safety'

December 2004

Environmental Services Department

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) have been concerned that risks posed by unsafe electrical installations have been increasing in recent years. To combat the problem the ODPM have introduced new Building Regulations, Part P 'Electrical Safety', which comes into effect on 1 January 2005.

The government has created Part P to cover the safety of fixed electrical installation work on domestic premises. It is the first time in England and Wales that the standard of electrical installation work comes under statutory scrutiny. Local authorities will enforce this and it will be a criminal offence if you do not comply.

Part P states that "Fixed electrical installations in dwellings shall be suitably designed, installed, inspected and tested so as to provide reasonable protection against their being the source of a fire or a cause of injury to persons." The agreed standard to show compliance are the 'fundamental principles' for safety set out in Chapter 13 of BS7671:2001 (the IEE Wiring Regulations).

The requirements of Part P1 state:

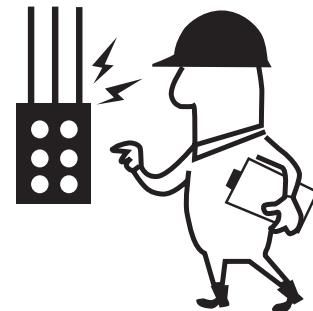
"Reasonable provision shall be made in the design, installation, inspection and testing of electrical installations in order to protect persons from fire and injury".

The requirements of Part P2 state:

"Sufficient information shall be provided so that persons wishing to operate, maintain or alter an electrical installation can do so with reasonable safety".

The requirements of Part P only apply to electrical installations that are intended to operate at low (for example, less than 1000v) or extra-low voltage and are:

- in new dwellings or flats;
- extensions or alterations to existing dwellings;
- in buildings normally exempt under the building regulations, such as conservatories, sheds, detached garages and greenhouses;
- in or on land associated with buildings, for example, garden lighting and pond pumps; or
- to the residential parts of any buildings which have a combined use (excluding lifts).



Why has Part P been introduced?

Government statistics show that fixed electrical installations in homes in England and Wales cause around 5 fatalities and more than 500 non-fatal injuries every year.

A further 25 deaths and 590 non-fatal injuries are caused by more than 12,500 fires in homes across the country which are reported as having an electrical source of ignition.

The objectives of the new regulations are to:

- regulate the industry to reduce the risk of death, injury and fire caused by electrical adaptations;
- hopefully improve the average level of competency and responsibility of those undertaking electrical work.
- raise the awareness of builders and householders of the need for care when carrying out electrical work.

When do I need to inform Building Control?

All electrical work must comply with BS7671 and the 16th edition wiring regulations. Under this legislation, an installation certificate must be issued to the homeowner in all circumstances.

In most cases where electrical installation works in dwellings are proposed you will need to notify Building Control under Part P of the Building Regulations before you start work. Unless when:

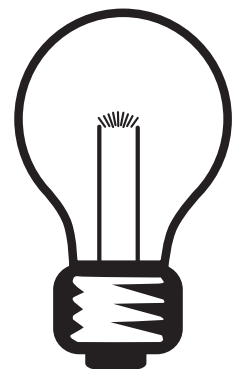
- The work is being carried out by an electrician who is qualified to 'self-certify' their work under 'The Competent Persons Scheme'.
- The work is of a minor nature, for example, additional sockets or switches to an existing circuit, and it is not in a kitchen, bathroom or 'special location'.
- Replacing sockets, switches or ceiling roses, even when they are in a kitchen, bathroom or 'special location'.
- Installing or upgrading main or supplementary equipotential ('earth') bonding.

What is a 'special location'?

Kitchens, bathrooms and special locations are areas where people are likely to walk around bare footed and perhaps wet.

Special installations and locations include:

- Locations containing a bathtub or shower basins
- Swimming pools or paddling pools
- Hot air saunas
- Electric floor or ceiling heating systems
- Garden lighting or power installations
- Solar photovoltaic (PV) power supply systems
- Small-scale generators such as micro CHP units
- Extra-low voltage lighting installations, other than pre-assembled, CE-marked lighting sets



Buildings such as conservatories, detached garages and sheds, which are usually exempt from the Building Regulations, will not be exempt from the requirements of Part P.

So, you will need consent for any electrical work in the house except for minor additions to an existing circuit outside the area of special risk defined as kitchen, bathroom and external areas.

What does Part P mean for electricians?

Unless an electrician becomes self-certified under the competent persons scheme, every installation they complete within a dwelling will have to be managed by Building Control. This could cause delays in completion of works, and cost the electrician and homeowner financially. Many electricians are therefore opting to be assessed by one of the government authorised bodies in the hope they will be certified as 'competent' to self-certify their own work.

Two bodies currently monitor electricians. These are the NICEIC and ECA. At the time of publication (December 2004) there are five organisations developed to manage the full self-certification registers under the Competent Persons scheme. These are BRE Certification Limited, British Standards Institute, ELECSA Limited, NICEIC, NICEIC Certification Services Limited, NAPIT. Three of these, ELECSA, NAPIT and NICEIC plus CORGI and OFTEC also run a scheme under which approved competent persons may self-certify limited electrical works in connection with a kitchen, bathroom or boiler installation. The contact details are on the back page.

It is important to note that an electrician may be a member of these organisations without being qualified to self-certify their work.

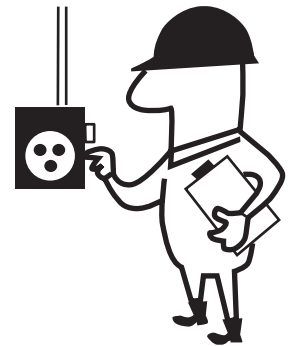
If electrical adaptations are being carried out by an individual or firm who is not qualified to self-certify, a Building Regulations application will have to be submitted to the local authority.

Complying

Electrical contractors will meet these requirements by following the important principles for safety set out in Chapter 13 of BS 7671: 2001. You can now download Approved Document P from www.odpm.gov.uk. The document emphasises the need for electrical installation work to be inspected and tested during and on completion of the work to check that it complies with BS7671.

What does Part P mean for agents and architects?

You must make it clear to your client the implications and responsibilities of these new electrical regulations. This is to avoid the possibility of problems developing during the project's construction phase and to reduce the risk of us having to take enforcement action against the owner.



The electrical work may form part of an application for a new house, extension or alterations. A question will be asked about the installation on the revised application forms, and a declaration must be made about the status of the electrician to be employed.

The plan should be endorsed with a specification that the work will comply with BS7671 and the 16th edition wiring regulations. This must include the provision of appropriate circuits protected by suitable safety devices. An example endorsement is shown below.

All electrical work required to meet the requirements of Part P (Electrical safety) must be designed, installed, inspected and tested by a person competent to do so.

Prior to completion the Council must be satisfied that either:

- A** An electrical installation certificate issued under the Competent Person Scheme has been issued; or
- B** Appropriate certificates and forms defined in BS 7671 have been submitted that confirm that the work has been inspected and tested by a competent person. A competent person will have sound knowledge and experience relevant to the nature of the work undertaken and to the technical standards set down in BS 7671, be fully versed in the inspection and testing procedures contained in the regulations and employ adequate testing equipment.

A competent person may be a member of NICEIC or ECA. In addition, in the case of 'minor works' (see part P for definition) an electrician qualified to at least City & Guilds 2391 is considered to be a competent person.

In the case of option B the person carrying out the work must arrange for a competent person to inspect the electrical installation at pre plaster stage and inspect and test prior to the installation being live.

Categories of electrician

A competent person has the necessary knowledge, skill and experience of the type of electrical work to be carried out to enable them to avoid the dangers that electricity can have on themselves or others. A person qualified to self-certify is a 'legal person', for example, a firm or an individual, registered with an electrician self-certification scheme authorised by the Secretary of State.

The different categories of electrician may be summarised as follows:

1 An electrician who is competent and is qualified to self-certify under the competent person scheme

To be eligible to self-certify electrical work, an electrician must prove their competence to design, install, inspect and test a domestic installation. In addition, they must have an understanding of the other Building Regulations, which may be affected by the work. These include:

- Part A - notches in joists and so on
- Part B - holes in fire resistant construction
- Part M - for height of sockets

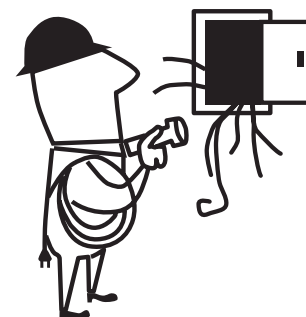
It is for this reason that Building Control have no involvement where an electrician is registered to self-certify. For further information refer to 'Electrical Installers Guide to Building Regulations'. The organisations affiliated to the Competent Persons Scheme should forward details of satisfactory installations to Building Control. It will therefore be the responsibility of the electrician to send the relevant information to their organisation promptly.

2 An electrician who is competent and who is qualified, but is not registered to self-certify

Electricians who prefer not to register to self-certify the whole of the installation including compliance with ancillary regulations will have to apply to the local authority for approval under the Building Regulations before starting work. As part of the application, a specification of the proposed works must be submitted together with the appropriate fee. Building Control will carry out an appropriate inspection by request prior to the works being covered over. These electricians will need to provide the homeowner with an installation certificate complete with confirmation that the appropriate tests have been carried out. Building Control will also need a copy of these.

3 An electrician who is unable to prove competence or DIY installation

A person who carries out electrical work who is unable to satisfy the criteria for either of the above categories will have to satisfy Building Control that the installation is adequate. The rules do not prevent DIY installation. However, it is strongly advised that you get professional advice from a qualified electrician, preferably a member of the Competent Persons Scheme. Such electricians or persons undertaking DIY must provide evidence that the work has been carried out in accordance with BS7671. Before starting work an application will have to be made to the local authority for approval under the Building Regulations. As part of the application, a specification of the proposed works may be required together with the appropriate fee. They must employ the services of an electrician qualified to provide a third party test certificate at an additional expense. Copies of any appropriate installation and test certificates must be provided to the homeowner, with copies forwarded to us. It may be cheaper and quicker to employ a competent person as described to carry out the works.



Certificates

BS7671 requires that a person installing electrical work or altering an existing installation must test the installation and provide certification to the owner.

A satisfactory electrical installation and test certificate must be sent to us before a completion certificate can be issued. Copies of such certificates are published in Approved Document P.

What will be the role of the Building Control Officer?

The Building Control Officers at Wigan are not electricians and are not trained as such. They cannot provide specific technical advice for electrical installations.

The role of the Building Control Officer is to provide a visual check during the installation. They are not there to test, but are there to make sure that the installer has tested or had tested, any installation to make sure the work meets reasonable standards. The officers will also make sure that during the course of the electrical installation work the other aspects are complied with. For example, the effect that the electrical wiring will have on the structure, fire resistance, accessibility and so on.

The ten building control authorities within Greater Manchester (Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Salford, Manchester, Trafford, Wigan, Stockport, Tameside and Oldham) have all agreed to manage the new requirements in a similar way. However, it is important to note that authorities outside of the Greater Manchester area may manage the system differently.

	Is the work notifiable?	
	Areas outside of bath, shower room, kitchen or special location	Within a bath, shower room, kitchen or special location
Complete new or rewire of installation	Yes	Yes
Consumer unit change	Yes	Yes
Installing new shower circuit	Yes	Yes
Installing additional socket or light	No	Yes
Addition of fused connection unit to ring final circuit	No	Yes
Installing a new cooker circuit	Yes	Yes
Connecting a cooker to an existing connection unit	No	No
Installing or upgrading main or supplementary equipotential bonding	No	Yes
Replacing a damaged cable for a single circuit	No	No
Replacing a socket outlet or light fitting	No	No
Installation and fit of a storage heater, including final circuit	Yes	Yes
Fit and final connection of storage heater	No	No
Installing extra low voltage lighting (not CE marked sets)	Yes	Yes
Provision of new supply and addition of sockets or lights to sheds or greenhouses	Yes	N/a
Installing a pond pump including supply	Yes	N/a
Installing a hot air sauna	Yes	Yes
Installing a solar photovoltaic power supply	Yes	Yes
Installing ceiling or floor heating	Yes	Yes
Installing a small scale generator	Yes	Yes
Installing an additional socket in a motor caravan	N/a	N/a

Application forms and charges

There are three scenarios:

- 1 Where work is being carried out in connection with other work requiring a Building Regulation application:** An additional question regarding electrical installations has been included in the Full Plans and Building Control forms. There will be no additional fee as it is likely that the work will be visually checked at the same time as the other works.
- 2 Where work is being carried out separately from other work requiring a Building Regulation application:** Where a kitchen extension is being built, but the house is rewired at the same time. Again, the Full Plans or Building Notice form must be used. An additional fee will be required for the electrical work, based on a 50% reduction of the 'Other works' charges.
- 3 Where only electrical adaptations are taking place:** There is a new application form specifically for electrical works. The fee will be based on the current 'Other works' fee schedule.

Enforcement

The person carrying out electrical work that contravenes the Building Regulations can be fined up to £5,000 for the contravention. And £50 each day the contravention continues. Also, householders may encounter problems selling their property if work fails to comply with the Building Regulations. The householder is ultimately responsible for ensuring that electrical work complies with the Building Regulations in their dwelling. It is the householder or owner who may ultimately be served with an enforcement notice. However, responsibility rests with the person carrying out the electrical work.

Contacts

Wigan Building Control- Telephone: 01942 489145, Fax: 01942 404222,
Website: www.wigan.gov.uk, E-mail: planningrepresentations@wigan.gov.uk



ODPM - To download copies of Approved Document P and additional guidance leaflets, go to www.odpm.gov.uk

NICEIC will supply all the documentation needed to meet Part P requirements, including a free pack of complimentary electrical installation certificates. www.niceic.org.uk/partp/partpindex.html
Telephone: 0800 013 0900

NAPIT - The National Association for Professional Inspectors and Testers is a Not For Profit trade association formed in 1994. It emphasises that a little knowledge is often sufficient to make electrical equipment function. But a much higher level of knowledge and experience is needed to ensure safety. www.napit.org.uk Telephone: 0870 4441392

BRE - Certification of inspectors and electricians for inspection and testing to BS7671 is a personnel certification scheme for individuals. It is provided by the BRE with the support and co-operation for Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA) and the IEE. www.partp.co.uk Telephone: 01923 664100

BSI - BSI Product Services offers an integrated certification service for electrical installation work leading to issue of a Kitemark Licence which also confirms the business as a 'Competent Person' under Part P. www.bsi-global.com/Kitemark/Electricalinstallers/index.xalter Telephone: 01442 230442.

ELECSA - The scheme has been set up to enable electrical installers to self-certify that their work is compliant with Part P. ELECSA is a joint venture between FENSA and the BBA. www.elecsa.org.uk Telephone: 0870 749 0080.

CORGI Services Limited- Operate a scheme for limited self-certification of electrical works in connection with gas appliances. www.corgi-gas-safety.com Telephone: 01256 372200.

OFTEC (Oil Firing Technical Association for the Petroleum Industry Limited) - Operate a scheme for limited self-certification in connection with oil fired appliances. www.oftec.co.uk Telephone: 0845 658 5080.