

Part P of the Building Regulations – Explained

Many electrical contractors and enterprises throughout the UK are asking themselves, “Does Part P of the Building Regulations apply to me?” Well, if you carry out or are associated with electrical installation work in dwellings situated within England and Wales, the answer to this question is certainly “Yes”. If you want to avoid the complication and consequent costs of using Building Control to inspect your work, you are recommended to read on.

INTRODUCTION

The Government announced its intention to introduce legislation on 15th July 2003, “to amend the Building Regulations to include a requirement on electrical safety in dwellings”, and Part P of the Building Regulations was published on 22nd July 2004. This will provide improved statutory support to BS 7671, the IEE Wiring Regulations, and will take the form of introducing Approved Document P of the Building Regulations concerning fixed electrical installations in dwellings in England and Wales.



As a result, this introduces a new statutory regulation and all fixed electrical installations in dwellings will become a controlled service as defined in the Building Regulations 2000. This means that, from 1st January 2005, anyone carrying out fixed electrical installation work in a dwelling must comply with Part P; also, all such work will need to be notified to the local Building Control body before work commences, unless:

- 1) the proposed work is to be undertaken by a Competent Person (an individual or a company authorised to self-certify compliance on completion of the work); or
- 2) the proposed work is of a minor nature.

Competent Person schemes are formally recognised by the Government as schemes whose members are adjudged sufficiently competent to self-certify that their work has been carried out in compliance with the Building Regulations.

Competent Persons for Part P are the firms that are responsible for carrying out the work. Of course, firms can be single-person entities, but they are not, for example, employees.

A firm wishing to join a Competent Person scheme is vetted to ensure it meets the respective scheme conditions including the relevant levels of competence. If it meets these conditions, it is classified as a “Competent Person” and its work is then not subject to inspection by Building Control bodies.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM) current criteria dictate that assessments should be carried out as required by the Electrotechnical Assessment Scheme (EAS) and that each scheme and certifying body should be accredited by UKAS to EN 45011.

The EAS scheme is published by the Institution of Electrical Engineers and a free copy of this scheme may be downloaded from the Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE) website www.iecee.org.uk.

COMPETENT PERSON SCHEMES

Those wishing to join a Part P Competent Person scheme will need to demonstrate their competence and, if necessary, may be required to undergo appropriate additional training. The on-site installation work of Competent Person scheme enterprises will be inspected at least once a year, as a requirement of their scheme provider.

Clients and specifiers in the past have generally specified that their electrical installation work should be undertaken by a NICEIC or ECA approved contractor. From the 1st January 2005, clients and specifiers of fixed electrical installation work within dwellings will be able to specify that their electrical installation work should be carried out by a Competent Person from any one of the following scheme providers.

Currently, there are five full scope Competent Person scheme providers approved by ODPM, these being:



- *BRE Certification*, c/o ECA Inspection and Assessment Services, Mansfield Business Centre, Ashfield Avenue, Woodhouse Road, Mansfield NG18 2AE. Tel: 0870 609 6093 or 01623 404515 for enquiries regarding the assessment process
www.partp.co.uk or
www.eca.co.uk or
www.brecertification.co.uk



- *British Standards Institution*, Maylands Avenue, Hemel Hempstead HP2 4SQ. Tel: 01442 278607
www.bsi-global.com



- *ELECSA*, 44-48 Borough High Street, London SE1 1XB. Tel: 020 7864 9913
www.elecsa.org.uk
(ELECSA uses British Board of Agrément (BBA) to deal with the technical side and to carry out the inspections.)



- *NICEIC*, 37 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7UJ. Tel: 0800 013 0900
www.niceic.org.uk/partp/partpknow.html



- *NAPIT*, The Gardeners' Lodge, Pleasley Vale Business Park, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG19 8RL. Tel: 0870 444 1392
www.napit.org.uk

Zurich Certification were also originally approved by the ODPM. They, however, have since been acquired by the NICEIC and are now part of *NICEIC Certification Services Limited*.

BUILDING REGULATIONS

In addition, the members of Competent Person schemes that are able to self-certify their own work must have an appreciation of how the Building Regulations in general affect their electrical installation work and they need to be sufficiently competent to confirm that their work complies with all the applicable requirements of the Building Regulations, not just Part P.

Such requirements include, but are not limited to:-

- Part A (structure) – depth of chases in walls and size of openings in joists or structural elements.
- Part B (fire safety) – fire resistance of ceilings and walls including provision of fire alarm and detection systems.
- Part C (site preparation and resistance to moisture) – moisture resistance of openings or penetrations for cables through external walls.
- Part E (resistance to the passage of sound) – penetrations through ceilings and walls.
- Part F (ventilation) – ventilation rates for areas within a dwelling.
- Part L (conservation of fuel and power) – energy efficient lighting, effective controls including automatic controls.
- Part M (access to and use of buildings) – heights of switches, socket outlets, etc.
- Part P (electrical safety) – fixed electrical installations in dwellings

These Approved Documents may be downloaded free of charge from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) website at www.odpm.gov.uk.

Failure to comply with the Building Regulations is a criminal offence and local authorities have the power to require the removal or alteration of completed work that does not comply with these requirements.

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. Householders may also encounter problems selling their property if work carried out does not comply with the Building Regulations. The householder is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all building work, including electrical work, complies with the Building Regulations.

In conjunction with the NICEIC, the ECA has produced guidance to help electrical contractors self-certify electrical installation work to comply with all the other relevant parts of the Building Regulations. A free copy may be downloaded from the ECA members' website www.eca.co.uk. Printed copies are available from the ECA Membership Department on 020 7313 4808/4810.



The guidance has been endorsed by LABC Services, the body representing Local Authority Building Control interests, and it is hoped that it will be recognised as an authoritative reference source for both electrical installers and building control officers.

SCOPE OF PART P

The scope of Part P applies to fixed electrical installations in buildings or parts of buildings comprising:

- Dwelling houses and flats;
- Dwellings and business premises that have a common supply – for example, shops and public houses with a flat above;
- Common access areas in blocks of flats, such as corridors and staircases (not lifts);
- Shared amenities of blocks of flats such as laundries and gymnasiums;
- Outbuildings such as sheds, detached garages and greenhouses served from a local dwelling, including garden electrics, external lighting and pond pumps, etc.

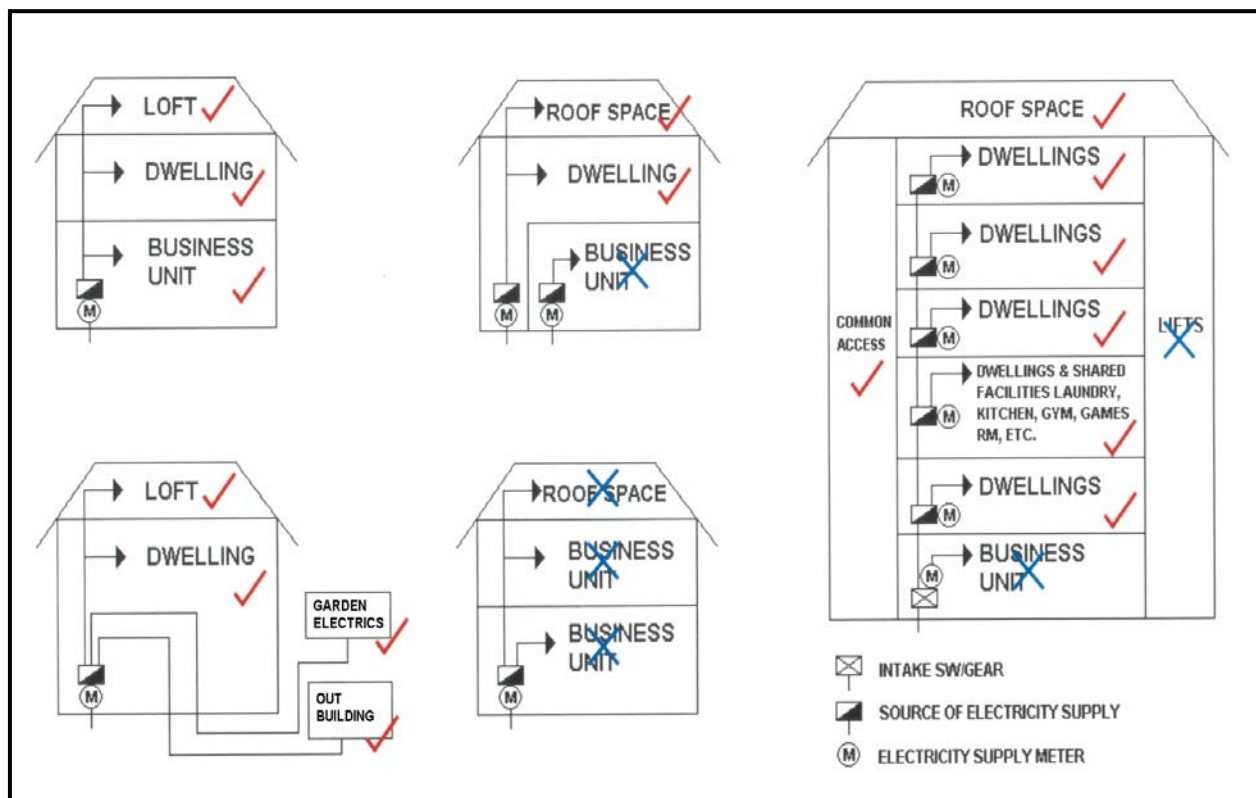


Figure 1 – The Scope of Part P

A dwelling, as defined in Part B of the Building Regulations, which deals with fire safety, is:

“A unit of residential accommodation occupied (whether or not as a sole or main residence) by a single person or by people living as a family, or by not more than six residents living together as a single household, including a household where care is provided for residents.”

Places of employment and work places such as hotels and university campus student accommodation fall outside the scope of Part P. These types of buildings are, however, covered by the Electricity at Work Regulations and their electrical installations are required to comply with BS 7671, the IEE Wiring Regulations.

HOW TO COMPLY

The new Part P requirements, as taken from the Approved Document, are:

<i>Requirement</i>	<i>Limits on application</i>
<p>PART P ELECTRICAL SAFETY</p> <p>Design, installation, inspection and testing</p> <p>P1. Reasonable provision shall be made in the design, installation, inspection and testing of electrical installations in order to protect persons from fire or injury.</p> <p>Provision of information</p> <p>P2. Sufficient information shall be provided so that persons wishing to operate, maintain or alter an electrical installation can do so with reasonable safety.</p>	<p>The requirements of this Part apply only to electrical installations that are intended to operate at low or extra-low voltage and are-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) in a dwelling; b) in the common parts of a building serving one or more dwellings, but excluding power supplies to lifts; c) in a building that receives its electricity from a source located within or shared with a dwelling; and d) in a garden or in or on land associated with a building where the electricity is from a source located within or shared with a dwelling.

The objective of Part P is “to ensure that, on average, more fixed electrical installations in more dwellings comply more thoroughly with accepted safety standards during their service lives”. The new safety requirements are applicable to alterations and additions to existing installations including rewires, as well as to new construction.

This new requirement of Part P will be met by complying with the “Fundamental Principles” for achieving safety as given in Chapter 13 of BS 7671, the IEE Wiring Regulations.

These fundamental principles can be achieved by following:

- the requirements of BS 7671:2001; and
- the IEE On-Site Guide and IEE Guidance Notes 1 to 7.

DEFINITIONS

In order to implement Part P, the definition of an Electrical Installation is key. The Approved Document P defines an electrical installation as:

Electrical installation is defined in BS 7671 as ‘an assembly of associated electrical equipment supplied from a common origin to fulfil a specific purpose and having certain co-ordinated characteristics.’ For the purposes of Building Regulations and electrical installation means fixed electrical cables or fixed electrical equipment located on the consumer’s side of the electricity supply meter.

Extra-low voltage (ELV) is defined in BS 7671 as ‘normally not exceeding 50 V ac or 120 V ripple-free dc, whether between conductors or to earth.’

Low voltage (LV) is defined in BS 7671 as ‘normally exceeding extra-low voltage but not exceeding 1000 V ac or 1500 V dc between conductors, or 600 V ac or 900 V dc between conductors and earth.’

IMPLEMENTATION

All new electrical installation work in dwellings after 1st January 2005 will need to be notified to the local Building Control body before work commences, unless:-

- the proposed work is to be undertaken by a Competent Person (an individual or a company authorised to self-certify compliance on completion of the work), or
- the proposed work is of a minor nature, i.e. it is non-notifiable and does not include the provision of a new circuit.

Note that replacement of a distribution board or consumer unit is notifiable work, it is not minor work.

Work commenced prior to 1st January 2005 will be exempt, provided that the work is completed by 31st March 2005.

Part P of the Building Regulations only applies to England and Wales. Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own Building Control systems. Details regarding the current requirements for electrical installations in both Scotland and Northern Ireland can be provided by the ECA or SELECT, if required.

EXAMPLES OF NOTIFIABLE AND NON-NOTIFIABLE WORK

See Tables 1 and 2 below for examples of work that need not be notified and examples of special locations and installations respectively.

Table 1: Work that need not be notified to building control bodies

Work consisting of:

- Replacing accessories such as socket-outlets, control switches and ceiling roses
- Replacing the cable for a single circuit only, where damaged, for example, by fire, rodent or impact (a)
- Re-fixing or replacing the enclosures of existing installation components (b)
- Providing mechanical protection to existing fixed installations (c)

Work that is not in a kitchen or special location and does not involve a special installation (d) and consists of:

- Adding lighting points (light fittings and switches) to an existing circuit (e)
- Adding socket-outlets and fused spurs to an existing ring or radial circuit (e)
- Installing or upgrading main or supplementary equipotential bonding (f)

Notes

- (a) On condition that the replacement cable has the same current carrying capacity, follows the same route and does not serve more than one sub-circuit through a distribution board.
- (b) If the circuit's protective measures are unaffected.
- (c) If the circuit's protective measures and current-carrying capacity of conductors are unaffected by increased thermal insulation.
- (d) Special locations and installations are listed in Table 2.
- (e) Only if the existing circuit protective device is suitable and provides protection for the modified circuit, and other relevant safety provisions are satisfactory.
- (f) Such work shall comply with other applicable legislation, such as the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations.

Table 2: Special locations and installations (a)

- Locations containing a bath tub or shower basin
- 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

Notes

- (a) See IEE Guidance Note 7 which gives more guidance on achieving safe installations where risks to people are greater.

EXTRA-LOW VOLTAGE ANCILIARY INSTALLATIONS

The extra-low voltage (ELV) category was included within Part P to cover extra-low voltage lighting installations, comprising downlighters, which have been known to be the cause of a number of house fires, for example, due to incorrectly sized conductors, sub-standard installations and breakdown at terminations.

We understand that the ODPM are working on guidelines which may specify how Part P will apply to ELV ancillary systems within dwellings. It is likely that these guidelines may confirm that any new work on new ELV fixed electrical wiring for communication and information technology (IT), signalling, control and the like is “NON-NOTIFIABLE” work in kitchens, but is “NOTIFIABLE” in bathrooms and other special locations.

Whilst other ELV fixed wiring installations work for domestic ancillary systems within dwellings may not fall within the scope of Part P, and is classed as non-notifiable work, all ELV fixed wiring installation work should be installed in accordance with BS 7671 and comply with the relevant safety requirements of this standard.

THE NOTIFICATION PROCESS

It is presently envisaged that the Competent Person scheme operators (certification bodies) will issue the Certificate of Compliance to the householder or the person ordering the work, and will give a copy of information recorded on the Certificate of Compliance to the relevant local Building Control Authority as a declaration of compliance with the Building Regulations 4 and 7.

Some scheme operators may place the onus on the Competent Person enterprise to issue the Certificate of Compliance to the person ordering the work.

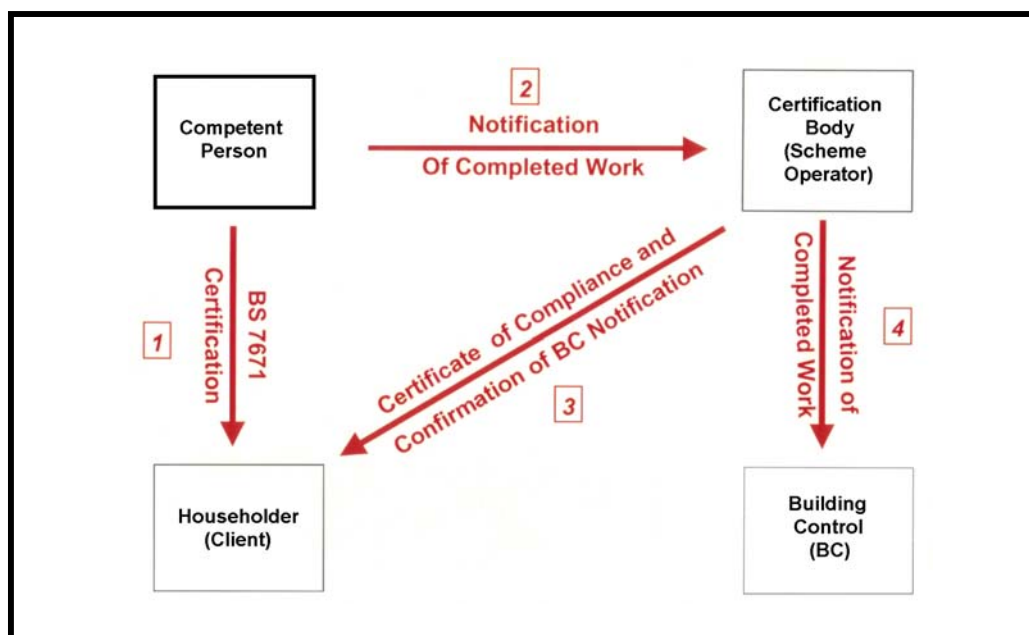


Figure 2 – Competent Person Scheme Notification Process (Typical)

- 1) The Competent Person will be required to issue BS 7671 certification (Electrical Installation Certificate or Minor Works Certificate) to the householder or the person ordering the work, as normal.
- 2) The Competent Person will be requested to notify his scheme provider/operator of work carried out upon completion of the work.
- 3) The certification body/scheme operator issues Certificate of Compliance (with the Building Regulations 4 & 7) and confirmation of Building Control notification to the householder or person ordering the work.
- 4) The certification body/scheme operator issues notification of the completed work to Building Control for their records.

It must be remembered that Competent Persons that self-certify compliance with Part P for electrical safety will also have to certify compliance with all other relevant parts of the Building Regulations (detailed above) that have been affected by the electrical work that has been carried out.

DIY WORK OR NON-REGISTERED ENTERPRISES

Electrical DIY work will still be permitted after 1st January 2005. Those doing notifiable DIY work will have to submit a building notice to the local Building Control before work begins and will have to pay a Building Control fee to have their work inspected and tested for compliance with the Building Regulations.

DIY enthusiasts and enterprises not registered with one of the five Competent Person scheme operators will be required to notify Building Control before starting work, by:-

- making a “full plans and specification application” and waiting for approval to start work; or
- giving a “building notice” before starting work.

QUALIFIED SUPERVISOR

An enterprise seeking Competent Person status is required to have at least one Qualified Supervisor, i.e. someone who has direct responsibility on a day-to-day basis for the safety, quality and technical standard of the work, and ensures the results of the inspection, testing and verification process are accurately recorded on the appropriate forms for certification as required by BS 7671.

Depending on the volume of work undertaken and the geographical spread of a firm’s operations, it may be the case that a single person cannot properly exercise the responsibility expected of Qualified Supervisors for the safety, quality and technical standard of the work carried out. If that is the case, the firm will require more than one Qualified Supervisor.

A firm may be asked by an Assessor to justify the number of Qualified Supervisors it has in place. Since each firm may be different, it is not possible to give a specific answer at the start of the assessment process. Firms should be aware that an Assessor will apply the following test:

“Is the number of proposed Qualified Supervisors sufficient to safely support the firm’s activities as a Competent Person given the composition, scale and geographical spread of its workload?”

Enterprises applying for Competent Person status are strongly advised to establish the appropriate number of Qualified Supervisors they require and ensure that each of them meets the required criteria.

Qualified Supervisors should have the appropriate knowledge and experience of the design, installation, testing, certification and reporting procedures for the electrical installation work within dwellings. In addition, they must be conversant with the following:

- The *Electricity at Work Regulations 1989*
- The current issue of BS 7671 (IEE Wiring Regulations)
- The applicable Building Regulations (not just Part P, but any other part of the Building Regulations that may apply to a particular work activity)

Any individual who wishes to become a Qualified Supervisor under Part P must possess a qualification that referenced in detail the edition of the IEE Wiring Regulations current at the

time the course was undertaken. This forms the essential underpinning knowledge required of a Qualified Supervisor.

QUALIFICATIONS

A Qualified Supervisor must also be able to meet each of the following criteria:

- 1) Demonstrate to an Assessor an appropriate level of understanding of the practical and theoretical aspects BS 7671 (IEE 16th Edition Wiring Regulations), including knowledge and experience of design, installation, inspection, testing, certification and reporting procedures. This may be achieved through demonstration of practical skills, questions and answers or a combination of both; and
- 2) demonstrate awareness and an understanding of the Building Regulations applicable to the type of domestic work the firm undertakes. A Competent Person is responsible for ensuring that the work the firm carries out complies with all the applicable parts of the Building Regulations, not just Part P. This may be achieved through demonstration of practical skills, questions and answers or a combination of both.

Where an applicant for Qualified Supervisor status is unable to demonstrate competence in each of the criteria above, he or she is advised to undertake a suitable course in order to address their deficiency.

Examples of suitable qualifications:

This table is not exhaustive and others may be accepted after individual consideration.

NOTE: Certificates will be required for inspection by the assessor during the assessment process.

S/NVQ Level 3 in Installing and Commissioning Electrotechnical Systems and Equipment	City & Guilds 236 Part 1, 2 or C certificate
NVQ Level 3 in Electrotechnical Services (Installation – Buildings and Structures)	City & Guilds 2360 Part 1, 2 or C certificate
A registered electrical apprenticeship	City & Guilds 2356 Part 1 or 2
EAL Level 2 Certificate for Domestic Electrical Installers	City & Guilds 2391
City & Guilds 2380	City & Guilds 2400
City & Guilds 2381	SQA tailored award in Design and Verification of Electrical Installations
City & Guilds A, B or C certificate	

If an applicant's qualification referenced in detail the edition of the IEE Wiring Regulations current at the time the course was undertaken, but is not listed above, contact the ECA Education and Training department **via fax** (020 7221 7344) or **in writing** to *Education & Training Department, ECA, ESCA House, 34 Palace Court, London W2 4HY* with the following information for further advice:

- Applicant's name, address, e-mail address and telephone number
- A COPY of the qualification certificate
- Details of the place of study
- Supporting information demonstrating how the qualification referenced the specified criteria

COMPETENT PERSON COSTS

The process of becoming a Competent Person and subsequently operating as a Competent Person will entail costs. The application, assessment and initial registration of a Competent Person provide the most obvious and immediate example of this, but there are other costs, some of which will be borne by the Competent Person enterprise and some of which will be directly charged to the customers or persons ordering the work.

The table below summarises the main cost activities that are involved:

a.	Application, Initial Assessment and Registration
b.	Annual Surveillance
c.	Certification
d.	Notification
e.	Warranty Cover
f.	Complaints Process

- a. Applicants to Competent Person scheme providers will be charged a fee for the initial assessment and registration process as required by the scheme provider's arrangements.
- b. The UKAS EN 45011 accredited status and the requirements imposed by Government as a condition of approving self-certification schemes require the annual surveillance of the installation work of registered firms (Competent Persons).
- c. Registered Competent Persons are required to comply with BS 7671. This includes complying with the certification requirements set out in this standard. Firms are advised to use the model forms set out in BS 7671, copies of which can be freely downloaded from the Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE) website www.iee.org.uk or, as appropriate, forms based on the model forms, i.e. ECA, NICEIC, etc.
- d. Competent Person schemes are required by Government to provide the relevant local authorities with information about the work carried out by their registered members. In order to be able to do this, registered firms will be required to tell their scheme operator, e.g. BRE Certification (BREC), about the work they have done, the address of the dwelling in which it was carried out, and the date of completion of the work. This must be done for each job carried out by a Competent Person that is in-scope to Part P of the Building Regulations. The scheme providers will levy a charge per job to carry out the necessary notification – this will include sending customers a Building Regulations compliance certificate. This charge will be levied on Competent Persons, and they in turn, if they so choose, can separately itemise this cost in their quotation to their customer, e.g. “Notification to Local Authority & Provision of Compliance Certification”.
- e. Competent Person schemes are required by Government to “make arrangements such that all customers (persons ordering the work) of scheme members have an opportunity to purchase an insurance-backed warranty as a minimum against non-compliance of work with the Building Regulations”.

Competent Persons will be required to offer the householder or person ordering the work the opportunity to purchase the guarantee/warranty against non-compliance of electrical installation work with the Building Regulations. However, uptake of the offer is optional and not compulsory.

- f. The costs of complaint management process and investigation may be absorbed in the costs of the initial assessment and subsequent surveillance for some providers. Others, however, may require an additional charge for this service to be provided.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Further information regarding Part P of the Building Regulations can be found and downloaded free of charge from the following websites:

www.partp.co.uk

www.odpm.gov.uk

www.eca.co.uk

ECA Contact Numbers:

General Enquiry on Part P – 0870 609 6093
Technical Enquiry on Part P – 020 7313 4835
Assessment Enquiry on Part P – 01623 404515
Education & Training Enquiry on Part P – 020 7313 4846

YOUR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ANSWERED

- 1) Q. *To gain Part P certification, do I have to be trading for at least 12 months?*
A. No. You need to be qualified and also have ongoing or completed work available for inspection by the assessor (who will usually want to see two separate jobs).
- 2) Q. *I've heard that Part P only applies to electrical work which has to be notified to Building Control. Is this correct?*
A. No. The requirements of Part P apply to all electrical installation work.
- 3) Q. *Do I need to be NICEIC approved or an ECA member to become Part P certified?*
A. No, but these organisations can bring business, financial and technical benefits to your firm.
- 4) Q. *I work for myself and don't employ anyone else. Can I still apply for self-certification?*
A. Yes. Sole traders can be registered for Part P.
- 5) Q. *I only carry out minor electrical work in dwellings, e.g. repairs and replacements, installing extra points. Do I need to be Part P certified?*
A. No - provided you keep within the scope of what constitutes non-notifiable work, as stated in Approved Document P, which is very limiting. However, all

minor work should comply with BS 7671 and be certificated by the issue of a Minor Works Certificate to the householder or person ordering the work.

- 6) Q. *Is PAT Testing covered by Part P?*
A. No. Part P is concerned only with the fixed electrical installations of dwellings.
- 7) Q. *My firm's work is largely commercial/industrial, with only the occasional domestic job. Must we be Part P certified?*
A. For limited domestic activity, it is a business decision to either gain Part P certification or notify this work to Building Control before the work commences, on a job-by-job basis.
- 8) Q. *Is it true that BS 7671 will be mandatory under Part P?*
A. No. BS 7671 requirements are non-statutory and will remain so. Having said that, however, meeting the fundamental principles for safety given in BS 7671 will be an appropriate means to achieve compliance with Part P requirements.
- 9) Q. *Can a Part P registered Competent Person certify other electricians' work?*
A. Part P Competent Person certification is for self-certification of the firm's work. A Competent Person may, however, wish to offer his services to Local Authority Building Control to carry out inspections on their behalf (for which purpose an Electrical Safety Inspection Report is being developed).
- 10) Q. *Does Part P apply to university or boarding school student accommodation?*
A. Not to accommodation blocks on campus and maintained by university or school-employed staff; these are subject to the HSW Act/Electricity at Work Regulations. However, houses off-campus are treated the same as other dwellings and are subject to Part P compliance.
- 11) Q. *Are permanently sited leisure homes subject to Part P requirements?*
A. ODPM advise that this depends on the size of the structure. Therefore, it is best to check on an individual basis with local Building Control.
- 12) Q. *Will wholesalers and shops be stopped from selling electrical goods to the general public?*
A. No, because DIY electrical work will still be permitted. The hope is, however, that most people will be discouraged from DIY work as a result of the introduction of Part P.
- 13) Q. *Does Part P apply to building work which was approved before 1st January 2005?*
A. No. However, the work must start within three years of the approval date, otherwise the approval lapses.
- 14) Q. *I carry out only periodic inspection and testing. Do I require Part P certification?*
A. The Part P Competent Person schemes relate to self-certification of installation work by the installer, so they are not relevant to periodic inspection and testing. Those carrying out such work need, of course, to be competent to undertake this activity and report to the client (householder) any unsafe aspects of their installation.