



# NEWSLETTER CHRISTMAS 2018

Dear Contractor,

Welcome to the 2018 Christmas Newsletter!

The year which is now drawing to a close has seen continuing growth in the Construction Industry with its consequent knock on effect on the Electrical Contracting Sector.

While some will claim that the majority of this growth has been within the greater Dublin area and that many parts of rural Ireland have not yet fully recovered from the collapse of the economy, there are signs that, if we can avoid another downturn, the future for the industry will look brighter.

Ironically increased opportunities for Contractors have highlighted a serious shortage of skilled labour in many areas of the Construction Sector and we daily hear from Contractors who are asked to tender for work but are reluctant to do so because of the difficulty of recruiting extra Electricians.

Very few if any Apprentices were trained during the recession and this has created a generational gap in the workforce which will take some time to address.

We are aware of this problem at first hand in our local area in Kerry where a large number of Electricians and Apprentices emigrated to Australia and Canada during the recession and many of those for whom emigration was not a practical option opted for the security of employment in factories and with local authorities and agencies.

Throughout 2018 ECSSA Members made good use of the Technical Support Service which is available to them in response to any technical, commercial or other query which they have.

Going forward into 2019, this support service will be more essential to Contractors than ever as with the Fifth Edition of the National Wiring Rule due to come out during the year there will obviously be several changes which will impact on Electrical Contractors.

With over 800 pages in the 5th Edition as opposed to the 360 in the current 4th Edition, it is obvious that there is a great deal more to be read and understood. We have seen far too many examples in the past where Contractors suffered from individual Inspector's own interpretation of the Rules and we intend, through our representation on the Technical Committee of NSAI, to establish exactly what is intended by each requirement in the Rules and to be in a position to advise Members accordingly.

Obviously, we can only maintain this service through the support of Members and therefore I would urge every Contractor to support ECSSA by renewing your Membership for 2019 or joining for the first time if you have not already been a Member.

Apart from Technical Support, membership for the year, which remains at €100, offers a significant discount on V&C Courses for Contractors and their Employees. We thank you for your support over the years, look forward to your ongoing loyalty and wish you and yours a Happy and Peaceful Christmas and a Prosperous and Profitable New Year in 2019.

*Mike Marshall*

General Manager

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**Technical Queries:**  
**064 6637266**

## 1 | Verification & Certification Courses

The requirement to have successfully completed an Accredited Course in Verification and Certification before one could hold a Qualified Certifier Number (QCN) came into force at the start of 2013.

Five years on, Qualified Certifier Numbers issued to the first of the Participants in those Courses will be about to expire, with the result that Completion Certs will be automatically rejected once the Expiry Date passes.

While this might seem harsh, the reality is that it would be entirely impractical for RECI/ Safe Electric to individually look up the expiry date of the Qualified Certifier Number on each Cert submitted for transmission to ESB.

The same is true of expired Insurance Cover which will also lead to rejection of Certs and the clear message which has to be understood is that there are no days of grace in relation to either insurance cover or validity of the QC Number on the Cert.

We have had discussions with Safe Electric on this issue and agreement has been reached that if QC holders attend a V&C Course ahead of the Expiry Date of their present QC Number, and notify Safe Electric, the QC Number will be automatically renewed and will remain valid for a further 5 years from the Expiry Date of the original number.

ECSSA will continue to provide the Accredited V&C Courses throughout the country for 2019 and while there have not been changes in the Wiring Rules which would require changes to the Course content, it is highly likely that when the 5th Edition comes into force, there may be need for additional modules or probably for a separate explanatory course on the new requirements since, irrespective of what changes are made in requirements, testing techniques will remain the same.

Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) has now merged with the Institute of Technology Tallaght and the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown to form Technology University Dublin (TU Dublin) but the Memorandum of Agreement between DIT and ECSSA, under which ECSSAI was authorised to deliver the Verification & Certification Courses, will transfer automatically to TU Dublin and the Level 7 Certificate to successful Participants in all Courses after Jan 1st 2019 will come from TU Dublin.

From a Participant's point of view there will not be any change in that successfully completing the Course will still entitle a person to receive a Qualified Certifier Number from Safe Electric and a Qualification Award from a University created by law (Technological Universities Act 2018) will be recognised internationally.

Course Dates and Venues appear elsewhere in the Newsletter and we would advise early booking as, when Expiry Dates start to kick in in January, there may not be sufficient capacity among Course Providers to deal with the demand.

While we have listed a skeleton schedule of Courses, we have the capacity to add additional dates in most venues should the demand arise, but please do not leave it until your QC number is about to expire to secure your place on a Course.

## 2 | Looking Forward

A constant complaint coming from Electrical Contractors who were members of ECSSA prior to the creation of a monopoly regulatory body, RECI/Safe Electric, is that they feel they are being specifically targeted by RECI Inspectors because of their former affiliation.

There would appear to be prima facie evidence of such unacceptable abuse of power, but the problem is that Contractors who feel they have been the victims of such discrimination are afraid to speak out in case they will be hit even harder for standing up for themselves.

The universal question posed by these Electrical Contractors, all of whom want a return to a situation where more than one Regulatory Body created competition which served to curtail the excesses of either, is whether ECSSAI will be among those tendering for appointment when the present RECI/Safe Electric term ends.

Unfortunately, this is a classic case of not missing the water until the well runs dry, and in fact Contractors themselves can take a significant part of the blame for allowing the situation to develop in the manner it did.

When CER issued Consultation Papers in advance of the selection process in 2014, very few Contractors made submissions to indicate their preference for the continuation of the existing arrangement of two Regulatory Bodies, which had worked well for several years.

At that time ECSSA had almost a thousand members more than RECI so, even if CER had wished to impose their preferred monopoly scenario, they would have to take cognisance of the expressed wishes of the majority of Electrical Contractors then operating in the country.

But that is history and to get back to the question as to whether ECSSA will once again pitch for appointment when the time comes, the answer is once again in the hands of Electrical Contractors.

Contrary to the hopes and expectations of some, ECSSA has not gone away and, through the support of a loyal core of Members, the provision of Training Courses and the sale of publications, it has remained alive and viable.

However, a realistic bid for re-appointment would entail considerable cost and re-appointment would involve even greater cost as we would have to upscale and invest in the IT structures which would be required to deal with the ever-increasing level of electronic certification.

The downside of appointment would be that ECSSA could no longer provide Training Courses in which it has a significant section of the market, since Training and Regulation are mutually incompatible.

The ultimate deciding factor however has to be whether there would be sufficient Members to support the existence of a second regulatory body and this can only be established by reference to the number of Contractors who signify their ongoing support by joining ECSSA over the next few years leading up to the next Tendering Process.

The question which should be honestly answered by all concerned is whether the creation of an anti-competitive monopoly has made the electrical industry in Ireland any safer, more efficient or less expensive for Contractor and ultimately for the end user?

# Spring 2019 Schedule of Verification & Certification Course

No.	Date	Day	Location	Venue
1	15th & 16th January 2019	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
2	21st & 22nd January 2019	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	Moran Red Cow Hotel
3	4th & 5th February 2019	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	Moran Red Cow Hotel
4	11th & 12th February 2019	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	Clayton Hotel
5	12th & 13th February 2019	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
6	18th & 19th February 2019	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	Moran Red Cow Hotel
7	26th & 27th February 2019	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
8	4th & 5th March 2019	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	Moran Red Cow Hotel
9	11th & 12th March 2019	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	Clayton Hotel
10	12th & 13th March 2019	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
11	25th & 26th March 2019	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	Moran Red Cow Hotel
12	26th & 27th March 2019	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
13	8th & 9th April 2019	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	Moran Red Cow Hotel
14	8th & 9th April 2019	Monday & Tuesday	SLIGO	Sligo Park
15	9th & 10th April 2019	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
16	15th & 16th April 2019	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	Clayton Hotel
17	23rd & 24th April 2019	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
18	29th & 30th April 2019	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	Moran Red Cow Hotel
19	13th & 14th May 2019	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	Moran Red Cow Hotel
20	13th & 14th May 2019	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	Clayton Hotel
21	21st & 22nd May 2019	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
22	27th & 28th May 2019	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	Moran Red Cow Hotel
23	27th & 28th May 2019	Monday & Tuesday	SLIGO	Sligo Park
24	28th & 29th May 2019	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
25	10th & 11th June 2019	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	Moran Red Cow Hotel
26	17th & 18th June 2019	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	Clayton Hotel
27	18th & 19th June 2019	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
28	24th & 25th June 2019	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	Moran Red Cow Hotel
29	25th & 26th June 2019	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA



### 3 | Check Before You Start!

One of the most frequent problems brought to our attention by Members is the dilemma they find themselves in when the are contracted to wire an electric shower or some other relatively minor installation in a domestic premises and find that, when they start to connect into the distribution board, the incoming tails are too small to safely carry the additional load or that the Fault Loop Impedance is far higher than the value permitted for the MCB or RCBO on the new circuit.

Obviously, no responsible Contractor will connect a significant extra load to incoming supply cables which are too small, but the process of having these cables replaced involves a request from the Customer to ESB for an upgrade and before the ESB will act, they will require a No 1 Cert from an REC in respect of the premises.

We have heard it said by people who should know better that one should connect and certify the shower using a No 3 Cert and at the same time issue a Notice of Potential Hazard to the Customer in respect of the inadequate ESB Cables.

Such a suggestion is as farcical as expecting a Test Centre to issue a Certificate of Road Worthiness for your van and at the same time handing you a Notice to say that your two front tyres are dangerously worn!

When a No 1 Cert is issued to ESB in order to facilitate the upgrade the incoming cables, the Contractor who signs that Cert is taking responsibility for every part of the entire installation at the Customers side of the ESB Meter.

The house where you have just installed the shower may be significantly out of compliance with the requirements of the National Wiring Rules and, until these non-compliances are addressed, you cannot issue a No 1 Cert.

So, what started off as a relatively small job, may end up as a major rewire, which the Customer may not have the money to pay for.

The same applies in relation to earthing and neutralising of premises.

A Fault Loop Impedance Test will generally confirm that the installation is neutralised, since an un-neutralised installation will generally give

a Test Result of 70 to 100 ohms as the return fault path to the transformer relies solely on the earth bar and the conductivity of the ground between the Customer's Earth Bar and the nearest ESB Earth Bar connected to the secondary of the supply transformer.

Searching for the Customer's earth bar is often a pointless exercise as in many urban areas the connection to the general mass of earth was achieved by connecting the main earth cable to the incoming lead or iron water pipe.

As water supply pipes continue to be replaced with plastic pipes the effectiveness of this means of earthing is becoming increasingly suspect.

What gives rise to a major problem is that there are thousands of older houses in the country which are not neutralised and, in many cases, a neutralising link cannot be fitted if the Main ESB Fuse is the old DZ3 type under a sealed cover.

In the December 2016 Safe Electric Newsletter it was announced that ESB would set up a Helpline which Electrical Contractors could call if they came across an un-neutralised installation and that, without further documentation or delay, an ESB Technician would be sent to remove the seals and allow the Contractor fit a link.

To date, nothing further appears to have been heard of this proposal so that as things currently stand if one needs to involve ESB, a No 1 Cert has to be issued and in doing so the Contractor who issues that Cert must bring the entire installation up to full compliance as he is in fact taking responsibility for everything beyond the ESB Meter.

The first step by any Contractor going in to carry out any additional work in an existing installation should be to check the Fault Loop Impedance and check the adequacy of the incoming supply cables.

If either are found to be such that ESB has to be involved, it is vital that the Contractor informs the Customer that there is far more work involved than what was initially asked for, rather than arrive at a situation where additional work, for which the Customer may not have funds, has to be carried out.

Far better to stop at the outset rather than end up in a costly and unwanted confrontation.

#### 2019 MEMBERSHIP - €100

\*Access to Technical Support

\*Your Voice is represented in the Industry

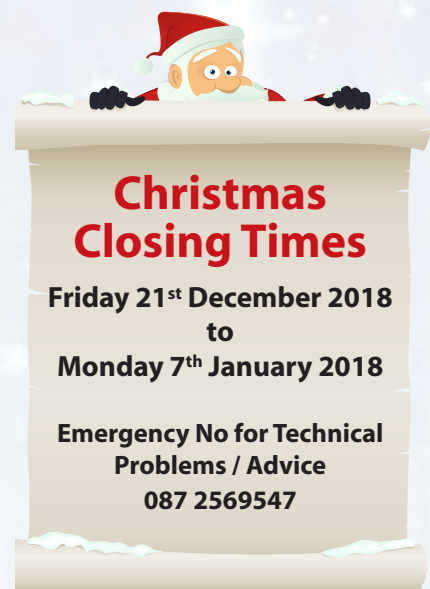
\*Reduced Fees for Courses

Tel No: 064 6637266 / Email: info@ecssa.ie / www.ecssa.ie

**Instrument  
Calibration**

**€113.50**

(incl. vat & carriage)





# 2019 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile No: \_\_\_\_\_

ECSSA Membership Number (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

For Office use Only
Member No.:
Date Received:

I wish to apply for Membership of ECSSA.

I understand that ECSSA will operate as a Trade & Training Association and that some of its services will be available to Members only.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please forward completed Membership Application Form together with Cheque / Postal Order/ Bank Draft for **€100** or Credit Card details to ECSSA, Coolmore House, Park Road, Killarney, Co. Kerry

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Credit Card Number:

Expiry Date:   /   CVV Last 3 digits:

Name of Card Holder \_\_\_\_\_

(Name that appears on Card):