

## Verification & Certification Courses - Autumn 2010 Schedule

The Autumn/Winter 2010 schedule of Courses is set out below and contractors are reminded that they should ensure their attendance at one of these Courses if they have not completed a Verification & Certification Course in the past 3 years.

Qualified Certifiers Numbers are now being issued to all participants who successfully complete the Course and from the start of 2011 these Qualified Certifier Numbers must appear on any Completion Certs submitted.

The registration number of the electrical contractor must still appear on the Cert and if a contractor employs others and wishes that they can also sign Certs on his behalf, they may only do so if they have successfully completed a Course and been issued with an individual Qualified Certifier Number.

It is however important to note that the possession of a Qualified Certifier Number does not permit the holder to sign Completion Certs for anybody other than the person by whom he is employed, but if the Qualified Certifier changes employment and goes to work for a RECI registered contractor, his status as a Qualified Certifier will be retained as indeed will the status of a Qualified Certifier who obtained his qualification by attendance at a course provided by RECI but who subsequently was employed by an ECSSA registered contractor

**All Courses run from  
2.00pm to 5.00pm  
COST : €150 per person**

• Members are reminded to bring: Test Instruments – (Check batteries & leads in particular 3 leads for Loop Impedance Shower Testing. New leads can be purchased from ECSSA)

A Booking Form is included in this Newsletter and is also available for download on our website at [www.ecssa.ie](http://www.ecssa.ie)

Date	Location	Venue
23/09/2010	Galway	Clayton Hotel
23/09/2010	Limerick	Kilmurry Lodge
29/09/2010	Dublin	Red Cow
30/09/2010	Sligo	Sligo Park Hotel
30/09/2010	Cork	Rochestown Park Hotel
07/10/2010	Cavan	Cavan Crystal
07/10/2010	Killarney	ECSSA Offices
20/10/2010	Kildare	Glenroyal Hotel Maynooth
21/10/2010	Tullamore	Tullamore Court
21/10/2010	Cork	Rochestown Park Hotel
28/10/2010	Galway	Clayton Hotel
28/10/2010	Limerick	Kilmurry Lodge
03/11/2010	Navan	Ardboyne Hotel
04/11/2010	Sligo	Sligo Park Hotel
04/11/2010	Cork	Rochestown Park Hotel
18/11/2010	Cavan	Cavan Crystal Hotel
18/11/2010	Killarney	ECSSA Offices
24/11/2010	Dublin	Red Cow Hotel
25/11/2010	Tullamore	Tullamore Court Hotel
25/11/2010	Cork	Rochestown Park Hotel

# ECSSA news

Autumn, 2010

ECSSA OFFICE HOURS:  
Monday to Friday:  
9am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm  
CLOSED FOR LUNCH 1pm to 2pm



**Dear Member,**

**Welcome to the Autumn 2010 Newsletter.**

ECSSA recently registered member number 32500. This indicates that since we registered our first member (97001) in May 1997, a total of 4,500 contractors have been members of ECSSA at one time or other.

The fact that just 2,500 of the 4,500 are still registered as members in 2010 indicates an unusually high rate of attrition in the electrical contracting industry.

There have been some who have retired on age grounds, others have retired as a result of illness, a relatively small number have died, but the vast majority of those who have fallen through the net did so because they found that trying to run an electrical contracting business requires far more than merely being a good electrician.

Getting and doing the job is often relatively simple, but it is an entirely different matter to collect your money once you have completed the contract, and never was this more relevant than in the present financial climate.

There are those who bemoan the admission of new members into the registers of either ECSSA or RECI, claiming that there are already too many contractors competing in a greatly diminished market.

There is certainly a lot of truth in that summary of the situation, but the fact remains that if an electrician applies to ECSSA or RECI for membership, produces the necessary qualifications and insurance cover, and pays his application fee, neither of the Regulatory Bodies can refuse to register him as a contractor, unless of course he has previously been a registered contractor and has failed to abide by the Rules of Membership.

To refuse registration to a contractor who qualifies for membership would be tantamount to creating a closed shop situation and would be contrary to both Competition Law and the Terms of Appointment of the Regulatory Bodies.

Of course there are people who come into the industry with little or no business acumen and who submit prices which are far too low when tendering for jobs.

They can only sustain this under-pricing for so long before they eventually go out of business, but unfortunately when they do there will be always others who will replace them and who carry on the same undercutting of prices for a further period until they too run into financial trouble, and so the cycle continues.

It is not the function of ECSSA to control prices or even to attempt to do so, but it is our function to monitor and control the quality of the work carried out by registered electrical contractors, and on an ever increasing scale we are having to deal with frustrated customers whose installations remain unfinished, or poorly finished, because the contractor involved had drawn down the full price tendered and, unable to complete the work, has chosen to walk away instead.

All this is very frustrating for those established contractors who are struggling to stay afloat in these terrible economic times, but there is little that a Regulatory Body can do to change the situation other than to advise all its members to price jobs, not just for the sake of getting the job, but to ensure that they make sufficient money on the contract to do a good job, cover all their overheads and so remain in a position to continue as a financially viable business in the long term.

There are enough pitfalls in the industry in the form of non-paying customers without having contractors shoot themselves in the foot by submitting prices which, even if fully paid, do not cover the cost of doing the job.

Nobody is suggesting a price fixing cartel, or seeking to interfere with normal competitive tendering, but somewhere between those illegal activities and the present pricing lunacy, there has to be a happy medium where the contractor makes a profit and the customer has the comfort of having a job well done, without short cuts, and without the inconvenience of having his electrical contractor go broke in the middle of the job.

Unfortunately we see evidence of this on an ever increasing scale with angry customers seeking to appoint new contractors because the original contractors are either unwilling or unable to finish what they have started.

Could we once again appeal to all our members, new and old, to keep this in mind when tendering for work.

Mike Marshall  
Technical Manager

**In this Issue:**

- Insurance Cover for Sub Contractors
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- Certification of Public Buildings
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- Performance Marking Scheme



## Notice to Members

### 1. Insurance Cover for Sub Contractors

The downturn in the construction industry has led to a situation where many contractors who up to recently employed one or more electricians, have now reduced their operation to a one man band.

They work on the basis that if a job arises which requires additional help, they can quite easily find other electricians who will join up with them on a sub contract basis for the duration of the project.

In many cases the contractor will have dispensed with Employer's Liability Insurance when he let his staff go and may not have paid sufficient attention to ensuring that another electrician employed on a subcontract basis has adequate or indeed any insurance cover.

If a contractor intends to operate in this manner, he should ensure that the incoming subcontractor has insurance cover which adequately covers any liability which will arise from work carried out by him or injuries suffered by him.

Alternatively the contractor should arrange with his own insurers to have his insurance extended to cover his liability to and for subcontractors.

It is frightening to see how many contractors are leaving themselves wide open to personal liability because of the inadequacy of their insurance cover and it is a well known saying in the industry that most insurances are fine until you seek to claim from them.

Please ensure that your insurance is adequate to cover not only the work you are doing but also work being done for you by others.

### 2. Four Core SWA Cables

Contractors using 4 Core SWA Cable to wire 3 Phase motors have reported that it is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain 4 core SWA with the correct phase colours and a green/yellow earth core.

CENELEC Rules permit the sleeving of the Blue (neutral) core to create an earth in such situations but ETCI Rules do not permit any sleeving of Blue Cores.

Manufacturers have indicated that they do not manufacture 4 Core cables in the colour combination required for compliance with ETCI Regulations, simply because there is insufficient demand for it.

We would be interested in hearing from contractors who have encountered this problem.

If there is sufficient demand for such a cable, some manufacturer might agree to produce it, but if this cannot be achieved, there may be need for ETCI to revisit the Regulations and come into line with what is permitted in CENELEC Rules.

### 3. Certification of Public Buildings

A letter sent from ETCI to the Department of Environment has been copied to ECSSA.

In the letter ETCI points out, quite rightly, that local Fire Officers have been demanding ETCI Completion Cert for existing installations in public buildings when they should in fact be asking for Periodic Inspection Reports.

The normal Completion Cert is not a suitable document for use when reporting on the condition of an existing installation as it does not provide adequate space or detail to allow the attention of the customer to be drawn to items which require attention.

ETCI has requested that the DOE circulate all local Fire Officers with the clarification that what should be sought for an existing installation is a Periodic Inspection Report.

Periodic Inspection Report Forms are available from ECSSA in Books of 10 costing €50 (including VAT, P&P).

There is also a certain amount of confusion circulating in relation to the testing and certifying of Emergency Lighting installations.

While discussions are currently taking place on the creation of a Register of Emergency Lighting Certifiers, nothing has as yet been finalised and therefore the situation remains as it was, namely that any registered contractor can issue a test certificate for Emergency Lighting provided that he is familiar with the requirements of IS3217, has a suitable test meter to check the light levels, and is satisfied that the installation complies in all respects with the requirements set out in IS3217.

### 4. Performance Marking Scheme

The trial period of the Performance Marking Scheme is still continuing and in general both Inspectors and Contractors continue to point out difficulties in the operation of the scheme as currently laid out.

Based on this feedback a very useful meeting took place between the Regulatory Bodies and CER on September 1st

where the experiences of both ECSSA and RECCI were discussed and compared and where a broad outline of the modifications required for the efficient operation of the scheme was put forward.

We are currently working on re-drafting the Assessment Sheet to make it more user friendly and more relevant to the variety of work which electrical contractors may find themselves involved in.

Hopefully this modified document will be available in first draft in early October so that Inspectors can see during the remainder of the trial period whether this more appropriately suits the task of assessing the performance of contractors.

It is intended that the final draft of the Assessment document will be circulated to contractors before the year end so that they will have clear indication of the points on which their assessment will be based from the start of 2011 onwards.



Please quote your ECSSA Membership Number when ordering to secure these special offer prices.

## ECSSA Member Offer

**1000 Business Cards**  
Printed full colour both sides  
**€69+VAT**

**A4 Docket Books**  
Duplicate or Triplicate  
NCR printed black, numbered, perfed.  
Proofs supplied for your approval pre press.

**5 docket books @ €98+VAT**  
Or 5 Books A5 size @ €85+VAT

**MURPHY PRINT & DESIGN**

Woodlands Industrial Estate Park Road Killarney  
tel 064 6634650 fax 064 6636394 [www.murphyprint.com](http://www.murphyprint.com)

### 5. Earthing of Wind Turbines

In response to numerous queries in relation to the earthing of domestic wind turbine masts, the following is the recommended method of earthing:

A bare copper cable of 95 sq mm or an equivalent bare copper tape 25mm x 4mm should be buried in the soil outside the turbine base to at least a depth of 1 metre and totally surrounding the base.

From this electrode one or more copper cables of 95 sq mm should be connected to the metal work of the turbine mast.

The normal domestic earth of the premises should not be connected to this earth system, as the primary purpose of the earth system at the turbine mast is to ground any lightning strike which the mast may attract.

Connecting the mast to the earth of the dwelling house would serve only to divert part of that high voltage lightning strike into the house where it could cause serious damage or possibly fire.

Contractors engaged in the connection of these turbines should follow the manufacturer's instructions closely and if in any doubt should call their local Inspector or contact ECSSA directly.

### 6. Certification of Previously Unconnected Houses

The ongoing recession in the housing market has left a large stock of completed houses which were tested and certified but which never proceeded to having an ESB connection made since the developers could not find buyers for them.

Any such houses which remain unconnected for more than six months after the date of initial certification will need to be re-tested and a new Completion Cert issued before ESB can make supply available to such a house.

Contractors should note that once they have issued the initial Completion Cert for a house, they have no automatic right to be recalled to issue any subsequent Completion Certs if the initial one expires at the end of the six months period.

The property owner is entitled to call in any registered electrical contractor of his choice to carry out the work of testing and certifying and he will have to pay for this service, just as he would have to pay the original contractor if he were called back to re-test and issue a new Cert.

The fact that a different contractor is engaged for the second certification does not constitute a Change of Contractor as defined in the CER Criteria since, when the initial contractor issues his Completion Cert he is deemed to be finished with the job and if the developer retains that Cert for more than six months before he has occasion to seek a supply, then the work of providing the re-test and re-certification is treated in the same way as if the new contractor were called in to wire additional lights or

sockets in a house previously certified and connected by a different contractor.

Change of Contractor only arises where the work is not complete and where the original contractor has not yet issued a Completion Cert in respect of the work which he has carried out.

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### Useful Website Addresses

Electrical Contractors Safety & Standards Association (Ireland) Ltd (ECSSA)  
[www.ecssa.ie](http://www.ecssa.ie)

Commission for Electricity Regulation (CER) [www.cer.ie](http://www.cer.ie)

Electricity Supply Board (ESB) [www.esb.ie](http://www.esb.ie)

Electro Technical Council of Ireland (ETCI) [www.etcie.ie](http://www.etcie.ie)

National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) [www.nσαι.ie](http://www.nσαι.ie)

National Consumer Agency (NCA) [www.nca.ie](http://www.nca.ie)

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) [www.seai.ie](http://www.seai.ie)