

Industry News

Training Courses

This year's series of course has now almost reached its conclusion with two venues remaining. With one or two notable exceptions, these were well attended and it shows that most Contractors are taking seriously the requirement to attend such a Course at least once every three years.

A more rigid implementation of this Regulation is likely to be in place when the Courses re-commence in the Autumn, as legislation is due shortly to give statutory standing to the requirements of the CER. It is likely that the number of Course venues will be increased in the Autumn 2005 / Spring 2006 series.

Telecom Connections

It now appears to be a Telecom requirement, in all areas, that an outside cabinet be fitted for the incoming Telecom Cable and that this be piped through the wall with a draw wire to a flush box inside the house. The Customer is responsible for all internal arrangements.

Cat 5 Cabling

In the December Issue of our Newsletter, the contact number for the CAT 5 Cable Courses being offered by Legrande is incorrect. The correct contact number is: (01) 2954465

Obituary

It is with deep regret that ECSSA learned of the death of one of our long standing members, Tim O'Brien of Skibbereen, who died unexpectedly on February 21st 2005. Tim had built up a very substantial electrical contracting business in Cork City and County since he first established his firm in November of 1975. He joined ECSSA on March 12th 1998 and was also a respected member of both AEI and RECI. We extend our Sympathy to his Family, Friends and Staff.

Temporary Supplies

The current ESB practice of installing the final supply, when requested for a temporary supply, is leading to serious problems within the Electrical Industry. There are currently many situations where completed installations are connected to what were originally the temporary supplies. In many cases Test Records and Completions Certs have never been completed for these installations.

In practical terms what can also happen is that an unscrupulous builder can employ a registered contractor to issue a cert for a temporary supply and then have the main installation wired by an unregistered contractor, who can obviously do the job far cheaper. Once the installation is complete, all the builder has to do is to have the temporary socket disconnected, and the full installation connected into the isolator in its place. We have also come across instances where electrical contractors, having certified a temporary supply, and subsequently completed the installation, have failed to receive payment from the Client / Main Building Contractor. Since withholding the Final Cert will make no difference, the electrical contractor is left with no option but to pursue a long and costly battle through the Courts.

We intend to continue our lobbying of the ESB and CER on this matter and our legal advise is that once the ESB are notified that additional loading has been connected to a temporary supply, liability for problems arising in the installation, will pass from the Contractor who issued the Cert for the temporary supply, to ESB Networks.

Protection of Mains in Cavity

In order to clear up a misunderstanding which seems to have arisen regarding the protection of Customer Tails in cavities, the following is the position.

1. Where the tails can come into contact with a potentially corrosive substance such as polystyrene, the tails must be protected by a tube or conduit.
2. In the case of timber framed houses, where the tails are free to move within the cavity, no such secondary protection is required.

This question is being looked at by ETCl at the moment but until there is a revision of the Rules, the above situation will pertain.

ECSSA OFFICE HOURS

Monday to Friday
9.00am to 1.00pm
2.00pm to 5.00pm

ECSSA news

Spring, 2005



In this Issue:
Chairman's Comments
Notice to Members
Industry News



Welcome to the Spring 2005 Edition of the ECSSA Newsletter!

Twelve months have now passed since the introduction of the ECSSA Insurance Scheme for Contractors.

At the end of that twelve month period, we note that 83% of our Members are now availing of the exceptional value afforded to Contractors by AON /Eagle Star. Not only have our Members experienced premium reductions of up to 50%, but all other Providers of Insurance to the Electrical Contracting Industry have been forced to bring their prices into line with the Eagle Star rates.

Once again, this highlights the lack of competition which existed in the Insurance Market prior to the introduction of our Scheme and it is indeed ironic that various other bodies should now be claiming to offer the best available insurance deals to Contractors.

One has to ask what did any of these bodies do to break the near monopoly position which existed in this sector of the market for the previous ten years.

The success of the ECSSA Scheme proves that, when Contractors stick together and act in a cohesive manner, they have considerable buying power, and have to be treated with respect by all those who wish to deal with them. We thank all those who have made the Scheme such a resounding success and we urge any Contractors who have not yet joined the Scheme to do so at their next renewal date.

Contractors should also realise that all important decisions regarding the future of the Electrical Industry will henceforth be taken by the CER and that it is only by having a strong voice at the meetings of CER, ESB, ETCl and Regulatory Bodies, that the concerns of the Contractor can be raised and his interest defended. From the outset the ECSSA has continually opposed any measures which we feel would have a negative impact on the ability of Contractors to function in a practical manner. Unfortunately, we have often been a lone voice in this regard and we would ask those of our members who are also members of AEI, to use that Body's influence on the Board of RECI to ensure that RECI supports the commercial interests of Electrical Contractors at meetings with the CER and ESB. AEI certainly look after the commercial interest of their members, but AEI does not have a place at the table when ETCl, ESB, CER and the Regulatory Bodies meet to discuss matters of importance to the trade. Therefore, it is important that both Regulatory Bodies use their right of representation at these meetings to ensure that the interest of the Contractor is upheld since it is obvious that unless the Regulatory Bodies uphold the interests of their members, nobody else is likely to do it for them.

John O'Loughlin
Chairman of ECSSA

www.ecssa.ie

Notice to Members

1. Membership Renewal

By March 1st over 80% of Contractors have renewed their Membership and we urge those who may have over looked renewing to do so as there is a cut off date of April 30th, after which no further Certs can be processed for Contractors who are not current Members. While there has been great improvement on the accuracy of correspondence with the Office, we still get a small number of Cheques and Postal Orders with no attached information and this leads to inevitable delays.

Please ensure that your **Membership Number** is quoted on all correspondence and that you clearly specify what items you want when placing an Order.

2. Diary and Yearbook

Our 2005 Yearbook has been very well received by Members, who have found it to be quiet useful and informative. Regrettably, it appears that the list of ESB Contact Numbers published is not really proving to be the asset which we expected it would be. The problem arises initially from the fact that very few of these numbers are answered when called and secondly, internal changes within the ESB have resulted in a considerable percentage of the phone numbers not being listed with the correct names. While one can accept personnel movement, it is difficult to understand how a company in a monopoly position such as ESB Networks is, can be allowed to treat its Customers and the Electrical Contracting Industry with such contempt. The smooth operation of the overall Electrical Industry, going forward, is supposed to be a system of cooperation between Electrical Contractors, ESB, ETCl, and CER, but it is difficult to see how this can ever be achieved if Contractors or indeed their Customers simply cannot contact their local ESB Offices.

It would appear that despite our best efforts, a small number of errors and omissions crept in to the Directory and we propose to issue an amendment sheet with the Summer Newsletter. Any Contractor, who was a member at the end of 2004 and who does not appear in the 2005 Directory or any Contractor, whose details are incorrectly shown, should submit their current details in writing between now and April 30th.

It also appears that due a misalignment of columns at the printing stage, the Current Carrying Capacity of cables is incorrectly showing in one of the tables.

3. Insurance

Contractors are reminded that the onus remains on them to ensure that we always have an up to date copy of their insurance on file in the Office. In the absence of such evidence of ongoing insurance cover, we cannot send out Certs or process Certs which have been submitted to us for onward transmission to the ESB.

4. Return of Certs to ECSSA (Pilot Scheme)

Latest news from the ESB would seem to indicate that the nationwide implementation of the return of Completion Certs to the Regulatory Bodies rather than to the ESB has been postponed to after June 1st.

The Pilot Scheme, which is being operated by both ECSSA & RECI in Kerry and Wexford, appears to be running smoothly and all that remains for its introduction to the remaining counties is some IT work on part of the ESB and agreement on how the Regulatory Bodies are to be reimbursed for the additional work involved. ECSSA has totally rejected an ESB proposal that these additional costs should be born by the Contractor in the form of increased membership fees or additional cost for Certs. The cost of Certs is being increased in any case due to price increases from ETCl, who supply the Certs to the Regulatory Bodies, and we have no intention of adding any additional costs to our members over and above those which are outside of our control.

Until the start date is officially confirmed and notification sent to all our members, Contractors should continue to submit the WHITE Copies of the Certs to their local ESB office, except in the case of counties Kerry and Wexford. In the case of Contractors who still have Certs which were purchased before the Colour Change was implemented, the GREEN Copy is the correct one to send to the ESB (or to ECSSA in the case of Kerry and Wexford installations).

5. Issue of Certs by Non Members

It has been brought to our attention that a small number of Contractors, who did not renew their membership in 2004, continued to issue Certs to the ESB for connections. These Certs are now being segregated and the ESB must be notified that these connections have been obtained on foot of an invalid Cert and corrective action will have to be taken.

6. ESB Networks

The ESB have requested that some details regarding an installation should be filled in to the Comments Box if the installation is not a straight forward connection of a new house.

For example, if the Cert is to facilitate a relocation of a meter, it should be indicated whether the meter is being relocated inside the building or relocated from inside to outside or whether the job involves under-grounding of an existing overhead service. The provision of additional information, such as this, could well help in speeding up the work by the ESB. Once again we have to stress the importance of including an MPRN Number or SAID Number or in the case of an existing installation, the Customer's ESB Account Number. At the moment, Certs submitted directly to the ESB without such a number are inevitably delayed and as soon as the system is changed and all Certs are returned to the Regulatory Bodies, it will become impossible to process a Cert which does not have one or other of the above numbers.

7. Price Changes

The cost of Completion Certs and other Publications charged to ECSSA by the ETCl has increased since January 1st. However, the Board decided that these increases would not be passed on until June 1st. From that date the following prices are the main Price Changes which will apply. (Price incl VAT)

Domestic Certs (Book of 10)	€65.00
Interim Cert (x 1)	€60.00
Industrial Cert (x1)	€64.00
Existing Certs (Book x 10)	€62.00
SubSystem Certs (Book x 10)	€37.00
Minor Certs (Book x 10)	€30.00
Domestic Certs (Book x 50)	€275.00
ETCl National Rules Book	€70.00
Agricultural Certs (Book x 50)	€20.00

Commercial Disputes

At least 80% of the Complaints which reach ECSSA have their origins in Commercial Disputes.

Time and again we are told by Complainants that their Electrical Contractor will not come back to continue with the installation, to finish off outstanding items or will not issue a Cert on foot of a job which appears to be largely complete.

Invariably, when the Contractor is contacted, we hear the other side of the story, which very often revolves around the fact that the Contractor is owed a considerable amount of money and that the Client or the Building Contractor is making no effort to discharge the debt. Not surprisingly, the Electrical Contractor is not prepared to proceed with any further work until payment is received.

We have to make it very clear that ECSSA can only get involved where there is evidence of defective workmanship or practices which do not comply with ETCl Regulations. Other than to advise both parties that they should try to

8. Reconnection of installations following Temporary Disconnections

The attention of Contractors is drawn to page 3 of the current Interface Book where it is pointed out that the ESB now require a Certificate for the reconnection of an installation where any change has been carried between the ESB Meter Point and the Customers Distribution Board, even though the disconnection may only have been for a short period of less than one hour. We recently had a case where the ESB were asked to remove the Lucy Fuses to facilitate the replacement of the incoming main switch with an identical unit. Despite the fact that replacing the switch took no more than twenty five minutes and did not involve any change to the wiring, the ESB were not prepared to refit the Lucy Fuses until they were given an Industrial Completion Cert for the replacement of the switch. Such a rigid interpretation of the requirements could have serious implications for Contractors, in that problem's like this can arise and frequently do at weekends or outside of normal working hours. A Contractor faced with a situation such as this, could be placed in a very embarrassing situation in that while he may be able to carry out the repair, he might not have an Industrial Completion Cert available and therefore his client would have to remain without power until such time as a Cert could be obtained and forwarded to the ESB. This is a matter which we propose to take up with the CER at the first available opportunity, as it is quite obvious that when the ESB decided on this requirement, they did not take in to account the impracticality of its enforcement.

In the meantime, it might be a good idea for Contractors who could find themselves in such as situation, to ensure that they have both Domestic and at least one Industrial Certs in stock at all times.

resolve their commercial dispute in a mutually acceptable manner, ECSSA has no role to play in commercial disputes.

Contractors would do well to advise their Employer, whether it be the House Owner or the Building Contractor, that ECSSA will not request or demand that any Electrical Contractor expose himself to further loss by continuing with the job where there is clear evidence that he is not being paid for his work. Furthermore, it is essential, in order to avoid disputes at the later stage of an installation, to have a very clear understanding, by all parties, of the scope of the contract so that there can be no ambiguity as to what was originally contracted for and what items could be deemed to be alterations or extras. It is particularly important that Contractors who tender for Public Authority work are fully conversant with the specification required, as the Building Regulations, which many Electrical Contractors are not aware of, contain guidelines on such items as the control of central heating and conservation of energy. Local Authorities will often demand that all these recommendations be adhered to. In a large scheme of houses, it could be financially disastrous for an Electrical Contractor to have to retro fit control systems which are seldom required in private dwellings, but which the Authority may demand in their schemes.