

7. Non-Compliant Electrical Products

At a recent meeting with the CER, representatives of the Electrical Manufacturers and Distributors Associations (EMDA), and the Electrical Wholesalers Association (EWA), expressed their alarm at the amount of non-compliant electrical materials which are finding their way on to the Irish Market.

While one immediately thinks of non compliant cables, and indeed these probably represents the greater part of non-compliant imports, there are several other items which are of uncertain origin, do not comply with the relevant Standards, and have the potential to create significant loss and damage to the public and to installers of these products should they fail in the future.

Product liability imposes very strict conditions on manufacturers and suppliers of goods, and the law as it currently stands allows very few defenses for the manufacturers or suppliers of such items.

Electrical contractors should be particularly careful in their selection and purchase of materials since a product from a reputable brand, bought from an established wholesaler will generally provide the installer with a good level of indemnity, even if the product proves defective in an installation, provided always of course that the product has not been modified and has been properly installed.

On the other hand, materials manufactured by companies based in obscure locations, and brought onto the Irish Market by a series of unknown or untraceable importers and distributors, may often lead to a situation where the electrical contractor who installs the product may well be the only person against whom damages can be recovered, as all other entities in the manufacture and supply chain might prove difficult to pin down, never mind successfully pursue for damages in the event of product failure.

Contractors should also be very wary of items such light fittings, dimmer switches, and electrical appliances supplied to them by the householder as these will often have been bought either abroad, or on the internet and in many cases are totally non-compliant with the relevant Irish Standards.

The simple message is stick with brands you know, deal with suppliers who have signed up to the Electrical Industry's Quality Charter, and avoid creating a potentially disastrous situation for yourself in the future for the sake of saving a few euros now.

8. Important Guideline Documents

We regularly get calls from contractors who seem unaware of what we are referring to when we mention the CER Criteria or the Customer Interface Code. The Criteria is one of three documents which regulate the Electrical Contracting Industry in Ireland.

The first of these documents is the **ETCI National Wiring Rules, ET101:2008**, which is the 4th Edition of the ETCI Rules and which came into force on September 1st 2009.

ET101 sets out the technical requirements covering equipment to be used and the manner of it's installation and testing. Contractors should already be familiar with the National Wiring Rules, but it is important that changes incorporated in the 4th Edition should be taken into account, and for that reason we recommend that members purchase a copy of the new Edition.

The second document which governs the operation of the industry is the **CER Criteria**, which can be viewed on the CER website at www.cer.ie. A link from the ECSSA website takes one directly into the Criteria document, which is divided into various subsections dealing with the Registration of Contractors, the responsibility of the Contractor towards their Regulatory Body and towards their Customers. It also governs the responsibility of the Regulatory Bodies to the CER and to the Public, and it sets out Common Procedures for such functions as Registration, Inspection, Training, Disciplinary Process, Certification, Enforcement, Change of Contractor, and other issues.

It is important that contractors be aware of what is expected of them, particularly in relation to certification, and for that reason they should make a point of logging on to the website and printing off those sections of the Criteria which set out the contractor's responsibilities.

The document is not available for sale as it has not been produced in printed form.

The final document which contractors should be aware of is the **National Code of Practice for Customer Interface** published by ESB. The 4th Edition of this publication came out in 2008, and ESB provided both Regulatory Bodies with copies for every contractor registered at that time. Apparently it is not proposed to publish a further Edition, and any ongoing changes which occur can be found on the ESB website at www.esb.ie/esbnetworks/ncp

Ollie Burke Appeal

On 31st October 2007 ECSSA Member Ollie Burke was carrying out electrical work when he fell from a ladder, suffered severe head injuries and now has an acquired brain injury.

From being an active and sports loving young man prior to his accident, Ollie's life has changed to a point where he now needs 24 hour care and has to be fed, dressed and showered. He has also lost the sight of one eye and has limited use of his hands. His recovery is very slow, but intensive speech therapy, occupational therapy and the provision of round the clock care will be required for a long period. There was no insurance cover for such an accident, and while the HSE makes a contribution, the provision of care has proved a major financial burden for his family.

An Appeal has been launched by his friends, and among other they are appealing to the electrical contracting industry to make even a small contribution to ease the burden of the enormous ongoing costs which his care will entail in the future. Details can be found on their website at www.friendsofollie.com

VERIFICATION & CERTIFICATION COURSE 2010 Spring / Summer Dates

Date	Location	Venue
28 07/04/2010	Dublin	Legrand Office
29 07/04/2010	Galway	Clayton
30 07/04/2010	Limerick	Kilmurray Lodge
31 14/04/2010	Dublin	Legrand Office
32 14/04/2010	Sligo	Sligo Park
33 14/04/2010	Cork	Silver Springs
34 28/04/2010	Dublin	Legrand Office
35 28/04/2010	Killarney	ECSSA
36 05/05/2010	Kildare	Glenroyal
37 05/05/2010	Cavan	Cavan Crystal
38 05/05/2010	Cork	Silversprings
39 19/05/2010	Galway	Clayton
40 19/05/2010	Limerick	Kilmurray Lodge

Date	Location	Venue
41 26/05/2010	Sligo	Sligo Park
42 26/05/2010	Cork	Silver Springs
43 09/06/2010	Dublin	Legrand Offices
44 09/06/2010	Tullamore	Tullamore Court
45 09/06/2010	Killarney	ECSSA
46 16/06/2010	Cavan	Cavan Crystal
47 16/06/2010	Cork	Silversprings
48 23/06/2010	Kildare	Glenroyal
49 30/06/2010	Dublin	Legrand Offices
50 30/06/2010	Galway	Clayton
51 30/06/2010	Limerick	Kilmurray Lodge

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

Booking Forms can be downloaded from our website at www.ecssa.ie

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ECSSA news



Dear Member,

Welcome to the Spring 2010 Newsletter.

It would be nice to be able to say that the Spring has brought with it the green shoots of recovery, but if these are to be found elsewhere, there is no real sign of them in the electrical contracting sector.

We continue to hear of member companies experiencing severe financial pressure, with many going out of business, often with substantial liabilities, but also owed vast amounts of money without any hope of collecting same.

It is particularly worrying to see major Developers, who are themselves being rescued by NAMA, holding on to their Subcontractor's money and attempting to renegotiate the terms of payment to suit themselves.

Notwithstanding this, a considerable number of Contractors have renewed for 2010, and what is encouraging is the fact that quite a few Contractors who were previously members of ECSSA but who had been missing for a number of years for one reason or other, are now coming back to the fold.

There is also an increase in the number of first time members, and this probably reflects the sad reality that once workers lose their employment, either through the collapse of their employer's firm or through a severe downturn in the workload of that firm, they are left with no option but to set up on their own and attempt to seek a living from what little work there is available.

The huge surplus of housing stock available would seem to indicate that very few new houses, if any, will be built this year, other than once off private dwellings.

Once source of work which might see an upturn is that many of the houses currently unoccupied will need to be re-tested and re-certified if an increased availability of mortgages generates an up turn in the number of first time buyers.

We are lead to believe that when NAMA and the other Government proposals, start to take effect, money will start to flow to businesses again, and there is no doubt but there is a lot of upgrading and remedial work which needs to be done at the moment, but unfortunately until business owners lose the fear of spending, this work will not become a reality.

In the meantime contractors have to be conscious of every cost, have to be more careful than ever in invoicing and collecting for those jobs in which they succeed in getting, and at the end of the day the one undeniable fact is that all recessions are cyclic, and that once we establish that we have reached the bottom of the cycle, things can only get better. While recovery may be slow, at least the country will be moving in the right direction.


Mike Marshall

Technical Manager

Please Read Carefully – Important Changes which effect You.

In this Issue:

- Post Connection Test Enforcement
- Insulation in Attics
- Connection of New Installations
- Verification & Certification Courses
- Change of Contractor
- CER Safe Electric Campaign
- Non-Compliant Electrical Products
- Important Guideline Documents

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

Notice to Members

1. Post Connection Test Enforcement

The new procedure for Post Connection Test Enforcement came into play on January 1st 2010, and while the majority of contractors have complied with the new requirements, there are still quite a few who either do not understand what is required, attach no importance to the Post Connection Tests, or simply cannot be bothered to find out and comply with what are not ECSSA Rules, but a legal requirement from the Commission for Energy Regulation.

No additional tests over and above those which have always been required are involved in the new procedure. All that is required is that, once a contractor connects the Customer Tails in the installation that he immediately carries out the Fault Loop Impedance Test and RCD Trip Time Tests and records the results in the appropriate places on the Completion Cert.

A copy of that fully completed Cert must then be sent to ECSSA, who will complete the process by posting those results on it's CIS System and filing the Post Connection Cert for retrieval at any stage in the future should the owner of the installation wish to have a copy of same for the purpose of insurance, sale, litigation, or valuation.

While handling these Post Connection Certs has involved an additional workload for ECSSA Staff, it was felt that an additional charge should not be incurred by the contractor once the Certs were sent in within the allowed period of 35 days from the date of supply being made available by ESBN.

However, those contractors who have ignored the request to comply, will from now on incur the extra charge brought about having to write to them to request compliance with the Post Connection requirements, and this charge will be made by way of a requirement that a Surcharge Stamp has to be placed on any Post Connection Cert sent in as a result of a First Notice or Enforcement Notice sent to the contractors.

While contractors may complain that this is yet another charge being imposed on them, it's avoidance is totally under their own control in that all they have to do is carry out the tests and send in the Cert in good time.

Some contractors claim that they are unable to carry out Post Connection Tests for a variety of reasons, and there are no doubt matters which are often outside the control of the contractor, but it would greatly help in avoiding unnecessary notification of non-compliance if contractors, who realise that there are reasons why a Post Connection test cannot be carried out in a particular installation, were to send a note to ECSSA indicating the Cert Number and outlining those reasons so that the enforcement process can be stalled accordingly.

Currently a photo copy of the third part of the Completion Cert is being used for notification of Post Connection Test

Results and contractors may continue to do so until they have exhausted their stocks of three part Certs. ETCI hope to have the new four part Cert available with the next couple of weeks.

2. Insulation in Attics

In the past few weeks we have heard of three separate fires, and another near miss, caused by insulation which had been sprayed into attics a short time earlier.

Unfortunately this is a problem which we are likely to see more and more of.

The availability of Grant Aid for retro fitting of insulation in walls and roofs, and the growing awareness of the high cost of heating, has lead to huge increase in the number of householders availing of this insulation service.

Up to 250mm of fibre type insulation is used in attics, and this is generally sprayed in under pressure, with the result that it packs in tightly around any recessed lights which protrude above the ceiling.

In many cases the original attic insulation would have been a thin layer of glass fibre type wool, and even if provision was made to keep the original insulation clear of Downlighters, the force of the spray process will ensure that the light fittings will be covered in several inches of the new fibre. This will invariably lead to overheating and fire.

Apart from light fittings, we have also had a report of an instance where an extract fan, discharging from a bathroom directing into the roof space, became clogged up with insulation and overheated when next used.

ECSSA has suggested to CER that ESB should be asked to include a Warning Notice in all Customer Bills drawing attention to this potential hazard.

It would also be helpful if SEAI would instruct all Registered Insulation Contractors to ensure that their Customers are made aware of the problem, and that steps are taken to prevent fires arising from the new insulation.

The nationwide drive towards better insulation is a relatively new occurrence, but it is not good that in a short space of time there have been an unacceptable number of fires and near misses caused directly by lack of consideration for the problems which this otherwise beneficial upgrade can cause.

Useful Addresses Website

Electrical Contractors Safety & Standards Association (Ireland) Ltd (ECSSA)	www.ecssa.ie
Commission for Electricity Regulation (CER)	www.cer.ie
Electricity Supply Board (ESB)	www.esb.ie
Electro Technical Council of Ireland (ETCI)	www.etcie.ie
National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI)	www.nsaie.ie
National Consumer Agency (NCA)	www.nca.ie
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)	www.seai.ie

3. Connection of New Installations

One of the chief excuses which contractors give for not carrying out Post Connection Tests is that on the day when they connected the Customer Tails to the Meter Isolator, the house was locked and they could not gain access to carry out the Loop Impedance and RCD Trip Time Tests.

Nobody should connect an installation without first checking in the premises to ensure that tilers, kitchen fitters, painters or other trades have not removed switches or sockets and left potentially live wires exposed.

To connect such an installation, while the premises remains locked and unchecked, amounts to negligence and should not be practiced in any circumstances.

If the Customer is so anxious to have supply switched on once ESB make it available, then the very least they can do is ensure that the contractor,

who makes the final connection, has access to the house to carry out the vitally important Post Connection Tests.

If you cannot do these tests, it means you will have to return later to do them, so the obvious thing to do is to also leave the connecting of the Customer Tails until that later date when the job can be properly completed rather than expose the occupants, or any other person who has reason to visit or work in the house, to unacceptable danger by providing a live but untested installation.

4. Verification & Certification Courses

There has been a good uptake in attendance at Verification & Certification Courses as contractors begin to realise that from April 1st Certs signed by a person who has not been on such a course within the past three years will have to be treated as 'Invalid'.

There are some areas of the country where this message does not appear to have been treated seriously, with continuing low attendance in Courses in those regions.

We have made it as easy as possible for contractors to participate in those Courses and have extended the schedule of Course up to June 30th so that contractors who cannot regularise their situation before April 1st will have an opportunity to do so in the following two months.

There are currently no plans to run Courses during the Summer so we would advise all those who still have to attend a Course to do so in the remaining weeks, preferably before April 1st, but at very latest before June 30th as it is unlikely that the CER will allow much flexibility or delay in the rigid enforcement of this requirement.

Courses Cost €150 per person and this includes free copy of the ECSSA Guide to Verification & Certification and also the ECSSA DVD on Verification and Certification.

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5. Change of Contractor

For a variety of reasons there appears to be a significant increase in the number of instances where a different contractor is asked to complete and certify installations started by another contractor.

While one suspects that the main cause of this increase is the unwillingness or inability of the customer to pay the original contractor, there are of course other reasons why this can occur, such as dissatisfaction on the part of the customer with the progress or quality of the work, death, illness, immigration or liquidation of the original contractor, or the termination of the contract of the main builder to whom the electrical contractor may be a domestic sub contractor.

The legal position that once such a contract is terminated, the services of all domestic sub contractors are also dispensed with.

If for any of the above reasons the electrical contractor is not in a position to complete and certify the installation, the customer obviously will have to make other arrangements to have the job finished.

There is an agreed procedure, authorized by the Commission for Energy Regulation, whereby the customer is obliged to notify the Regulatory Body to which the replacement contractor belongs, and to seek clearance before that new contractor is allowed to take over the work.

In practice however, it is unrealistic to expect that a customer is aware of this requirement since no advertising campaign has ever been undertaken to notify the general public of the existence of such a procedure.

Registered Electrical Contractors, on the other hand, should be well aware that they cannot simply walk in and take over a job started by another REC without first ensuring that the customer has submitted a written request and obtained the clearance from the new Contractor's Regulatory Body, and that the reasons why the change of contractor has been requested have been submitted to the Regulatory Body.

ECSSA often hears of such takeovers only when Contractor A contacts us to say that he has found out that Contractor B has gone in and completed and/or certified a job which Contractor A had wholly or partially installed.

All ECSSA can do at that stage is to take the matter up with the replacement contractor and advise the original member that if there are outstanding commercial issues, these should be pursued through the normal legal channels.

If a contractor is asked to take over a job, he should firstly ensure that his customer has sought and obtained approval for the change, and secondly, he should satisfy himself by way of a detailed inspection, that what he is taking over complies with ETCI Regulations.

It should also be made clear that the approval of the Regulatory Body of the change does not in any way indicate support for one side or other in a dispute which may exist between the customer and the original contractor.

The decision to seek a change of contractor is within the rights of the customer, and the legal and financial consequences which may subsequently arise from such a decision are solely the responsibility of the customer.

This procedure has already been brought to contractor's attention, and members who find themselves the subject of Disciplinary Action for non-compliance will only have themselves to blame for their disregard of this important rule.

6. CER Safe Electric Campaign

CER will launch the new "Safe Electric" brand on the 28th April 2010 followed by a TV and Radio campaign. Only Registered Electrical Contractors will be legally permitted to use the logo. From this date, all customers will know to look for the "Safe Electric" brand representing registered electrical contractors throughout Ireland. You will receive packs from your SSBs, look out for them



Death of ECSSA member Philip Power RIP



On Monday February 8th, ECSSA learned with regret of the death of our member, Philip Power of Caherconlish, Co. Limerick, which had taken place suddenly Friday, February 5th.

Philip became a member of ECSSA on 22/04/1998 and was highly regarded for his competence and professionalism by the ECSSA Inspectors who came into contact with him in the intervening years up to his untimely death.

Prior to starting his own electrical business, he had been employed by Tully Electrical, Clancy Electrical, and Euro Paks Irish Co-Op, with whom he spent 13 years.

He had a life long interest in the GAA and was a loyal follower of Limerick teams.

He is survived by his wife Betty, sons Wesley and Joe, and daughter Jackie. To his immediate and extended family, and his wide circle of friends, the Directors, Staff and Members of ECSSA extend their sympathies.