

Industry News

Earthing of Old Houses

Contractors who undertake the rewiring of old houses should pay particular attention to the provision of a main earth and should not assume that the existing 'earth' still provides a good earth connection. This is because in former times, the earthing of many urban dwelling was provided by connection to the water mains which were generally made of lead, copper or cast iron. The vast majority of these water mains are now of plastic non-conducting substance and therefore cannot be treated as an earth electrode. The only safe option remains to treat old houses as if they were new installations, drive a proper earth bar and ensure that these is a good earth connection available. It goes without saying that it is of the utmost importance to ensure that the neutralising link to the incoming ESB neutral is connected by the contractor.

Non Compliant Cables

A number of contractors have recently informed our Inspectors that they have been offered cables which would not appear to comply with current wiring rules. Electric cables must comply with EU low voltage directive 73/23/EEC as amended by 93/68/EEC and transposed in to Irish Law by SI428 of 1992 and SI307 of 1994. This states *inter alia* that cables, or their packaging, must have CE marking to indicate that they comply. The main problem with the cable recently

found on the market refers to 16sq twin and earth. The requirement for the earth conductor in such cables is that the earth conductor be the next standard size above 50% of the current carrying conductors. 16sq twin and earth therefore requires a 10sq mm earth conductor but cable clearly marked 16 x 2 + 6 has recently appeared on the Irish market. This does not comply with current regulations and while a contractor may be able to offer the defence of having bought the cable from a reputable wholesaler and not having realised that the earth conductor is not of sufficient size, that defence will hardly be available when 16 x 2 + 6 is clearly stamped on it. Contractors should be particularly vigilant to ensure that all cables which they use is marked as being approved by NSAI, BASEC or other HAR member to conform to IS201 or IS 202. Otherwise they run the risk of being exposed to negligence claims and/ or the cost and time of rewiring the installation with approved cable. Vigilance by all contractors will ensure that substandard or unapproved cables will not find a place in the Irish market.

Amendments to the National Rules for Electrical Installations

The recently published second Amendment to the National Rules for Electrical Installations (ET101: 2004) is now available from ECSSA at a cost €7.76.

However, until a new edition of the main book on Wiring Rules is printed, the Amendment comes free with all copies of the main book purchased after June 1st. The reprint is expected towards the end of the year.

The Amendment of the Wiring Rules covers changes in building regulations and practices and provides for harmonisation with CENELEC directives.

The main changes are as follows:

- Chapter 443** Protection against over-voltage. This section deals with over-voltages in installations which result from internal switching or lightning.
- Chapter 46** Isolation and Switching. This is a major revision of the existing Section 466 and involves a complete new section.
- Chapter 51** The new European Cable Colour code including the rules on marking of cables with tape or sleeving.

Chapter 52 Protection of cables in solid or cavity walls

Chapter 53 A new section on isolation which includes much of what was formerly contained in Section 466.

Chapter 55 Various detailed changes including socket outlets and extraction fans.

Chapter 61 Additional test procedures.

Chapter 701 Locations containing bath or shower basins

Annex 43.A Clause 2 Electric Cookers

ECSSA OFFICE HOURS

Monday to Friday

9.00am to 1.00pm & 2.00pm to 5.00pm

ECSSA news

Summer, 2005



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Welcome to the Summer 2005 Edition of the ECSSA Newsletter!

ECSSA has now celebrated the 8th Anniversary of its founding and its membership currently stands at 2,300. Much of this growth has been brought about by the big influx of new contractors into the industry, but obviously the hard work of ECSSA, and in particular the introduction of its new insurance scheme, has attracted a lot of additional contractors into the fold.

Unfortunately, an influx of new entrants to any trade creates its own problems and I would appeal to younger members of the trade not to 'pull down' prices in an effort to get more work. Contractors in the housing sector have suffered particularly over the past number of years. Within the past decade alone, prices of houses have increased out of all proportion but the cost of the electrical installation in houses has, in many cases, remained the same as it was 10 years ago. New entrants to the trade are often blind to the many hidden overheads which are encountered by self employed people. Many of the costs and benefits which you took for granted while you were employed by somebody else, suddenly become costs which have to be absorbed by the profits of the business. It is quite important therefore, when tendering for jobs, to ensure that a margin is included to cover all these overheads. There are a variety of courses being run by various organisations on job costing and indeed we propose to make such courses available later this year.

In the meantime, contractors should realise that they would be far better off, financially, doing less work for more profit than merely trying to win every job they tender for and ending up in a situation where the builders or the developers are the people who are laughing all the way to the bank. Virtually every other trade in the building industry, be they plasterers, blocklayers, or carpenters, have benefited enormously from the Celtic Tiger. This is how it should be and long may it continue for them. However, very few electrical contractors have benefited financially to the same extent from the vast amount of work which is available in this country at the moment.

Unfortunately, they have few people to blame other than themselves and, even more unfortunately, this will continue to be the case until those involved in the electrical industry realises that if they were to place a higher premium on their work, they would be able to achieve a far better living.

Obviously it is illegal nowadays to suggest or attempt price fixing but there is no rule against making a suggestion that contractors, and in particular, new entrants to the trade, should take a long hard look at the prices they are working for, and look for substantial increases. There may be resistance at first but, if there is solidarity within the trade, the increases will have to be granted.


John O'Loughlin
Chairman of ECSSA

www.ecssa.ie

Notice to Members

This is particularly important if you need your supplies in a hurry as Orders which are received with the wrong amount will be held up until the balance is forwarded. The price increases are unfortunate but are totally beyond our control as they reflect the amount of the increases at which we buy the goods from ETCL. On a more cheerful note we have decided that there will be no change in renewal fees or new application fees for 2006.

1. Lapsed Members

While the number of Contractors who have not renewed their 2005 membership is quite small, nevertheless, the time of year has been reached when not only will no further certs will be issued to those in default but we also have to formally notify the ESB that these people are no longer entitled to certify work or to obtain connections from ESB Networks.

If for any reason you have neglected to send in your 2005 subscription, please do so before June 30th which is the date on which the list of lapsed members has to be compiled and send to the ESB.

2. Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of ECSSA will take place in the Brehon Hotel, in Killarney at 11am, Saturday, 9th July. Following the formal business of the meeting, there will be an open discussion on matter pertaining to the trade. So that we can give the hotel an indication of the numbers attending, we would appreciate if you would complete and return the enclosed card as soon as possible.

3. Opening of New Premises

The extension of Coolmore House which consists of a Training School and a large open plan office, has now been completed and the entire complex will be officially opened at 3pm on Saturday, July 9th.

We would like to pay tribute to the work of all concerned, including our Architect David Linton Forde, Builder John Horan and all his Subcontractors, for the manner in which they carried out the work with little or no disruption to the ongoing running of the Office.

A full program of courses on a variety of subjects is being planned for the latter months of the year and no doubt the centre will fill a much needed function for ECSSA and its members.

4. Price Changes

A current Order Form showing the revised prices is enclosed. These prices changes came into effect on June 1st and, therefore, Contractors should only use these Forms when ordering materials.

5. Unwanted Advertising

Once again we want to stress to our members that we do not give contact names or numbers to the publishers of various magazines, wall planners and calendars who constantly lie to contractors by saying they have obtained the contractors name and number from the ECSSA Office and that ECSSA has recommended that it's members advertise in a particular publication. The truth is that these names and contact numbers are almost invariably taken from our website and unfortunately there is little we can do to prevent the activities of publishers who wish to stoop to this sort of a revenue gathering exercise.

6. Change to Registration Procedure

We have come across a number of incidences recently where the Qualifying Manager nominated by a Member has left the Company and has proceeded to use the Company's Membership Number and Card to purchase Certs and have connections made while working on his own behalf. To avoid the problems created by such scenarios, the Directors have decided that in future a Certificate of Registration will be issued to the registered contractor. This Certificate will carry the name of the Principal Duty Holder who may, or may not, be the Qualifying Manager.

ECSSA will continue to require copies of the qualifications of the Qualifying Manager who will actually sign the Completion Certs. The name and photo of the Qualifying Manager will appear on the identity card but from now on the card will indicate on whose behalf he is issuing the Completion Cert. The Principal Duty Holder may permit other members of his staff to sign certs on his behalf provided that they have the necessary skill and competence to do so. The control and distribution of Completion Certs is the responsibility of the Principal Duty Holder, who has an onus to ensure that Certs issued to him are used only to certify work which is carried out by him or his employees. The Principal Duty Holder also has an onus to ensure that he has in place a suitable insurance policy to cover all liabilities both public and employer and he must ensure that ECSSA has a copy of his current insurance cert.

7. Issue of Completion Certs

We have recently had complaints from ESB that, having arrived on sites for which Completion Certs have been issued, ESB found that the installation was far from being complete and in some instances, the building was not even first fixed.

Obviously it is not in order to issue a Completion Cert for an installation which is not complete and on which all the relevant tests have not been carried out. It would appear however, that there can be long delays in obtaining supply arising partly from the fact that ESB in certain areas seem to have developed a practice of not doing any work until the Completion Cert actually reaches them. Builders, frustrated by these delays, which often meant their final payments were held up while their clients waited for an electrical supply, started to put pressure on electrical contractors to issue the Completion Cert long before the installation was ready and tested. In this way, they hoped to avoid delay by having the ESB carry out the preliminary work at an earlier stage of the building, which would leave them in a position to make supply available at the same time as the builder finishes his work. While the logic of the builders approach can be understood, nevertheless, no electrical contractor should issue a cert for an incomplete installation. One way around the delay is to make application for a temporary supply as soon as there is sufficient of the outer walls of the house built to enable the mounting of the meter cabinet. In this way supply will have to be brought to the house at an early stage and once the installation is complete, all that remains for the contractor to do is to replace the temporary supply cert with a permanent Completion Cert showing the test results for the whole installation.

Correct Labelling of Meters

We wish to draw the attention of members to the importance of correctly identifying the meter numbers in multi metered installations such as Apartment Blocks. We have become aware of a number of potentially dangerous situations where contractors have switched off what appeared to be the correct switch fuse at the metering position and then proceeded to carry out work in the correspondingly numbered Apartment, only to find the distribution board in the Apartment was still live.

It can not be over-emphasised that this verification and marking of Apartment Numbers and their corresponding meters, should be carried out before a Completion Cert is issued and before ESB Supply is switched off.

Grasslin Time Switch

The Manufacturers of Grasslin Timers have issued an alert in respect of their QEZ Timers. These were widely used in Ireland for the control of water heating systems.

If you feel you have installed some of these units, please check the installations where they may have been used and **Free Phone 1800-946-360** to register the name and address of the Customer so that a replacement can be fitted by technicians from Grasslin.

You should also advise your Customer not to use the switch until it is replaced, as the faulty switches can overheat.

8. Faxed copies of Certs

At the early stage of the Pilot Scheme which involved the return of Completion Certs from Counties Kerry and Wexford to ECSSA rather than to ESB, we had several instances of where Contractors mistakenly sent the cert to their local ESB office. In many cases, this led to delay and under pressure from Customers, Contractors would then fax a copy of the Completion Cert to ECSSA in the hope of speeding up the connection of supply by ESB. We have to repeat once again that a photo copy or fax of a Completion Cert is not acceptable either to the ESB or ECSSA.

In practical terms, the Green Copy of the Completion Cert does not fax very well and is often illegible by the time it reaches our office.

Secondly our electronic storage system is designed for the scanning of the original certs and cannot record the detail from a blurred fax or photocopy.

Sending a fax does not speed up the connection of a supply as it simply has to wait here until the original arrives, before being transmitted onwards to ESB. Much delay could be avoided if contractors made certain that either they personally send the Cert to the local ESB office or to ECSSA (depending on which county the installation is in) or alternatively if they hand the Cert to their Customer with clear instructions that the responsibility lies with the Customer to ensure that the Cert is forwarded to the relevant office as soon as they need supply.

