

with ECSSA as soon as possible. The incorrect copies were distributed from June 2006 to April 2007.

## 8. Connection of Shower Switches

The problem with shower switches burning out has already been widely reported within the trade. The issue is not confined to any particular manufacturer and arises mainly from the fact that shower manufacturers have continuously increased the wattage in their showers, without switch manufacturers providing a parallel increase in the current carrying capacity of shower switches.

With some showers now rated at up to 10kw, concern is being expressed about the ability of the normal 6 sq. mm cabling to sustain the load, particularly if there is a good distance between the consumer unit and the actual shower. Some contractors are now starting to use 10 sq. mm twin and earth cables, but this has lead to a new and equally dangerous situation in that it is virtually impossible to connect the incoming and outgoing cables in the shower switch and then push the slack cable back into the switch box without creating the possibility of pulling one or more of the cables out of the terminations. An acceptable alternative is to switch the supply to the shower by means of a contactor at the Distribution Board with a brown/brown cable to a 5amp local switch, either ceiling mounted, or outside the bathroom, to control the coil of the contactor.

## 9. Smoke Detectors

In a previous Newsletter we outlined the current requirements for smoke detectors in private houses, but there are still contractors who think that, once they have provided a detector in the hall and landing, the requirements of the Building Regulations have been met. This is not the case and has not

been the case for quite some time. Minimum requirements at the moment are for a heat detector in the kitchen, a smoke or heat detector in the living room, smoke detectors in all escape routes ie. in the hall and landings, and it is recommended that a detector be provided also in the main bedroom. While the bedroom detector is not a legal requirement at the moment, it would make sense to at least provide the wires for the future installation of a unit, as it may be a major job to retrospectively wire for a detector if the cables are not installed at the building stage.

## 10. Attic Insulation

The dangers of attic insulation have already been highlighted but the contractor remains in a vulnerable position in that, at the point in time when he certifies an installation, there may not be any insulation close to or covering the cables. However, the likelihood is that the homeowner will shortly afterwards have insulation sprayed into the attic, and possibly between the floor boards to improve the thermal rating of the house. In doing this they are also creating a dangerous situation in that, if the insulation is expanded polystyrene, this will react with PVC/PVC cables, leading to a deterioration of the cable insulation which can in turn lead to a short circuit, or possibly a fire. If, on the other hand, the insulation takes the form of the recycled paper based product which has recently come on the market, then the problem will arise from over heating of any cables carrying a heavy current such as cooker cables, shower cables, etc. There is no easy answer to the problem but, as a minimum first step in order to protect themselves from future claims, contractors should advise their customers of the dangers of having these insulation materials fitted after the wiring has been completed. If no insulation is present when the job is being certified, this fact should be clearly noted in the comments box of

the Cert so that it can be relied on afterwards as a defence if a claim arises.

## 11. Test Leads

One of the major problems which our Inspectors report in relation to the accuracy of tests carried out by contractors relates to low battery levels in instruments. A close second to this comes the use of old and unsuitable Test Leads where poor connections lead to high resistance results.

To encourage contractors to provide themselves with proper leads, ECSSA has acquired a stock of good quality leads and accessories suitable for use with all meters which have the standard 4mm connections. These are being sold on to contractors at cost and an Order Form listing the various items available is enclosed with this Newsletter.

The 1 Metre Plug Top Test Leads for the plug top test method will prove particularly useful in that contractors have been found to use short pieces of various cables and crocodile clips when using this method of testing. These multiple connection points invariably lead to inaccurate results.

The prices shown are inclusive of VAT & Postage.



ECSSA sponsored Killarney Swimmer, **Niamh O'Sullivan** who travels to Antwerp on the 15th of July as part of an eight member Irish Swim Team which will compete in the European Junior Championship from the 19th to 22nd of July. Niamh made the qualifying time in the 200m, 400m and 800m freestyle events, but will also represent Ireland in the 100m and team relay races. A week later she travels to Sheffield to compete in the British Youth Championship. ECSSA is very proud of Niamh's achievements to date and wish her every success in this very competitive sport.

## Chief & Regional Inspectors

**Wally Forde, Chief Inspector,**

Galway, Mayo, Clare  
Roscommon, Leitrim

087 2942447

**Tony Murray**

Louth, Meath, Longford, Westmeath  
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**Jack Gleeson**

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# ECSSA news



Summer 2007

## Chairman's Comments

### Welcome to the Summer 2007 Edition of the ECSSA Newsletter!

The past three months has seen the successful introduction of the nationwide system of returning Certs directly to ECSSA and their onward transmission to ESB.

This represents a major step forward in improving the integrity and value of the certification system as, up to now, it was virtually impossible for ESB to check that every Cert received by them in their local offices had been issued by an insured contractor who was still a member of a Regulatory Body.

The checking of Certs by ECSSA before releasing them to ESB has removed these loopholes and has ensured that both ESB Networks and the public are no longer at the risk of having uninsured jobs connected.

The additional volume of work created by the influx of approximately 250 Certs per day has tested the capacity of our systems and I am delighted to say that both the systems and the staff have coped admirably with the extra work load.

The Financial Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2006 are enclosed with this Newsletter and once again reflect the very healthy position of the Company with substantial increases in turnover and pre-tax profits. That this situation has been achieved in spite of rising costs is encouraging and places the Company in a very strong position going forward.

Once again we see a steady increase in membership and in particular we welcome a return to the fold of quite a few contractors who have been out of the scene for the past few years. We confidently expect to have 3,000 registered members by the end of 2007. This is a major achievement in which everybody involved in ECSSA, since it's foundation 10 years ago can take justifiable pride. We look forward to the next 10 years of continued growth and success.

*John O'Loughlin*  
Chairman of ECSSA

### ECSSA OFFICE HOURS:

**Monday to Friday:**  
**9am to 1pm and**  
**2pm to 5pm**

**CLOSED FOR LUNCH**  
**1pm to 2pm**

**PLEASE ENSURE THAT A  
SURCHARGE STAMP**



**IS STUCK ON EACH CERT  
RETURNED**



## Notice to Members

### 1. New Cert Return System

Since April 1st, members throughout the country have been returning their Completion Certs to ECSSA rather than submitting them to their local ESB offices.

Approximately 250 Certs per day are being received. In the early days of the operation up to 30% of Certs had to be sent back to contractors because of shortfalls in one area or another. Thankfully, that proportion has since reduced dramatically but, on average, 15 Certs per day are still incapable of being processed. Many of these Certs have to be returned for such basic reasons as lack of an MPRN number, or because the contractor concerned has not renewed his membership or has

failed to provide ECSSA with a copy of his up to date public liability insurance. While the situation in regard to Surcharge Stamps has improved dramatically, there are still contractors who do not seem to realise that a Surcharge Stamp must be fixed on the top right hand corner of the Cert.

To date we have seen Stamps stuck on the top left hand corner, in the comments box, on the back of the Cert, across the MPRN number, across the Cert number, obscuring the contractor's name, and even on the envelope containing the Cert. A small number of contractors are so ill-informed about the whole operation that postage stamps have been stuck on Certs in the hope that this will enable the Cert to be processed.

Once again, we repeat the simple Rules which will make life easier for everybody.

1. A valid MPRN number is essential - see separate article

2. A Surcharge Stamp should be stuck on the **top right hand corner** of the Cert. Our scanning systems are designed to pick up the stamp in this location and putting the stamp anywhere else on the Cert leads to delay and rejection of the Cert.

3. The system will not accept a Cert from a contractor who membership has expired and there is nothing we can do to circumvent this built in blocking system.

4. Neither will the system allow a Cert to be processed unless there is proof on our database of current insurance cover.

NOTE: While AON inform ECSSA, on a daily basis, of policies renewed or new policies issued, no other Insurer does so. The onus therefore remains with the contractor to ensure that proof of ongoing cover is forwarded to ECSSA immediately on expiry of the existing policy.

5. Test values, within the acceptable parameters, must be included on the

Completion Cert for all jobs.

6. ESB will not accept a Cert when more than six months have elapsed since the date of the test of the installation.

7. Contractors should ensure that their membership number is correctly inserted, that the Cert is signed and that the type of installation, ie. new, alteration, etc., is ticked.

Finally, it is important that the White copy be returned to ECSSA; that all entries on the Cert are clearly legible, and that the Cert used was originally purchased by the contractor who is using it. The system will reject any Cert which it detects as having been allocated to a different membership number from that shown on the Cert.

The overall compliance by members has improved greatly, but there is still room for further improvement. Paying attention to the above points will ensure that a contractor's Cert gets logged to ESB without delay and avoids frustration for both himself and his customer.

### 2. Invalid MPRN's

Quite a few of the MPRN's shown on Completion Certs are rejected as "Invalid" when entered on the CIS System for transmission to ESB.

Once this happens, ECSSA staff can do nothing further with the Cert other than return it to the contractor, who then has to go to his customer and check if the MPRN Number has been correctly transferred to the Cert from the correspondence which the Customer has received from ESB Networks or from their ESB Bill.

If the number on the Cert is correct, then the problem has to lie between the Customer and ESB Networks. For example, the MPRN is issued when the Application for Supply is first made, but it does not become valid until the Capital Contribution is paid. The Customer should contact ESB Networks to find out what the problem is, as it would not be legally permissible for

ESB Networks to disclose to either ECSSA, or to the Contractor, the reason why an MPRN is not being accepted, particularly if the problem is a commercial one between the Customer and ESB Networks.

Contractors who have Certs returned to them on foot of "Invalid MPRN" should not ring ECSSA to find out what the problem is, as the ECSSA Staff have no way of checking the reason for refusal.

The contractor should follow the steps outlined above and, once the problem has been cleared, the Completion Cert should be re-submitted to ECSSA, where it will be immediately logged on the CIS System for transmission to ESB.

It is particularly important when dealing with housing schemes to ensure that the MPRN number provided by the builder corresponds with the house number, as it does not follow that the first number on the list from the builder automatically applies to house number one.

Contractors should ask to see the MPRN designation sheet provided by ESB, as it is likely to create huge problems afterwards if the wrong MPRN is entered on a Cert for a house to which ESB have allocated a different MPRN. Once a Cert has been posted on the ESB website in relation to a particular MPRN, there is nothing ECSSA can do to change the detail and it could well end up in a situation where the wrong houses are connected by ESB, and where the ESB Bill will afterwards be addressed to the incorrect customer.

### 3. News from CER

The Electricity Miscellaneous Provisions Bill became law at the end of 2006 meaning that the regulation of the electrical contracting industry in Ireland can now move from the voluntary basis on which it has existed since 1992, to a statutory based situation. To provide for the rules and procedures which will be adapted for the future, the CER

(Commission for Energy for Regulation), the Regulatory Bodies (ECSSA & RECI), the ESB, and the ETCI have had an intensive series of meeting to re-draft the Criteria under which the industry will operate going forward.

While the proposed Criteria is still in its drafting stages, it is clear that one of the aims of the CER is to ensure that every person who signs a Completion Cert will have attended a recognised course on Testing & Certification. It will also mean that individual electricians who attend these courses and pass the assessment at the conclusion of the course, will be issued with a card or certificate allowing them to sign Completion Certs on behalf of any registered contractor by whom there are employed. Electricians who attend courses run by one of the Regulatory Bodies will have their authority to certify recognised by the other Regulatory Body and each qualified certifier will have an individual number which must be put on the Cert when he signs it. The need to ensure that a new member has attended a course in Testing & Certification before he issues his first Cert will mean that, in addition to the winter schedule of courses, further courses will have to be put on throughout the year at a variety of venues to cater for new members.

### 4. Staff News

Our Chief Inspector Wally Forde intends to retire at the end of 2007 and we are currently seeking a replacement Inspector for the West of Ireland.

Our South Eastern Inspector Brendan O'Brien has recently been hospitalised but is now back at home recovering and hopes to return to work in a few weeks time. In the meantime, members in counties Wicklow & Wexford should contact Jimmy Batten at 087 2067117 for advice on any problems they may encounter.

Liam McHale, who has been a member of ECSSA since 1997, has joined us as Assistant Technical Manager. Liam originally comes from Dublin but

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***The equipment is designed for simple fitting but we also offer:***

***• Installation services • commissioning services • Technical helpline***



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***Horan Electrical Services, Ballybride,***

***Roscommon, Co. Roscommon.***

***T: 087 7646675 E: info@gate-automation.com***



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moved to Killarney several years ago and has wide experience in both industrial and domestic electrical installations.

Suzanne O'Donoghue has joined the Certification Department to assist in the checking and processing of Completion Certs before forwarding them to ESB. We welcome our new staff members and look forward to a long and happy association with the Company.

### 5. AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Company will take place in the ECSSA Offices on Saturday, August 11th 2007, at 2pm.

Once the formal business of the AGM has been disposed of, there will be an Open Forum at which members are encouraged to raise issues which are relevant to the electrical contracting trade.

So that we can estimate the likely level of attendance, we would appreciate if

you would return the Proxy Card enclosed with this Newsletter, indicating whether or not you intend to be at the AGM.

### 6. Courses

For the months of July, August & September, courses in Testing & Certification are proposed. These Courses will cover the same content as the main schedule of Courses, which will run from October to April, but the summer courses are intended to cater primarily for new members and will be restricted to much smaller numbers of participants. At the moment we have identified suitable venues in Dublin and Killarney for these courses which can be run either in the evening or on Saturday mornings. Contractors who wish to attend or send employees should contact the office on (064) 37266 and speak to Cathy who is organising the dates and venues.

### 7. ETCI National Wiring Rules

Some time ago it was discovered that the edition of the National Wiring Rules produced by ETCI (ET101) contained an error. Apparently this arose when, in the course of a re-print, the printers used a disk from an earlier edition. The incorrect copies can be identified by checking page 167 where under Regulation 704 (Construction & Demolition Sites) the word "Future" appears on its own. In the correct version Regulation 704 appears on page 169 and goes on to deal with Construction and Demolition Sites over the next two and a half pages. We have given ETCI a list of all those members to whom the incorrect version has been sold and, at this stage, ETCI may have replaced the faulty editions directly to the contractors. Anybody who has the incorrect version and has not received a replacement, should get in touch