

## New Website

ECSSA is currently re-developing it's website which has remained virtually unchanged since it was first created.

The aim of the update is to create a new and more vibrant image of ECSSA and to reflect it's position as the largest Regulatory Body for Electrical Contractors in this country.

The work has been carried by Evan Mangan from a company known as *The Marketing Crowd* based in Killorglin, Co. Kerry.

Evan, a native of Killorglin, has spent many years on web design for major multi national clients while he was based in London, but has recently re-located back to his hometown and already has a folio of several prestigious clients.

As part of the new website, we propose to introduce a Cert Tracking facility whereby anybody with access to the web can track the status of a Cert if they know either the Cert Number or the MPRN.

This will obviously relieve contractors of the need to ring up either ESB Networks or ECSSA to find out if a Cert submitted to ECSSA has been accepted by ESB.

No details of the Address of the installation, the customer's name, or the contractor's details will appear, so that only those people who have access to the Cert Number or the MPRN number can track a particular Cert.

This facility is currently undergoing tests and will be incorporated into the new website before it goes live around mid July.

The web address will remain unchanged at [www.ecssa.ie](http://www.ecssa.ie).

## Intruder Alarm PSA Licensing

One of the questions which we are frequently asked by our members is what activities require a license from PSA (Private Security Authority) and how does one go about obtaining such a license.

Currently it is an offence to install intruder alarms for reward without a PSA license, or an exemption from PSA. It is likely that at some time during 2009 the installation of CCTV cameras will become an activity which requires a license. Access control licensing is unlikely to commence in the near future as it appears that the Private Security Services Act 2004 will need to be amended before that activity can be subjected to license.

The current cost of a PSA license for a contractor with a turnover of less than €625,000 is €2,250 for a two year period. In order to obtain a license, an applicant must be certified to EN50131 and SR40 by an approved Accreditation Body. One such Accreditation Body is EQA whose price of €950 + VAT appears to be the most reasonable available from any of the Certification Bodies, particularly when that price includes a free book of 20 Completion Certs for Intruder Alarms. To maintain certification to IS EN50131, a license holder must successfully complete a surveillance audit every twelve months.

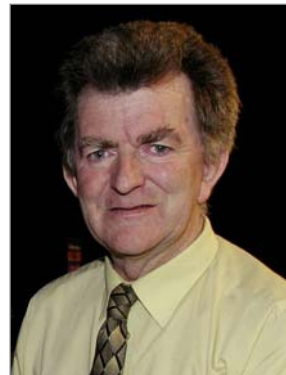
EQA can be contacted on (01) 4734188 and email [info@eqa.ie](mailto:info@eqa.ie)

## Meet the Team

*For the majority of ECSSA members their only contact with the ECSSA Staff is by telephone so we thought it would be a good idea to give members the opportunity of putting a face to the name and finding out something about the people they deal with in ECSSA in the course of the year.*

*This Newsletter features Technical Manager, Mike Marshall, and Financial Controller, Cathy Healy. Over the next few Newsletters other members of the Staff will be featured.*

### Mike Marshall – Technical Manager



When Mike joined the staff of ECSSA in 2004 he brought with him 40 years of hands-on experience in the electrical industry. Educated in CBS Tralee, Mike started his training with WJ McCarthy, a long established Radio/TV and Electrical firm. Following periods with three other electrical contractors in the county, Mike branched out on his own in 1970, and after a short period in general electrical contracting, concentrated on industrial and marine electrics, with the supply and installation of generators also featured in the range of service offered. He was one of the chief organisers and secretary of the Association of South Western Electrical Contractors (ASWEC), a group of 62 electrical contractors who objected to the proposed rules of the newly established RECI in 1992. ASWEC went on to successfully challenge the ESB on the RECI issue in the High Court and the Supreme Court. This important Competition Law case opened the way for the formation of ECSSA in 1997, but apart from being one of the founding Directors, he played very little part in the operation of the Company as the founders opted to leave that to the management and staff of ECSSA.

Mike studied law as a mature student (DLS Course) and afterwards went on to do specialised courses in Competition Law, Construction Dispute Resolution, and Employment Law.

When the then Technical Manager of ECSSA, Sean O'Shea, retired at the end of 2003, the Directors found it difficult to identify a suitable replacement, and Mike eventually agreed to fill the role on a temporary basis, mainly because he had broken his leg in a work accident and could not get around on site.

During his four year temporary stint he has doubled the membership of ECSSA, and trebled it's turnover and profitability. As his son, Kieran, has now absorbed the staff and customer base of the originally family firm into his company Southwestern Power Services, it is unlikely that Mike will return to the business where he spent most of his life, and which he initially found so hard to leave.

Away from work, Mike is one of the best known Rally organisers in the country and over the past 30 years has led the team which has grown the Rally of the Lakes from tiny beginnings into one of the best known and most prestigious international car rallies in Europe. His other interests include travel and local history.

Mike and his wife Noreen live in Killarney, and have two grown up children and five grand children.

### Cathy Healy – Financial Controller



A native of Currow, near Killarney, Cathy was educated in Presentation Convent, Castleisland and IT Tralee, where she studied Hotel Management. She played basketball with St. Josephs, then one of the leading ladies basketball clubs in the county, and is the holder of several medals at County, and All Ireland levels.

Following a period in the hotel industry, Cathy spent further time as a pharmacy assistant. She later joined the

Accounts Department of a major printing works and found her true calling in the world of Accounts and Credit Control.

She joined ECSSA in 2002 and was put in charge of payroll, credit control and general accounts.

Her IT skills have enabled her to play a major role in developing many of the dedicated software programs which ECSSA has designed to deal with the unique procedures which apply to the operation of a Regulatory Body.

Outside of work hours, Cathy is a keen walker and marathon competitor and is interested in fashion, music, rugby and motor sport. The youngest of a family of seven, she has two sisters and four brothers.

# ECSSA news

Summer 2008



## Chairman's Comments

The downturn in the economy which has been obvious from the beginning of the year, continues with no signs that the worst is over. On a daily basis we hear of building firms going into liquidation, and one can be certain that each of these commercial casualties brings with it a number of other casualties among the sub contractors involved with the company which is being wound up.

At a time like this more than ever it is important that electrical contractors do not rush into jobs at unrealistic prices just for the sake of getting work.

It is equally important that every possible safeguard is put in place to ensure that, when the work is done, you are paid fully and promptly. The deteriorating financial climate has made banks even more reluctant to stand by contractors who experience cash flow problems, and indeed we have seen a number of high profile electrical contractors go out of business with substantial liabilities to Revenue, to wholesalers, and also to smaller electrical contractors who were hired in as sub contractors.

As in all situations where cash flow needs to be preserved, it is important for contractors to ensure that paperwork is kept up to date and in order, and that invoices are promptly submitted and diligently pursued.

No recession ever last indefinitely and the important thing for contractors is to ensure that they survive the present downturn and perhaps the lull in work activity will afford contractors an opportunity to look at their pricing structures and see if they really made money during the days of the Celtic Tiger or if they were merely busy for the sake of being busy and deluding themselves that turnover equates to profit.

*John O'Loughlin*

Chairman of ECSSA

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### ECSSA OFFICE HOURS:

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

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

*John O' Loughlin*

Chairman of ECSSA





1. Submission of Certs

At the risk of repeating ourselves, can we impress on contractors the importance of ensuring that MPRN numbers are included on Completion Certs before sending them to ECSSA. If the MPRN number is not present, or if it has been incorrectly entered, we cannot even begin to process a Cert. Thankfully, most contractors now realise the importance of the MPRN in the system, but regrettably we still get a good share of Certs from contractors who have not taken the trouble to ensure that we have an up to date record of their Public Liability Insurance. The CIS system which is used to transmit Certs to ESB Networks is constructed in such a way that once a Cert Number is entered it immediately pulls the data on the contractor, to whom the Cert was issued, from our database. If that contractor's insurance has expired, there is no facility whereby we can overwrite the insurance expiry date to allow the Cert to go through. This is a rigid and non-negotiable requirement from ESB Networks who will not accept a Cert unless public liability cover to the specified amount of €6.5 million, is in place on the day that the Cert is transmitted to them. The message is therefore that a contractor should ensure that the expiry date of his public liability insurance is written on the cover of his book of Certs so that he is constantly reminded that any Certs submitted after this date cannot be processed unless confirmation of renewal has been sent to ECSSA either by the Insurers or the contractor himself. Finally, there is no point in getting annoyed or angry with the staff in ECSSA on this account as they quite simply cannot override the system to allow through a Cert for which they do not have proof of current public liability insurance.

2. Alleged “backlog” of Certs

From mid June onwards we have been receiving calls from contractors who claim that either they, or their customers, are being informed by ESBN that the delay in having connections made might be due to a backlog of Certs in ECSSA, where it is claimed there is an accumulation of two or three days of unprocessed Certs. Whether this arises from misinterpretation of what was said by ESBN personnel, or by misinformation being circulated by them, we want to make one thing quite clear. There is not now, or never has been, a situation where a backlog of Certs has built up in ECSSA. Every single Cert received each day is either processed and transmitted to ESB before close of business of the same day, or, if the Cert fails because of any reason, such as incorrect measurements, invalid MPRN, lack of proof of insurance, or being more than six months old, the Cert goes back to the contractor in the same day's post. Anybody who tries to suggest otherwise is quite bluntly not telling the truth.

3. Grasslin Time Switches

Contractors will recall that in 2005 there was an alert issued by Grasslin in respect of their QE7 Timers. Following that initial alert Grasslin estimate that they have replaced 54% of the potentially defective Timers which were sold in the Irish market. The matter appears to have faded from the public mind but it should be remembered that the 46% unaccounted for represents a huge number of Timers where the same danger of fire still exists. One has recently caused a fire in Wexford and to avoid future fires we would recommend that contractors who ever

installed any of these units around that period should ensure that they are replaced as soon as possible. Grasslin have in the past made replacements available free of charge to contractors, and there is no reason why this same facility should not be available in respect of any further units detected.

4. Phone Numbers on the ECSSA Website

The ECSSA website currently shows the names and addresses of all our members apart from those who have specifically asked not to be placed on the website. Both mobile and landline numbers are also included. However, we have been receiving an increasing number of requests from contractors to remove the phone numbers from the website as their being pestered by nuisance calls from EPACE, Advertising Companies, Charities, Magazine Publishers, Surveys, and other unidentified callers, all seeking to extract money from the contractor, and all indicating that they have received his contact details from ECSSA. To start with ECSSA does not authorise anybody to contact our members selling advertising or requesting donations, and it goes without saying that our attitude to EPACE does not need to be repeated. It has now come to the stage where we have to seriously consider removing all contact numbers from the website and informing the public that if they have a genuine reason to contact a particular contractor, that they should phone ECSSA to obtain contact details. We are obliged by the CER to publish a list of our members, but it is unlikely that this publication would have to extend to including contact phone numbers, particularly when such contact details are increasingly becoming a source of annoyance and time wasting for our members.

5. Guardian Cables

The 17th Edition of the IEE Wiring Regulation/BS7671: 2008 has been published in the UK, and it draws the attention of contractors to the possibility of screws or nails penetrating a cable concealed in a wall or partition, particularly if the screw or nail remains live, creating a danger for anyone who touches it. With the growth of partition of walls, both traditional and metal studded, on the Irish building scene, this problem is equally present here and will no doubt be covered in the 4th Edition of the ETCI Wiring Rules due for publication in September. One of the solutions which will ensure compliance is use of Guardian Cables produced in a variety of sizes by the Irish Driver Harris Company. These cables, which are available in two, three or four core, with a separate tinned copper earth conductor, come in cross section sizes of 1.5 to 6mm and in appearance look like NYMJ, although it is available in both black or white. The big difference from NYMJ is that underneath the sheath there is an aluminium tube which acts as a

screen and as an earth conductor. This means that a nail or screw penetrating the cable has to pass through this screen before piercing a current carrying conductor. If it pierces a live conductor the screen immediately shorts the live conductor to earth, thereby operating the short circuit protection device (fuse, MCB, RCD, or RCBO). The overall cable sheet is low smoke, halogen free, UV stable, and is not affected by expanded polystyrene thermal insulation. Though slightly more expensive than the traditional PVC cables, the increased cost should be more than offset by the ease of installation and removal of the need for conduits in many applications. Your local wholesaler should be able to obtain supplies and prices on Guardian Cable, or alternatively Irish Driver Harris can be contacted at 051 421405 or email quality@idh.ie or www.idh.ie .

6. Telephone Surveys

Several contractors have phoned us recently reporting calls from an unidentified group carrying out a phone

survey among electrical contractors. Nobody appears to have been able to establish the identity of this alleged market research group, nor has it been possible to establish the body for whom the survey is being conducted. In the circumstances most of those who contacted us said that they were not prepared to engage in any survey unless they were aware of it's purpose, and of the identity of the individual or company who commissioned the work. We would concur with this stance and would also confirm to our members that this survey is not being carried on behalf of ECSSA. There is a survey being carried out on the internet by the National Electrical Contractors of Ireland (NECI), seeking to establish relevant statistics within the industry and NECI are anxious to stress that completing and returning this survey does not imply that a person taking part automatically wishes to join NECI. The information being gathered will be freely available to anybody within the industry who wishes to avail of it. This survey can be found at <http://www.neci.ie>.

7. Contact Telephone Numbers

We have noticed of late that many of the existing area codes have been changed and that many of the numbers which we have on our database for contractors are no longer accessible. The same applies to quite a few mobile numbers, particularly as people change their networks and fail to inform ECSSA. It is important that we have a current correct number for every contractor on our database as quite apart from the need to be able to contact our member at any time, we also have a situation where our CIS system transmits to ESB the mobile number held for a particular contractor every time that a Cert of his is processed. If we do not have the correct number on our database, ESB will end up sending the standard text which informs the contractor that supply has been available, to an incorrect mobile number. Please check the ECSSA website and if any of the details shown,

such as your address, landline or mobile number, differs from what they really are, you should inform us in writing as soon as possible.

8. ENJIC Agreement

It appears that two separate groups are currently opposed to the present ENJIC Agreement, and Barristers representing both these groups objected to the latest variation when it came up for approval at the Labour Court on May 22nd. The Labour Court adjourned the matter until June 16th, but on the previous Friday the High Court granted an Order to one of these groups preventing the Labour Court from varying, or otherwise enforcing the REA until the Agreement and the Legislation supporting it, is subjected to judicial review by the High Court. The matter was back before the High Court on June 24th and the Judge continued the Prohibition Order for a further two weeks to allow all parties to submit Affidavits in support of their positions. In the meantime, a case brought in

Longford District Court against a contractor for non-compliance with an order of the Labour Court is to be referred to the High Court by the District Justice, who feels that since doubt has been raised about the validity of the REA, the question should be decided by the High Court. It is unclear when this case will come before the High Court.

A.G.M.

The Annual General Meeting of the company will be held at the Ecssa Office, Park Road, Killarney, Co. Kerry on Saturday the 9th of August, 2008 at 2.00p.m.

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