8. Performance Marking Scheme (contd.)

As a result of the reservations expressed, the full implementation of the scheme has now been deferred to January 1st 2011, and in the meantime both ECSSA and RECI will operate a pilot scheme over the next six months aimed at identifying the strengths and the inherent problems of the scheme and devising the solutions for these problems.

ECSSA Inspectors will, in parallel with the normal annual inspection, attribute penalty points to electrical contractors based on how they would fare if the points system was in full operation.

No action will arise on foot of these accumulated points which are to be used purely for analysis and planning purposes.

Dangerous or unacceptable work practices detected by Inspectors in the course of routine inspections will of course, be dealt with in the normal manner which has been in place for many years.

The Assessment Sheets have been distributed to the Inspectors and on their return to ECSSA will be analysed to identify weaknesses and anomalies.

It is hoped that at dedicated workshops to be arranged by the CER in August many of the problems highlighted will be eliminated; leaving a clear, concise workable document on which contractors will be assessed going forward from January 1st 2011.

PRODUCT RECALL

We have become aware of an immediate Product Recall on the **MORPHY RICHARDS Double Electric Over-Blankets, Model 7511 (Single Control Model only).**

This over-blanket, sold between **October 2008 and January 2010** can develop a fault which has the potential to cause the blanket to overheat and catch fire.

A spokeswoman for Morphy Richards has informed ECSSA that this overheating becomes more likely to occur if the voltage supplying the blanket has dropped to lower than normal levels.

If you are aware of any such blankets, **please advise the owner to stop using the products immediately** and contact MORPHY RICHARDS either by Freephone or be email.

No other MORPHY RICHARDS Electric Blankets are affected.

FREEPHONE **1800 409 119**

Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm

EMAIL: blankets@morphyrichards.co.uk

NEW PRODUCTS

Book of 5	Domestic Certs	€40
Book of 20	Domestic Certs	€130
ECSSA Guide to 4th Ed. of National Rules		€20
Pack of 5 Surcharge Stamps		€15
Starter Pack (x5 Domestic Certs / x 5 Stamps / Test Records)		€80

Verification & Certification Courses

The Spring schedule of Verification & Certification Courses has now come to an end.

It is proposed to resume Courses in the same format in September.

As before, these Courses will be offered at a limited number of venues throughout the country.

It is intended that the requirement for a Qualified Certifier Number on each Completion Cert will be fully enforced from January 1st 2011, and therefore contractors should ensure that either they, or at least one member of their staff, have been on such a Course during the three years prior to that date.

It is not planned to run any Courses during the Summer, but if there is a demand, a small number of Courses can be arranged during these months, but only in Dublin and Killarney.

ESB Policy on Disconnection of Supply

There has been much confusion in the industry about what is required when a customer, or his electrical contractor, wishes to have the electricity supply disconnected from a building where there is no clear indication of when, if ever, that supply may need to be reconnected.

Examples of such disconnections are where an extension is being added to a house, and the removal of overhead supply cables from the chimney or gable of the house becomes necessary to allow the builders proceed with the extension.

There are of course several other scenarios in which a supply needs to be taken out to allow work proceed safely in an installation.

In all such instances where restoration of supply is not required within 24 hours, there is no need for anybody to issue a Completion Cert.

All that is required is that the Customer contacts his Supplier eg.ESB, Board Gais, or Airtricity, and asks that a de-engerisation request be logged with ESBN by the Supplier.

This has been official ESB policy for quite some time, but unfortunately ESB ground staff in the various area offices would appear to have been incorrectly briefed on the policy and quite a number of the Network Technicians and Area Supervisors have been asking for Completion Certs before they will even move to carry out a disconnection.

Such a request was of course incorrect and could not be sustained on any valid grounds.

ESB have now confirmed their policy on disconnections and have undertaken to ensure that ground staff are fully appraised of the correct procedure which is that set out above.

A different procedure applies when a reconnection is required within 24 hours of disconnection and this procedure will be dealt with in the next issue of our Newsletter.

Useful Website Addresses

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.etci.ie
National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI)	www.nsai.ie
National Consumer Agency (NCA)	www.nca.ie
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)	www.seai.ie

Coolmore House, Park Road, Killarney, Co. Kerry Tel 064-6637266 Fax 064-6637269 info@ecssa.ie

ECSSA news

Summer, 2010

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

Dear Member,

Welcome to the Summer 2010 Newsletter.

Despite the harsh times which the construction industry, the electrical contracting industry, and the whole economy has undergone since the beginning of the year, membership of ECSSA has not been as badly affected as we had anticipated.

To date over 80% of contractors who were members at the end of 2009 have renewed their membership, and while we are aware of a number of contractors who have ceased trading or emigrated, there has also been a significant level of new applications for membership.

In many cases these new applicants are people who either have been made redundant by employers, or who are setting about re-organising defunct companies on a smaller scale.

It is therefore unlikely that the overall number of contractors in the industry will increase in the medium or long term.

The main problem of course is that while the number of contractors has decreased slightly, the amount of work available has decreased drastically, with the resultant scramble for whatever level of work is out there.

Unfortunately, this is leading to price cutting and attempts by contractors to undertake contracts at unrealistic prices.

While the commercial decisions taken by a contractor in relation to the price for which he is prepared to work is ultimately a matter for himself, the worry which ECSSA has is that reduced prices will lead to short cuts and the use of cheaper material which might in turn lead to a lowering of standards and an increase in the level of danger to the public, who have to live with what might be potentially unsafe installations.

One welcome trend which we have noticed is a decrease in the number of contractors who are pulling out of jobs because of non-payment, and this is perhaps because the worst of that phase has now passed, although of course it has left many electrical contractors badly burned from their over dependence on a small number of builders, who may in turn have themselves suffered from the over ambitious plans of developers and their bankers.

Hopefully the worst of this aspect of the down turn might be over, and there might be a period of calm during which contractors who remain in the trade will reassess the situation and rebuild their operations, perhaps on a smaller scale but on a better structured and less risky model.

For its part, ECSSA will do all in its power to oppose any measures which would place any additional costs on contractors during a time when they are at their most vulnerable.

Mike Marshall
Technical Manager

In this Issue:

ECSSA news

Notice to Members

1. Fault Loop Impedance Measurements

An unacceptably high proportion of Post Connection Certs are still being rejected because of Fault Loop Impedance Values which are less than the figure entered for the Resistance of Longest Protective Conductor on the corresponding Pre-Connection Cert.

It is physically impossible for the Fault Loop Impedance value to be lower than the Resistance of the Longest Protective Conductor, provided always of course that both measurements are taken at the same test point, i.e. furthest distant from the Consumer Unit.

The Protective Conductor from the test point to the Consumer Unit forms part of the Fault Loop which is measured to give the Fault Loop Impedance value, and therefore it is impossible that the value of the entire loop could be less than the value of part of the loop.

We have come to the conclusion that most of the Fault Loop Impedance values are correct, as modern instruments make the Fault Loop Impedance test virtually fool proof and generally very accurate.

The problem lies in that contractors are incorrectly calculating the Resistance of the Longest Protective Conductor by measuring the value of the phase/earth loop and entering that as the result without applying the correct multiplier of .625 to arrive at the value of the Protective Conductor on it's own.

Once a Pre-Connection Cert is submitted to ESB using the Insulation and Protective Conductor measurements originally submitted on the Cert, there is nothing anybody can do to change these test values.

The CIS System, on the other hand, will reject any Post Connection Cert where the Fault Loop Impedance value is lower than that of the Longest Protective Conductor submitted on the corresponding Pre-Connection part of the Cert.

The inevitable outcome is that the Contractor has to go back to the installation and carry out all the tests again so that a new Cert with acceptable values can be re-submitted and superimposed on the existing Cert.

This causes unnecessary cost and duplication of effort for everybody concerned, not least for the contractor himself.

Perhaps the simplest answer would be to use the Wander Lead method when measuring the Longest Protective Conductor, thereby getting a straight read-out from the Test Meter of the Resistance value of the Protective Conductor

2. Change of Contractor Procedure

The disastrous state in which the economy and the construction industry in particular, finds itself has resulted in a situation where the failure of developers and construction firms is now almost a weekly if not a daily occurrence.

In most cases these failures leave behind a legacy of small contractors brought down by the unpaid bills when the Developer or the Builder fails.

Countless electrical contractors have suffered financially through no fault of their own, and in a significant number of cases they are left with no option but to cease trading and wind up the business.

We now see a trend where in case of some major developments, and in particular housing estates, the lending institutions who have siezed these properties are bringing in alternative Builders to complete the work in the hope that the finished asset will have some saleable value.

It would make common sense to re-employ the subcontractors who had already worked on these projects, but unfortunately common sense does not appear to be all that common on the part of financial institutions.

There are of course cases where the original subcontractor is no longer available having gone out of business or even emigrated, and in that case there has to be a provision for the appointment of a new contractor.

Quite apart from any contractual issues, the appointment of a new electrical contractor is not as simple as it might be in other trades in that the electrical contractor has to certify the completed installation before it can be energised.

One of the basic rules, and indeed one of the great strengths of the certification system is that a contractor is not permitted to certify work which he did not carry out himself and his insurance will be accepting liability for any claims which might subsequently arise from a fault in that installation.

Obviously where the original contractor has died, emigrated or ceased trading, there has to be a procedure to allow the orderly completion of the work by another.

Providing a facility for builders, developers or customers to avoid paying their existing electrical contractor was never the purpose of the Change of Contractor facility.

It is perhaps understandable that builders, developers, financial institutions, and private customers are not aware of this area of regulation in relation to the change of electrical contractor, but there is no excuse for an electrical contractor who goes in and takes over a job without first advising the person employing him of the procedure required to approve a change of contractor, and furthermore insisting that the customer complies with the procedure.

This Change of Contractor Procedure requires a written application to the Regulatory Body to which the replacement contractor is affiliated.

The application should set out the reasons why the change of contractor is sought, and should give details of the original contractor who is being replaced.

ECSSA contractors should note that if they take over a job without ensuring that their employer has followed the Change of Contractor Procedure, not only will the subsequent Completion Cert be rejected, but Disciplinary Action can follow with penalties up to and including suspension of the right to self certify.

It is very simple; if the customer has a genuine reason for replacing the contractor, he should not be afraid to set that out in writing and the request will not be unreasonably refused.

If on the other hand the customer believes that he can simply fire one contractor to avoid paying him, and bring in another who is foolish enough not to realise that he may not be paid either, then both the customer and replacement contractor will find that there is a price to be paid for ignoring the proper procedure.

Finally, it is very important to note that the approval of a Change of Contractor request does no more than note the fact that a contractor, other than the person who carried out the work, will subsequently test and issue a Completion Cert for the installation.

It cannot, and must not, be accepted or portrayed as any support for either of the parties in any commercial dispute which may have lead to a breakdown of relations and the replacement of the original contractor.

3. The Safe Electric Logo

The Commission for Energy Regulation has now launched the Safe Electric brand and are promoting it through an advertising campaign on Radio and TV.

Contractors who are members of ECSSA or RECI may display the Safe Electric logo on their vehicles but are not obliged to do so if they so wish.

The Safe Electric logo packs are currently being distributed by the Regional Inspectors in the course of their annual inspection visits to Registered Electrical Contractors.

Any contractor who had his annual inspection before the packs became available should note this on his next order and the pack will be dispatched with the order.

4. New Books of Completion Certs

To meet an obvious gap in the market, ECSSA has introduced new books of 5 and 20 of the four part Domestic Completion Certs.

These sell at €40 and €120 respectively.

In addition a Starter Pack of 5 Completion Certs, 5 Surcharge Stamps and a Book of Test Records have been introduced at a price of €80 including VAT, Post & Packaging.

5. Domestic & Industrial Certs

Contractors should note that the deciding factor on whether a Domestic or Industrial Cert is required is now decided by the level of load contracted for rather than by the question of whether Whole Current or CT Metering is to be used.

The dividing line is now 50kVA with all loads under that level being certified by a Domestic Cert, and all loads of 50kVA or greater requiring an Industrial Cert. It is therefore important for the contractor to establish from the outset the level of supply which the installation requires or the Maximum Import Capacity (MIC) which his customer has applied for.

Occasionally Industrial Certs arrive from contractors in respect of installation where a Domestic Cert would have been quite sufficient.

Apart from the fact that this is not the correct Cert for the particular installation, it represents an unnecessary waste of money on the part of the contractor.

Please ensure therefore that the correct level of supply is identified before submitting a Completion Cert.

ECSSA OFFICE HOURS

Monday to Friday: 9am to 1pm and 2pm to 5 pm • CLOSED FOR LUNCH 1pm to 2pm

6. Meter Relocation

Much of the construction work currently in progress consists of alteration, refurbishment or extension to houses.

In some cases very little electrical work is involved other than relocation of the meter from inside the house to a wall mounted meter box on an outside wall.

Contractors should note that in carrying out this installation, they are now required to fit the over-current and short circuit protection for the Tails in the Meter Cabinet as the relocation of the meter will in all probability have resulted in a much longer run of Customer Tails from the Meter Point to the Consumer Unit.

Certs which are submitted to ECSSA in respect of Meter Relocation should list the number of lights, sockets, etc. in the installation and should carry the Longest Protective Conductor value and the Insulation Value.

It is important to establish that your customer has actually applied to ESB for this Meter Relocation and has paid the charge required by ESB for the work.

There is little point in submitting a Cert to ECSSA, who in turn transmit it to ESBN requesting an alteration, when nobody has seen fit to actually tell ESBN what alteration is required.

7. ECSSA Guide to the 4th Edition of the Wiring Rules

ECSSA has long felt the need for a simple Guide to the 4th Edition of the Wiring Rules which, like all such official publications can be both intimidating and difficult to follow, as sections frequently cross reference to other sections and to Appendices, thereby leaving the reader more confused at the end than when he started.

Any technical publications available were produced in the UK and were aimed at providing guidance on the interpretation and implementation of the IEE National Wiring Rules which contains significant differences from the ETCI National Wiring Rules.

Some months ago Liam McHale of ECSSA took it upon himself to produce a simple and easy to follow Guide to the National Wiring Rules, with particular emphasis on the Regulations pertaining to Domestic and Agricultural installations.

We are delighted to announce that this new publication is now on sale and we are confident that it will fill the void in the technical literature which has existed for so long for Irish electrical contractors.

The price of €20 including Post & Packaging was specifically kept as low as possible as we believe that every contractor in the country should have this Guide Book available as a useful on-site tool to clarify the complexity of the Regulations.

8. Performance Marking Scheme

The idea of a new Performance Marking Scheme for electrical contractors has been debated at CER level for some considerable time now.

Under this scheme all electrical contractors, both ECSSA and RECI, would be assessed under a common list of headings, with various levels of penalty points being allocated for failure to comply with each of the Check List points.

The accumulation of a certain level of penalty points at a single inspection would trigger various levels of corrective or disciplinary action.

While accepting the desirability of creating a universal assessment system for all types and sizes of contractors, it is obvious that in practice to create such a one size fits all solution would be difficult, if not virtually impossible.

The scheme was originally intended to come into force on July 1st this year.

ECSSA has submitted a list of reservations concerning the practicality of many of the penalty point headings, and we understand RECI also had reservations about some of the detail of the Common Performance Marking Scheme.

Regional Inspectors around the country reported very negative reaction to the scheme from contractors when they were appraised of it's method of operation and of the wide variety of breaches for which they could accumulate points.

It was felt that this was a scheme designed primarily to catch out contractors.

At the outset it should be clear that this is not the intention of the scheme but rather to arrive at a common assessment scheme aimed at raising the standard of electrical work and assuring the public of the benefits of using a Registered Contractor.