



NEWSLETTER CHRISTMAS 2020

Dear Contractor,

Welcome to the 2020 Christmas Newsletter!

Our December Newsletter marks the end of an unprecedented year, not only for the electrical contracting industry but for the entire nation.

Jobs and incomes have been disrupted and decimated and nobody can say for certain when we will return to some form of normality, but we live in hope that the rapid research and advances which have been made in the search for an effective vaccine will soon provide a level of protection from a virus which has shaken the whole world to its core.

In one way it could be said that, to date, the Electrical Contracting Industry has come through the Restrictions with relatively little disruption, in that Construction was, for the most part, allowed to continue, along with its various associated Mechanical and Electrical trades.

Domestic electrical installations, repairs and extensions were hit hard in that few householders were willing to have strangers into their homes to carry out anything more than the most minimal of essential repairs.

Contractors heavily dependent on this sector were severely impacted, though in fairness to the Government, a range of financial supports which were available to most of those impacted was rolled out very quickly.

It would appear however that not all those who may well be entitled to assistance have come forward to avail of financial support which may well be available.

We would urge anybody in this situation to obtain all the relevant information, from Citizens Advice, your Local Authority, your Accountant or from Government websites and to ensure that if there is an avenue of assistance which you can avail of, then avail of it.

These schemes are not charities; they were put in place to ensure that as many as possible of the employers and employees in all sectors of society can survive through the pandemic and be ready to contribute to the rebuilding of the economy in the better times which are sure return in the future.

ECSSA would like to extend our Best Wishes to You & Yours for a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful & Prosperous New Year!

Mike Marshall

General Manager

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- THE NEW EDITION OF THE NATIONAL WIRING RULES IS10101
- ABUSE OF POWER
- PROCESSING OF CERTS
- 2021 DATES FOR VERIFICATION & CERTIFICATION COURSES



Technical Queries:
064 6637266

The New Edition of the National Wiring Rules IS 10101

The transition period from the 4th Edition of the National Wiring Rules, ET 101:2008 to the 5th Edition, IS 10101 commenced on **April 1st 2020**. From that date Electrical Installations **MAY** be **Designed** and **Certified** to the New Regulations.

However, Installations can continue to be **Designed** to the **Old** standards (4th Edition) up to **31st of January 2021** provided that such installations will have a Pre-Connection Cert issued prior to 31st of July 2022.

Designing to the **Old Standard** must cease on **January 31st 2021** and it follows that after this date all **New** installations **will** be **Certified** to the **New Standard**, with the exception of those installations for which the Design was created **before Jan 31st 2021**.

Currently the facility to certify to the Old Standard is supposed to end on July 31st 2022 but it remains to be seen if, in the event of further disruption of construction by lockdowns, situations which arise where Installations designed before Jan 31st 2021 and which, in normal circumstances, would be expected to be completed and certified before July 31st 2022, will be afforded extensions to the deadline because of non-completion before July 31st 2022 as a result of Covid-related delays.

Despite the fact that ET10101 extends to over seven hundred pages there is not an awful lot new which should prove problematic for the average Electrical Contractor. The basic principles of electricity cannot change nor can the Rules for Electrical Installations be radically altered or the procedures for testing and certification. Thankfully Chapter & Individual Rule Numbers have been carried over from ET101 to IS 10101 thereby making it easy to compare the New requirement with the Old.

It appears that a number of errors or omissions have been discovered in the first print run and, while this is probably inevitable in a publication of this size and complexity, we must hope that the errors are not too numerous as there is nothing so confusing as reading a Rule in the main publication and then having to check in another document to see whether or not that Rule has been altered or overturned by an subsequent Amendment. Hopefully the second print run will have all these errors or omissions corrected.

What we would strongly recommend to Contractors is to get a copy of the **Practical Guide to the National Rules for Electrical Installations** which has been published by former RECI Chief Inspector John Clare. This is an excellent 170-page publication which covers every chapter of the new rules with Diagrams and Text explanations.

Most helpful of all is the fact that where changes have been introduced in the Rules, these are highlighted in text boxes with a red background in the Guide. The Guide is stocked by most of the

main Electrical Wholesalers and will also be stocked by ECSSA for sale at the V&C Training Courses, but prohibitive postage costs will make it unlikely that we will offer mail order on the book.

Finally, despite what has been said about having to design and install totally to the Old or the New Rules there is, or never was, any rule which prevents a Contractor from taking some aspect of the new regulations and incorporating that item in an installation which is otherwise designed and constructed in accordance with the old regulations.

How can anybody seriously suggest that a Contractor is not entitled to put RCBO protection on all the lights in a house even though that requirement is part of the new regulations but can equally be applied, and indeed could always be applied, to any installation ever since RCBOs initially became available many years ago.

This all or nothing idea which is being promoted does not make sense in a period which is specifically designated a time of transition and it is clear that during that time there will be several examples of hybrid installations where Contractors may opt to incorporate items such as Arc Fault Detection, Surge Protection Devices or Double Pole Isolators even before these items are recommended or required by regulations.

2021 MEMBERSHIP - €100

- *Access to Technical Support
- *Your Voice is represented in the Industry
- *Reduced Fees for Courses

Tel No: 064 6637266

Email: info@ecssa.ie www.ecssa.ie

Emergency Lights - €60

Fire Alarm Certs - €60

Guide Verification & Certification - €20

Selection of Contract & Sub-Contract Forms

Calibration of Test Instruments - €113.50



Membership

Throughout the past year ECSSA Members continued to make good use of the Technical Support Services, which was maintained during both lockdowns by the circulation to Members of a dedicated mobile number, which was manned throughout.

Already a considerable number of Contractors have renewed their 2021 Membership and we would ask others to do so, including Contractors who have been absent for a number of years.

We are now at the end of the 5th year of the 7 year period for which RECI was appointed to operate the Safe Electric Brand and a constant request from Contractors has been that ECSSA should consider tendering for the license when it comes up for renewal in 2022.

Obviously, if the support from Contractors is sufficient, we will give the matter every consideration and may even see a decision by CRU (formerly CER) to revert to the situation where more than one Regulatory Body is appointed.

The elimination of competition by vesting all the power in one Body has been a disaster for the industry leading to tensions between the Contractors and their Inspectors and an unacceptable breakdown in the efficiency of the entire Cert Processing System.

How such a retrograde situation could be viewed as an improvement in the electrical industry is beyond belief and hopefully the decision makers will have the good grace to admit that the experiment has been an unmitigated failure.

Abuse of Power

It is regrettable that both in phone calls and at the Training Courses we continue to get an ever-increasing level of complaints from RECs in relation to the unacceptable behaviour of certain RECI Inspectors.

By virtue of the monopoly position which RECI finds itself in, it appears to regard it as acceptable that its Inspectors can, with complete impunity, harass, abuse and humiliate Contractors on a daily basis.

It should be acknowledged that some RECs speak very highly of the common sense and professionalism some of the Inspectors with whom they have to deal and indeed within ECSSA there has always been a high regard for a number of RECI Inspectors but, sadly the conduct of the few has tainted the reputation of all.

It has always been said that those who throw their weight around generally have very little to throw and this has been confirmed by RECs who knew the bullying types in their previous existences as Electricians or Contractors, where their professional competence left a lot to be desired.

Several Contractors have told us that they have not been subjected to such harassment since the days when E-pace, aided and abetted by the Labour Court, sought to intimidate Contractors and extort

substantial sums of money from them under cover of blatantly illegal Registered Employment Agreement (REA) which was in turn based on an unconstitutional and therefore invalid piece of legislation.

There has to be something rotten in a system where, when a Contractor makes a complaint about the unwarranted and abusive approach of a certain Inspector towards him, he finds himself subjected to further abuse and humiliation by the person handling the complaint.

Electrical Contractors have had more than enough to contend with in recent years, starting with a financial crash where many of them suffered substantial losses at the hands of builders and developers.

Back in the days when the worst excesses of E-pace were being perpetrated on harassed Contractors, we are aware of at least two Electrical Contractors for whom E-pace was the last straw which finally broke the camel's back and they took their own lives.

Just as things were beginning to go well in the economy, the country is plunged into a series of disruptive lockdowns which have caused physical, mental and financial worry and loss for many.

We have had Contractor's wives literally crying on the phone as they tried to recount to us the manner in which their husbands have been victimized and humiliated by RECI Inspectors.

One woman went so far as to say that she was terrified of the possible consequences of the state of anxiety to which her husband had been driven in the aftermath of his encounter with what she referred to as a sadistic thug.

Yet they know that if they speak out in public they will be targeted for even further punishment.

RECs have enough to contend with without being told by a RECI Inspector, that he, the Inspector, takes out several RECs each year and that the Contractor who is the victim of his lecture has been identified as one such REC who is marked out for elimination from the trade.

Apparently, the Inspector concerned rang back in a more apologetic mood an hour later, but an apology can be defined as an admission of guilt with belated politeness.

It appears somewhat suspicious that the worst abuse seems to be reserved for Contractors who were originally ECSSA Members before they were forced into an organisation where they do not, or never did, want to be.

Is it that some Inspectors have taken literally the objective which was set out at one of the founding meetings of RECI when it was recorded in the minutes that "RECI should become an evil in the lives of contractors"?

One has to ask who should ultimately control the conduct of these bully boys.

Legally the overall control rests with the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (CRU) who appointed RECI to operate the Safe Electric Brand and who are supposed to oversee the performance of that task.

The power to delegate brings with it the responsibility to control and, if RECI Inspectors are permitted to prey on the mental health of RECs to a point where the intimidation and abuse ends in tragedy, then the CRU cannot walk away from the debacle with clean hands.

We have all seen the fallout and outrage at the attendance of certain high-profile individuals at a golf dinner and the equally strident condemnation of a few RTE staff posing for a photograph with a retiring colleague.

While not condoning the situations outlined, they may or may not have posed significant physical health risks to any of those involved but when the lives, livelihoods and mental wellbeing of citizens is being put at risk, those who have the means to stop the abuser cannot stand idly by and condone the ongoing abuse.

Here we have a situation where the CRU, a statutory commission, appears prepared to condone the infliction of mental stress on hard pressed Electrical Contractors by out of control Inspectors, allegedly in the interests of electrical safety.

It would be well to reflect that suicide has taken far more lives in this country than electrocution ever has or ever will.

If the CRU is not aware of what is happening in the industry on a daily basis, then it is out of touch and not fit for purpose.

If it is aware, then it should take immediate steps to ensure, in a firm and unambiguous manner, that the tragic loss of life caused by the thugs in E-pace is not repeated as a result of power trips by a small number of Inspectors, whose perception of power has blinded their sense of responsibility to act in a civilised and equitable manner.

The sad truth about all this reliance on heavy handed tactics is that it has not resulted in any significant improvement in the safety of the industry.

In fact the direct opposite has been the case in that a significant number of Contractors, particularly those in the commercial and industrial sector, have decided not to join RECI and have been able to make a perfectly good living in the trade by simply staying away from domestic installations, the only sector of the industry which is designated as Restricted Work and which can only be carried out by a Registered Electrical Contractor.

By remaining outside the regulatory framework these Contractors avoid the need to pay membership fees to RECI, attend V&C Courses or tolerate interference and intimidation from Inspectors who may be less competent than the Contractors they are inspecting.

The vast majority of Contractors who have taken this logical option are competent insured individuals who do not need a Safe Electric sticker to confer respectability on their operations but the downside of the situation is that there are others who have cynically availed of the same arrangement and whose competence, ethics and overall performance fall far short of an acceptable level.

Not being answerable to any regulatory or supervisory body, there is nobody overseeing or controlling what these people choose to do and therefore the heavy hand of draconian regulation, administered in an uncontrolled and repressive manner, has created a parallel culture

where sub-standard and potentially dangerous electrical work can go undetected.

When the inevitable accidents happen, the CRU, which holds the overall responsibility for electrical safety, will be found to have failed in that responsibility and will be seen to have failed because it did not learn from the lessons of history, which have shown that, through all the ages, regimes which ruled by fear and coercion invariably brought about their own demise.

Processing of Completion Certs

In the years prior to the creation of Safe Electric, Completion Certs were sent by RECs to their own regulatory body, ECSSA or RECI for onward transmission to ESNB.

It was a rigidly applied policy in ECSSA that every Cert received on a particular day would be checked and either sent on to ESNB before 3pm or set aside for return to the REC later that day if there were issues such as incorrect MPRN, missing or incorrect test values or lack of proof of ongoing Insurance cover.

RECI was dealing with almost a thousand less RECs than ECSSA at that time so there should not be any reason to believe that Certs were not being handled by RECI in an equally efficient manner.

Unfortunately, all this changed for the worse at the end of 2015 when the Members of ECSSA were forced into RECI by the irrational decision of the CER.

In a typical case of biting off more than one could chew, delays started to arise almost immediately in the transmission of Certs.

The much-vaunted RECI electronic certification system proved problematic in that it could not accommodate all the recent arrivals who expressed an interest in opting for it and it could not initially handle anything other than domestic certs.

Furthermore, it appeared that the software could only be developed further, if at all, at very substantial cost.

ECSSA had recognized inherent design faults in the Electronic Cert from the day it was first demonstrated to us and decided from the outset that we would not get involved with it.

Delays in transmission of certs became longer and we now regularly have RECs tell us of instances where the previous delay of a few days has now stretched into double figures.

Contractors are coming under pressure from their Customers who need to have their installations energised and, in many cases, are questioning whether the REC has sent in a Cert at all, or whether there is some problem on the part of the Contractor which is delaying the connection by ESNB.

When the Contractor is able to prove that the Cert has been properly filled in and sent to RECI, the blame then switches to ESNB, but ESNB point out, quite correctly, that they cannot proceed with the connection until they are provided with a Completion Cert.

ESBN are quite unhappy with the current situation and point out that it is impacting on the way they plan their work.

A senior engineer in ESBN has sent a circular to all Area Supervisors pointing out the problems which are being created by RECI in relation to the provision of certs to ESBN.

The circular indicates that there is a further problem in that a change of attitude by management in RECI now insists that an installation must be fully completed and tested before a cert can be sent to ESBN.

Anybody who has ever worked in the Electrical Contracting Industry knows well that this is an impossibility and if ESBN cannot proceed with the preparatory aspects of their work until the job is finally completed, then weeks of delay are likely to arise and progress on the project could grind to a halt.

The problem could easily be resolved if the facility to issue an Interim Cert, which is a feature of installations over 50kVa, were to be extended to all installations, thereby allowing RECs to issue an Interim Cert to get the distribution board energised, with a full Completion Cert being provided to the Customer and RECI once the installation is completed and tested.

If the facility can be provided for installations over 50 kVA, then why deny that same facility to domestic and agricultural installations?

The argument used to be made at CER meetings that once a builder got supply into the premises, he could get the carpenter to carry on with the rest of the wiring, but that is farcical since the carpenter would probably be more expensive to pay than the electrician and in any case the carpenter could not issue a final Cert on which continued supply could be conditional.

Undoubtedly there will be a greater emphasis on electronic certification going forward but the paper option will always have to be available.

However, it makes little sense to persist with an electronic cert which cannot be transmitted unless one is prepared to falsify facts by ticking that main equipotential bonding has been carried out on either the gas or water supplies.

A new house in most parts of rural Ireland will not have a mains gas supply available and incoming water will be in a plastic non conducting pipe so there is nothing to bond, yet an REC has to provide false information on the cert by saying that the gas pipe, which does not exist, or the water pipe, which is non-metallic, has been bonded, before the Cert can be transmitted.

One of the terms and conditions for the award of the seven year contract to operate the Safe Electric Scheme was that the successful tenderer would have to operate an efficient Completion Certificate Verification and Transmission System but it is now blatantly obvious that what has replaced a system which worked efficiently up to the end of 2015 has deteriorated to a point where the interests of the Public, the Electrical Contracting Industry or ESB Networks are not being served and where rather than measuring up to any Key Performance Indicators, the entire handling of the certification process is being dragged to a halt by a failure to accept the fact that the

alternative arrangements created by CER (now called CRU) in 2015 and condoned by CER to date, have been an abject failure.

Verification & Certification Courses

Completing an Accredited Verification & Certification Courses became mandatory for Registered Electrical Contractors in 2014.

Initially there were a lot of Contractors whose earlier un-accredited Course still had some time to run until its Expiry Date, with the result that it was not until early 2015 that the vast majority of RECs had to participate in the new Accredited Course.

The Accredited V&C Course allows an REC to hold a valid Qualified Certifiers Number (QCN) for a period of five years from the date of the Course.

With high numbers of QCNs needing to be renewed in 2020, the demand on Courses was obviously high and at the start of 2020 there were only a small number of course providers available, but the applicants could all have been facilitated were it not for the disruption caused by Covid-19 Virus related lockdowns from March 27th to the end of June and again with the imposition of Level 5 Restrictions in late October.

Thankfully RECI/Safe Electric took a pragmatic approach to the problem with extensions being granted to the expiry dates of QCNs once an REC could produce proof of having booked on an Accredited V&C Course.

While the level of Restrictions which may apply in January 2021, still uncertain at the time of preparation of this Newsletter, it is our intention to resume courses in Galway (The Clayton Hotel), Dublin (The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel) and Killarney (ECSSA Training Centre) as per the schedule published on our website.

One thing which RECs should be aware of is that holding proof of having booked on a Course is not going to provide a long-term excuse for putting off taking up a place offered at their choice of venue.

We do of course recognise that there may be a very genuine reason why the initial date offered may not be suitable but slots vacated will be offered to RECs on the reserve list.

We would ask RECs to co-operate in this and avoid finding themselves in a situation where Safe Electric may no longer honour extensions to renewal dates if they feel that their forbearance is being abused.

The Schedule of V&C Training Courses for the first half of 2021 is set out elsewhere in this Newsletter.



Spring 2021 Schedule of Verification & Certification Course



Date	Day	Location	Venue
11th & 12th January 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
11th & 12th January 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
12th & 13th January 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
18th & 19th January 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
18th & 19th January 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
19th & 20th January 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
25th & 26th January 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
25th & 26th January 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
26th & 27th January 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
8th & 9th February 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
8th & 9th February 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
9th & 10th February 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
15th & 16th February 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
15th & 16th February 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
16th & 17th February 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
22nd & 23rd February 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
22nd & 23rd February 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
23rd & 24th February 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
1st & 2nd March 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
1st & 2nd March 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
2nd & 3rd March 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
8th & 9th March 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
8th & 9th March 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
9th & 10th March 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
22nd & 23rd March 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
22nd & 23rd March 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
23rd & 24th March 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
30th & 31st March 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
12th & 13th April 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
12th & 13th April 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
13th & 14th April 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
19th & 20th April 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
19th & 20th April 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
20th & 21st April 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
26th & 27th April 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
26th & 27th April 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
27th & 28th April 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
10th & 11th May 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
10th & 11th May 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
11th & 12th May 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
17th & 18th May 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
17th & 18th May 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
18th & 19th May 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
24th & 25th May 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
31st May/1st June 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
25th & 26th May 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
1st & 2nd June 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
14th & 15th June 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
14th & 15th June 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
15th & 16th June 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
21st & 22nd June 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
21st & 22nd June 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
22nd & 23rd June 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA
28th & 29th June 2021	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
28th & 29th June 2021	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
29th & 30th June 2021	Tuesday & Wednesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA

COST: €425 (Non-Members) €400 (Members)

Please complete **BOOKING FORM** and return with Copy of your **ELECTRICAL QUALIFICATIONS & PAYMENT**





2021 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____

Company Name: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Tel No: _____

Mobile No: _____

ECSSA Membership Number (if applicable): _____

For Office use Only
Member No.:
Date Received:

I wish to apply for Membership of ECSSA.

I understand that ECSSA will operate as a Trade & Training Association and that some of its services will be available to Members only.

Signed _____ Date _____

Please forward completed Membership Application Form together with Cheque / Postal Order/ Bank Draft for **€100** or Credit Card details to ECSSA, Coolmore House, Park Road, Killarney, Co. Kerry

Credit Card Number:

Expiry Date: / CVV Last 3 digits:

Name of Card Holder _____

(Name that appears on Card): _____