



Christmas

NEWSLETTER | 2021



Members: Technical Queries: 064 6637266

IN THIS ISSUE

- Appointment of a Body or Bodies to operate the Safe Electric Scheme post 2022
- Temporary Certs for Installations under 50 Kva
- Electric Vehicle Chargers
- Interpreting the new Regulations
- Standby Generators Installations
- 2022 Dates for Verification & Certification Courses

Dear Contractor,

Welcome to the Christmas 2021 Newsletter in which we look back on the unfolding events of the year and look forward to what 2022 might bring.

It is in fact difficult to treat 2021 in isolation as the Electrical Contracting Sector, along with the entire country, has been through a traumatic and uncertain period ever since Covid-19 brought the first lockdown in March 2019.

It has been frustrating to watch a situation where there was plenty of electrical work available but where converting that work into turnover and profit was severely hampered by restrictions on sites, restrictions on travel, non-availability of materials and inordinate price increases for those materials which could be obtained.

However, the Electrical Contracting Sector has always been resilient and will adapt to meet whatever turns out to be the new norm in the months and years ahead.

While dealing with the public health and safety is a matter which will be dictated by the relevant authorities, the availability and escalating cost of materials will remain an ongoing headache for Electrical Contractors themselves.

Costs are rising in every aspect of life and Customers will have to accept the fact that electrical work is no exception and will have to cost more going forward.

Already we have seen first-hand evidence of both Main Contractors and Electrical Contractors walking away from major contracts which were priced pre-pandemic, and which cannot now be delivered as the client is not prepared to re-negotiate.

It is now more important than ever, when quoting for jobs, that the Customer is aware and accepts that, unless the work can proceed immediately and without interruption, there may well be increased material costs.

The shortage of skilled labour has also become a problem for the industry, but hopefully with greater Government emphasis on Apprenticeships this will become less of an issue over the next few years.

Above all, this remains a time for prudent planning, flexibility of approach to pricing and an acceptance of the fact that the mistakes which were made in the boom years where turn-over was equated to profit, are not repeated now.

ECSSA will continue to support its Members, as it always has, in providing Technical Advice and an ear to listen, in an unbiased manner, to any problem which a Contractor is confronted with.

*Finally, can we wish you & yours a
Happy Christmas
and a healthy and successful
2022*

Mike Marshall
General Manager



Appointment of a Body or Bodies to Operate the Safe Electric Scheme post 2022



For the past five years, and in particular over the past two years, the recurring question put to us in phone calls and at Training Courses is whether there is any possibility that the regulation of the industry might revert to the situation which existed when there were two Regulatory Bodies, before the creation of a monopoly led to the blatant abuse of power by RECI employees and also to unjustifiable cost increases for Contractors.

The simple answer is that we do not know whether there is a possibility of a return to more than one Safety Supervisory Bodies (SSBs) or whether the CRU is intent on maintaining the monopoly which it has created. None of the information which we have seen to date gives any clear indication that the CRU intend to consider the damage which has been done to the Electrical Contracting Industry since it took the ill-advised decision to remove any element of competition in the sector in 2014.

The most disturbing thing about the CRU timelines for the Tender Process is that the Public Consultation would appear to be going on at the same time as the actual Tender Process.

One would have thought that the views of the relevant Stakeholders should be obtained and evaluated before any decision is taken as to whether a single SSB or more than one SSBs should be appointed.

That question would have to be unambiguously answered before any organisation could submit a Tender for Appointment.

One cannot, for example, base your income and expenditure figures on any realistic foundation until it is clear whether you are going to have the membership income of all the Contractors in the country and the associated costs of employing sufficient Inspectors and Administrative Staff to deal with that number of RECs or whether you might, at best, be catering for half that number in the event of there being two SSBs.

It might well be that the CRU is merely paying lip service to the outcome of any Public Consultation, as indeed it did in 2014, when more of the Submissions received were in favour of retaining the existing position of two SSBs, rather than the monopoly situation favoured by a minority of Submissions.

Obviously nobody in CRU had the foresight to realise that putting all their eggs in one basket left them in a very vulnerable position in that no matter how poorly the single SSBs performed its functions, there was nothing which CRU could do other than let them carry on in the hope that the SSB would improve its performance.

Terminating the appointment would have caused chaos in the industry, since the CRU has neither the staff nor the expertise to act as an SSB, meaning that completion certs could not have been processed, connections obtained, complaints responded to or installations inspected.

In short CRU would have to live with the fallout from their short-sighted and ill-advised decision.

What is now abundantly clear is that the existence of a monopoly has done significant damage to the industry, has alienated thousands of Contractors from the regulatory regime, has added to Contractors stress and cost and has done nothing to improve safety in the industry.

The level of harassment and bullying of which some RECI employees have been guilty of has led many Contractors to question whether involvement in Restricted Domestic Work, which is the only category for which they need to be registered, is in fact worth the hassle.

Many have opted to leave the Domestic Electrical Sector entirely, and concentrate on Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural work, where they are free of the many costs associated with Safe Electric membership and where above all they do not have to tolerate the petty harassment of Inspectors who seen intent on humiliating the Contractor in the presence of his own Staff or his Customer.

The minutes of an early meeting of RECI record the aspirations of one of the founding fathers, who advised that; *"RECI should become an evil in the lives of contractors"*

Facilitated by the CRU, that aspiration has now become a reality for the unfortunate Contractors who have been forced into the present repressive regime.

Many of the new Electricians coming into the Contracting Sector are in fact opting to remain outside the regulatory net, as they are quite entitled to do, provided they stay away from domestic installations.

While one would like to believe that all these new entrants to the industry carry out their work in a safe and competent manner, the fact remains that there is no inspection of their work, no mandatory certification of completed jobs and no proof that the people involved have adequate, or indeed any, insurance.

Can anybody therefore say that the Electrical Industry has become a safer place as a result of the creation of a monopoly?

The answer has to be an emphatic No.

The ball is really in the Contractor's court at this stage in that there is little point in complaining to ECSSA about the unacceptability of what RECI is inflicting on Contractors.

Neither is there much point in complaining to RECI since the people you are complaining about may well be the same people handling your complaint.

What is most likely to bring about results is a concerted protest from every Contractor who feel aggrieved and bullied by the present regime.

This protest should be by way of letter/e-mails to the CRU (*Commission for Regulation of Utilities*) and representations to your local Public Representatives of all parties.

There comes a time when enough is enough and when all trust in the Governing Body is lost, the only option, as in the case of the Irish Women's Rugby Players, is to lobby the Government directly.

If the opportunity to create choice and competition is afforded to the industry, ECSSA will willingly play its part but Contractors must realise that ECSSA cannot do it on its own, so the chance to avoid a further seven years of the same bullying depends entirely on the numbers who are willing to stand up and be counted.

Do not allow an oppressive monopoly, which was facilitated by the silence of Contractors in 2014, to be continued for another seven years by a repetition of that same silence.



V & C COURSES

€425 (Non-Members)

€400 (Members)

Please complete

BOOKING FORM

and return with **Copy of your ELECTRICAL QUALIFICATIONS**

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Electric Vehicle Chargers



There appears to be some confusion among Contractors about the installation of Electric Vehicle Chargers.

This is understandable in that permission to take supply directly from the meter cabinet to the charger unit was not initially given but this was allowed some time later as in many cases it would have been very difficult to run a cable from the distribution board in an existing installation to the charger location.

The current position is that in an **existing installation**, the supply can be taken, through suitable protective devices, from the meter cabinet to the charger.

In **new installations** a dedicated circuit must be provided in the distribution board and a cable of adequate cross-sectional area for the wattage of the charger must be installed from the distribution board to the charger unit.

It is important to check that the charger, which is sometimes supplied with the car, is from a reputable manufacturer and that its specifications are appropriate to the job it is expected to do.

A Contractor installing an EV charger should take every possible precaution to ensure that, in the event of charger failure, fire or vehicle damage, they are not found liable for losses caused by a defective or unsuitable unit which they did not supply.



Christmas Holiday Arrangements

The ECSSA Office will close
at 1.00pm on Wednesday,
22nd December and will
reopen at 9.00am on
Monday, January 3rd 2022



Interpreting the “new” Regulations

IS10101 is a large and detailed publication where it is often difficult to quickly find the exact answer to the question which the contractor is faced with.

Thankfully the *Practical Guide to the National Rules for Electrical Installations*, published by John Clare is now widely available in most wholesalers throughout the country.

John was formerly the Chief Inspector in RECI and has applied his many years of experience to producing a guide where the most relevant word in the title is “Practical”.

Written in plain English, with a minimum of engineering jargon, it is exactly what every electrician should have to hand when an answer is needed to the interpretation of any regulation.

One of its innovative and useful points is that where changes to existing regulations or additional new regulations appear in IS10101, these are highlighted in red panels in the Guide.

Every REC is obliged to have a copy of IS10101 but equally nobody should be without a copy of this excellent Guide.

Check before you start



There are a few fundamental checks which a Contractor should carry out before starting any installation, particularly in a domestic scenario. By confirming that all is in order in relation to the following three issues one can avoid a lot of hassle later with the Customer, the ESB or with Safe Electric.

First check, before doing any work, is to confirm that the seals on the ESB Meter and Main Fuse are intact. If not, immediately report to ESB on 1850 372999 that you have found an unsealed installation and that, before you commence any work in the premises, you want seals replaced.

Next establish whether the installation is Neutralised by carrying out a Fault Loop Impedance test at any socket. If the result obtained is very high you can take it that a neutralising link has not been fitted and that the test has relied on the Earth Bar on its own. The fault current which will flow through an Earth Bar and the general mass of earth is most unlikely to be sufficient to operate the magnetic solenoid of an MCB and open the breaker within .4 of a second as required by regulation. If you can fit a neutralizing link without opening any ESB seals, then do so before starting any further work, otherwise notify ESB on 1850 372999 and report the situation as a fault.

Finally, it is vital to confirm that the supply cables and customer tails are adequate to carry the additional load which you are proposing to install.

It is not acceptable to add a 9.8 Kw Shower to an existing load which is only supplied by 6sq mm or 10sq mm supply cables. If the customer wants to proceed with the installation of that shower, they must apply to ESB for an upgrade of supply cables, must pay ESB for that upgrade and their Electrical Contractor must provide ESB with a No 1 Completion Cert. That Cert must cover everything after the ESB Meter: in other words the entire electrical installation in the house must be tested and certified.

It may well be that the wiring in parts of the house may be quite old and incapable of being brought up to a certifiable standard without spending a lot of money, which the customer may be unwilling or unable to spend. Better to call a halt to the whole project at the outset rather than have a situation where you have installed a shower which you cannot connect as the ESB will not upgrade the cables because you cannot give them a cert for a house where part of the installation falls below certifiable standards. Your chances of getting paid for your time and materials are therefore very slim or non-existent as the customer is still without the use of the shower which he employed you to install.

Situations such as outlined above are happening all the time and rather than get involved, an increasing number of contractors are avoiding all involvement in small domestic installation work.

Standby Generator Installations

The increasing frequency of storm damage and the worries about the generating capacity in the country has lead to a greatly increased awareness of the need for private back-up generators, not only in commercial and industrial situations but also in the domestic sector where prolonged outages of supply make life very difficult.

In the past it was not normal in Ireland to break the Neutral Cable in Changeover switches or contactors. The new edition of the National Wiring Rules, IS 10101, makes it mandatory to break not only the phases but also the neutrals. This should not normally prove an issue for installing Contractors in that virtually all 3 phase changeover switches are four pole, but a problem might arise if a pair of interlocked 3 pole contactors are used in an automatic load transfer system.

It is unlikely that the requirement to break neutrals will be applied retrospectively to existing installations, but Contractors should ensure that any system installed in future provides for breaking of the neutrals.

Temporary Certs for Installations under 50 Kva



Interim connections have always been available for Industrial and Commercial installations.

Without this facility it would have been impossible for the industry to function in that supply is required for testing of many specialised parts of an installation long before the whole installation is advanced to a stage where a final Completion Cert could be issued.

Various irrational reasons have been put forward as to why a similar facility did not exist for installations less than 50 Kva.

In practice however, Contractors and their Customers constantly found situations where it was vital to have continuity of supply maintained, even though the installation was not at a stage where a Completion Cert could be issued.

A typical example would be a farmhouse which was undergoing a total refurbishment, including the replacement of all wiring but where a supply to operate a water pump or milking parlour had to be maintained.

Even though the Contractor had installed a temporary distribution board to serve this vital load, issued a No 1 Completion Cert to allow reconnection of supply to this board and ticked the box marked "Temporary Supply" (which still appears on the Cert), RECI, unilaterally and without any tenable reason refused to forward such Certs to ESB.

We have logged hundreds of phone call from Contractors in relation to such obstruction which in cases left premises without security, without water, without the means of operating electric gates, milking cows or other vital services which the Customer should not be deprived of.

Quite apart from the loss and inconvenience to the Customer, the question of Animal Welfare also arose in that cattle need water and cows need to be milked at regular intervals, a fact that appears to have passed over the head of whatever individual in RECI decided to block the making of a vital connection by ESB.

Thankfully, a little common sense has set in and a Temporary Cert is now available for Installations under 50 Kva.

While the conditions attached to its use will prove unworkable and its cost is utterly disproportionate and could only be sustained in a monopoly situation, nevertheless it provides a partial solution to a problem which had existed for far too long.

2022 MEMBERSHIP - €100

*Access to **Technical Support**

***Your Voice is represented** in the Industry ***Reduced Fees** for Courses

Emergency Lights	€60.00	Guide to 5 th Edition by John Clare	€49.00
Fire Alarm Certs	€60.00	Selection of Contract & Sub-Contract Forms	
Guide Verification & Certification	€20.00	Calibration of Test Instruments	€113.50

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2022 Verification & Certification Courses

A list of Dates & Venues for V & C Training Courses for the first six months of 2022 is included in this Newsletter. Subject to there being no further Restrictions or Lockdowns we would hope to have a clear run at delivering all planned Courses at the various Venues.

Participants should however be aware that while we can provide the appropriate social distancing within the class, ensure that everybody has their temperature taken each morning and insist on the wearing of masks, the hotels at which the Courses are run will invariably insist that anybody entering the premises for a Course is able to provide a valid Vaccination Cert or other proof that they are not creating a danger for themselves or others. This is an issue which is beyond our control and may vary from time to time depending on prevailing public health restrictions and how these are applied by the management of the hotels.

The delivery of Courses since March 2020 has been severely disrupted by Covid related Restrictions which shut Courses down from the end of March 2020 until the beginning of July 2020 with a further loss of 6 weeks in October of that year. Courses were also interrupted from January to June 1st 2021, and this led to a significant backlog of bookings from Applicants whose QCN had passed its Expiry Date but who, in the absence of Courses could not renew their qualification.

Thankfully RECI did the sensible thing in that it allowed an ongoing extension of the validity of these QCNs on receipt of proof that the individual concerned had actually booked a Course. If this provision had not been made there would have been chaos in the industry as Contractors who had jobs completed could not have their Certs passed on to ESB for connection. Obviously, this would have a knock-on effect on their Customers, their prospects of being paid and on the overall operation of the Construction Industry, so the stance adopted by RECI was both practical and welcome.

What was far less welcome however, was the vindictive attitude adopted by an individual in RECI who sought at every opportunity to bad mouth the *Level 7* Accredited Course being delivered by ECSSA in association with Technological University Dublin (formerly Dublin Institute of Technology).

What the person involved forgets, or perhaps never knew, is that this is the identical Course which RECI themselves delivered up to the time when their appointment to run the Safe Electric Scheme meant that they could no longer offer Training Courses. The bad mouthing appears to have rubbed off on a small number of RECI Inspectors but for the most part the feedback which Inspectors were getting from RECs was that the DIT/ECSSA Course was exceptionally good, was well delivered in a clear and easily understandable manner by Tutors who had years of practical experience in the Industry.

What should be remembered at all times is that this is a course on Verification and Certification and has quite a narrow focus. ***It is designed to allow a Participant to demonstrate that he/she has the experience and competence to Inspect, Test and Certify an electrical installation.***

This requires that they recognise what a properly constructed installation should look like, that they can spot if anything is missing or incorrectly installed and should be able to outline remedial action. They should know what Tests have to be carried out, how to carry out these Tests and be aware of what are the acceptable parameters within which the Results should fall.

They should be aware of the correct scope and methodology of Periodic Inspection Reports and should be capable of recording all Test Results and other relevant information in a neat and complete manner on the appropriate documents.

Any Qualified Electrician who cannot demonstrate this competence over the course of two days is unlikely to acquire the extra skills by undertaking the four-day course towards which the individual in RECI regularly sought to steer potential Participants. One is unlikely to acquire in four days that which four years of an apprenticeship failed to achieve.

SPRING 2022

Schedule of Verification & Certification Courses



Date	Day	Location	Venue
10th & 11th January 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
17th & 18th January 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
17th & 18th January 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
17th & 18th January 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
24th & 25th January 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
24th & 25th January 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
24th & 25th January 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
7th & 8th February 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
7th & 8th February 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
7th & 8th February 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
14th & 15th February 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
14th & 15th February 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
14th & 15th February 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
21st & 22nd February 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
21st & 22nd February 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
21st & 22nd February 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
7th & 8th March 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
7th & 8th March 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
7th & 8th March 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
21st & 22nd March 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
21st & 22nd March 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
21st & 22nd March 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
28th & 29th March 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
28th & 29th March 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
28th & 29th March 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
4th & 5th April 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
4th & 5th April 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
4th & 5th April 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
11th & 12th April 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
11th & 12th April 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
11th & 12th April 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
25th & 26th April 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
25th & 26th April 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
25th & 26th April 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
9th & 10th May 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
9th & 10th May 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
9th & 10th May 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
16th & 17th May 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
16th & 17th May 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
16th & 17th May 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
23rd & 24th May 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
23rd & 24th May 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
23rd & 24th May 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
13th & 14th June 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
13th & 14th June 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
13th & 14th June 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
20th & 21st June 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
20th & 21st June 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
20th & 21st June 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room
27th & 28th June 2022	Monday & Tuesday	DUBLIN	The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
27th & 28th June 2022	Monday & Tuesday	GALWAY	The Clayton Hotel
27th & 28th June 2022	Monday & Tuesday	KILLARNEY	ECSSA Training Room

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

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



2022 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):