



Christmas

NEWSLETTER | 2022



Members: Technical Queries: 064.6637266

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Dear Contractor,

Welcome to the Christmas 2022 Newsletter.

As 2022 draws to a close we look back on a year where thankfully the industry has not suffered further disruption by Covid Restrictions. While the virus has not fully gone from the scene, we do not envisage a return to the chaos encountered in 2020 and 2021.

However new and challenging problems have arisen in the form of unprecedented increases in both materials and transport costs. In the Electrical Contracting Industry those on whom high fuel costs have impacted most severely have been the small and medium sized Contractors operating in rural areas where even small jobs can involve significant travel, with the travel costs often ending up disproportionate to the cost of job. Customers will have to get used to the fact that an invoice for a breakdown call which might be resolved in an hour will have to reflect the current high cost of travelling to and from the site.

December 31st will mark the end of RECI's seven year appointment as operators of the Safe Electric Brand but much as we would like to be able to give guidance to Contractors as to what exactly will be the situation in 2023, we find that both RECI and the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (CRU) have been virtually silent on the future arrangements, other than to indicate that a different company, SGS, have been appointed to take over the operation of Safe Electric for the next five years with a possible two year extension to the appointment at the end of 2027.

As we went to print, all that Contractors have really been told is that they should not pay their renewal fees to RECI but that the processing of certs would not be interrupted. Hopefully the picture will become clearer in the near future and hopefully the abuse and intimidation which Contractors have had to endure from some Inspectors during the past seven years of RECI oversight will not be tolerated by the incoming Safety Supervisory Body.

Once again, we express our thanks to all those Contractors who continue to support ECSSA and we look forward to doing all we can to support our Members going forward.

Finally, on behalf of the Directors and Staff of ECSSA, I want to wish everyone in the industry a Happy Christmas and every Success in 2023.

Mike Marshall
General Manager





Appointment of SGS Ireland to Operate the Safe Electric Scheme post 2022

At the outset can we make it clear that the reason why ECSSA could not accede to the countless requests from Contractors to tender for the operation of the 'Safe Electric' Brand for the next 7 years, was that CRU decided that the company appointed should operate both the Electrical and Gas Regulatory regimes. ECSSA has no background in, or no experience of, the Gas sector and therefore we followed the very wise recommendation that you should never get involved in something you are not master of.

On September 21st last the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (CRU) released a statement which did little to inform its most important stakeholders, the RECs, of the significant changes which will impact the regulation of the industry from Dec 31st. In that statement it was announced that from Jan 1st 2023 both the Safe Electric and RGI Brands will be operated by a single entity, SGS Ireland.

We cannot speak for the Gas Installers, but Electrical Contractors, without exception, are adamant that their views, as stakeholders in the industry, were not sought in any forum or consultative process whatsoever. So much for a competitive public procurement process!!!

In reality, Contractors should not feel upset by the lack of public consultation because it would appear that, in the world of the CRU, any process which could not be guaranteed to deliver a pre-determined result is too dangerous to be even contemplated.

Certainly, that was the case back in December 2014 when, contrary to the majority of submissions received in favour of retaining two Safety Supervisory Bodies (SSBs), the CRU decided that regulation of the industry would be entrusted to one body under the Safe Electric Brand.

The Sept 21st 2022 Statement goes on to claim that having a single SSB to operate both the Gas and Electrical Schemes will lead to greater consistency and efficiency.

What planet are these people living on?

Are they not prepared to face up to the fact that for the past seven years they have had a single organisation operating both the Electrical and Gas Regulation and that the same claim of increased efficiency was also trotted out to justify their decision in 2014.

In 2014, when the CER (as they were then known) decided to ignore the submissions and appointed RECI as both the Gas and Electrical SSB they would have us believe that this was the solution to all the problems which they wrongly believed, or would like to believe, existed in the sector.

Seven years later it is obvious that the Single Body solution solved nothing and achieved nothing other than to drastically increase costs (as was inevitable when a monopoly was created) and to alienate the overwhelming majority of Electrical Contractors through a repressive and abusive regime perpetrated by some RECI Inspectors and obviously condoned at management level in RECI and by the CRU who ignored the complaints of RECs.

It's hard to see how the RECI monopoly, which increased prices on the flimsiest of excuses and with the approval of the CRU, still filed losses of over €230k in 2019 and a further €221k in 2020.

The users of electricity are in fact more likely to be exposed to greater danger at this point in time than they were seven years ago, since many of those who started to trade on their own in recent times have opted to keep out of the domestic electrical sector, which is the only category of work for which registration with Safe Electric is mandatory.

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By concentrating on the industrial, commercial and agricultural sectors they can avoid the hassle and ever increasing expense of membership fees, training courses, instrument calibration and intimidation by Inspectors who seem intent on achieving the aim of RECI as expressed at one of its early meetings where it was recorded that "RECI must become an evil in the lives of contractors".

While it is to be hoped that all who have chosen to remain outside the regulatory framework are competent and conscientious, there will inevitably be some who are less so and, freed from any level of inspection or supervision, shortcuts and dangerous practices will remain undetected and uncorrected.

Two years into their seven year term of appointment, RECI performed very poorly in an Audit by CER, who then demanded a Remediation Plan, but the lack of foresight shown by CER in putting all their eggs in one basket came back to haunt them in that, irrespective of how poorly RECI was performing or how incapable it was of getting its' house in order, there was no alternative body to which the role could be transferred, even on a temporary basis, while the shortcomings detected were being corrected.

The CRU had neither the Inspectors nor the administrative staff to perform the functions of an SSB and therefore had to allow RECI stumble on, as to do otherwise would have meant that Certs could not have been processed, new connections obtained or customer complaints responded to .

In the absence of an alternative body to deal with the ongoing requirements of the industry, ordering RECI to cease operations until it had dealt with the non-conformances identified would have caused chaos in the electrical & wider construction sectors and in the economy.

We wish SGS every success during its term of appointment and hope that a different culture will prevail, where the Contractors, without whom any SSB cannot survive financially, will be treated in a respectful and fair manner and where complaints of intimidation and irrational behaviour by employees of the SSB will be taken seriously and resolved equitably.

While it is difficult to establish what SGS Ireland actually does in the Electrical Sector, or what experience they have in this area, we would hope that it will not be subjected to the irrational demands and micromanagement which CER/CRU imposed on ECSSA in its time as an SSB and apparently on RECI also.

However, the growing fear among Electrical Contractors is that SGS will simply subcontract the operation of Safe Electric back to RECI, leaving a situation where nothing more will have been achieved other than the imposition of a further costly layer of control which will have to be funded by the Electrical Contractors and ultimately by their Customers.

One would have thought that the CRU, whose remit is to protect the interests of Customers, would seek to avoid the imposition of additional costs in these challenging times.

Such a solution would be regarded as utterly unacceptable to the Electrical Contracting Industry and it is difficult to see how an organisation which, after 30 years experience, failed to deliver what CER/ CRU demanded of them can be replaced by a newcomer with no track record of the regulation of the Electrical Contracting Industry in Ireland.

Replacing one monopoly with another is bizarre and calls into question whether the whole licensing framework as designed by CER/ CRU, was ever fit for purpose.

CRU has a primary function in relation to ensuring security of supply, control of energy prices and other functions in the Gas and water sector. Having presided over an unprecedented series of energy price hikes and having fallen asleep at the wheel in relation to ensuring security of supply by monitoring the generating capacity in the country, the CRU cannot be said to have covered themselves in glory in discharging their primary function . It has recently been claimed by CRU that it does not have the power to control energy prices but one has to question whether, even if it had that power, does it have the people willing and able of doing the job?

V & C COURSES

€425 (Non-Members)

€400 (Members)

Please complete

BOOKING FORM

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



Remember!!
To check your
Qualified Certifier
Number (QCN)
Expiry Date

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2023 Membership

Membership for 2023 is now due and can be renewed using the attached Membership Form.

With the uncertainty surrounding the operation of the Safe Electric Brand from Dec 31st, contractors may need more than ever to have advice and guidance available to them. We would like to help every Contractor who contacts us, but for legal reasons we can only advise those who are actual members of ECSSA.

Membership Fee for 2023 remains unchanged at €100 and we look forward to your continued support in 2023.

2023 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 also available | |
| Guide Verification & Certification | €20.00 | Calibration of Test Instruments | €113.50 |

Stock Exchange

The Covid lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 provided an opportunity for contractors to clear out and re-organize stores and in doing so many discovered a significant amount of stock, tools and equipment which had lain undisturbed for years. In quite a few cases this was new material, in its original packaging, which was surplus to some project in the past and which was unlikely to be used at any future date.

Switchgear, Light fittings, Contactors, control units, test meters and cable were all included in what was re-discovered and what could be converted into cash, as there are always other contractors willing to buy such items, particularly if they come at a good price. We have regularly been asked in the past to bring this surplus equipment to the notice of our members but until now we have not had the opportunity to prepare a comprehensive spreadsheet of who has what and how much they are asking for it. We hope that the listing will be completed in January, after which we will circulate regular updated e-mails to members.

With the increased awareness of the importance of creating a circular economy we would hope that contractors will avail of the opportunity to buy at reduced rates what they need and other have.

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Verification & Certification Courses

Since the publication of IS10101 an increasing number of REC's have sought advice on the inclusion of Anti Surge Protection and Arc Fault Detection Devices in Installations.

It is clear that there is considerable confusion and uncertainty in the sector about what is mandatory and what is recommended, and the current Verification & Certification Course might benefit from the inclusion of a module dealing with these issues.

Any changes to the Course would have to be evaluated and accredited by Technological University Dublin (Formerly Dublin Institute of Technology) and are unlikely to be made before the expiry of the current term of the Memorandum of Agreement between ECSSA and TU Dublin at the end of March 2023.

It has already been conveyed to us that the preparation and accreditation of a revised Course post March 2023 will incur considerably higher initial fees to TU Dublin and these in turn will obviously have to be passed on to participants.

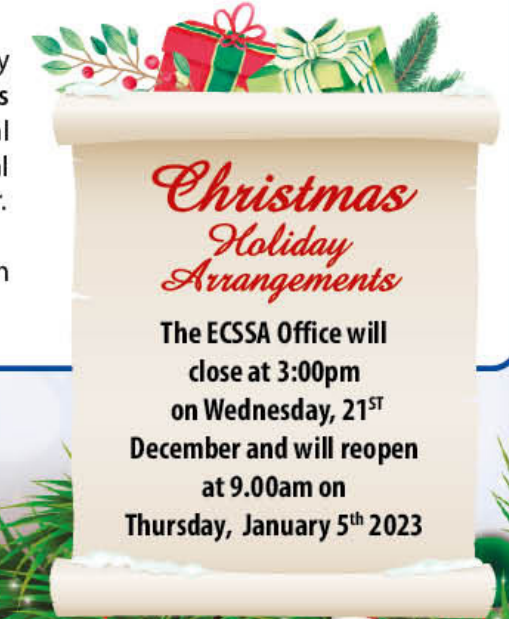
Also, there may be a time lag between the final dates on which the present Course will be available and the roll out of a new Course.

We would therefore urge any REC whose Qualified Certifiers Number expires in the first half of 2023 to avail of the earliest opportunity to complete a V&C Course either during the remainder of this year or before the end of March 2023, thereby ensuring a smooth roll over of your QCN for a further five years from the expiry of your present one.

A list of the V&C Courses for the first quarter of 2023 can be found in this Newsletter and on the ECSSA website (www.ecssa.ie).

In the meantime, we strongly recommend to all REC's that they purchase a copy of **John Clare's Practical Guide to the National Rules for Electrical Installations** which sets out in a clear and practical manner the changes which IS10101 has brought to the electrical regulations and their implications for the electrical contracting sector.

The Guide is available in most Electrical Wholesalers or by post from ECSSA at a cost of €40 & Postage.



Christmas Holiday Arrangements

The ECSSA Office will
close at 3:00pm
on Wednesday, 21ST
December and will reopen
at 9.00am on
Thursday, January 5th 2023

SPRING 2023

Schedule of Verification & Certification Courses

| Date | Day | Location | Venue |
|---------------------------|------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| 16th & 17th January 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | KILLARNEY | ECSSA Training Room |
| 23rd & 24th January 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | DUBLIN | The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel |
| 23rd & 24th January 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | GALWAY | The Clayton Hotel |
| 23rd & 24th January 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | KILLARNEY | ECSSA Training Room |
| 30th & 31st January 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | DUBLIN | The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel |
| 30th & 31st January 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | KILLARNEY | ECSSA Training Room |
| 30th & 31st January 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | GALWAY | The Clayton Hotel |
| 6th & 7th February 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | KILLARNEY | ECSSA Training Room |
| 13th & 14th February 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | DUBLIN | The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel |
| 13th & 14th February 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | KILLARNEY | ECSSA Training Room |
| 13th & 14th February 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | GALWAY | The Clayton Hotel |
| 20th & 21st February 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | KILLARNEY | ECSSA Training Room |
| 27th & 28th February 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | KILLARNEY | SA Training Room |
| 27th & 28th February 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | GALWAY | The Clayton Hotel |
| 6th & 7th March 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | KILLARNEY | ECSSA Training Room |
| 13th & 14th March 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | DUBLIN | The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel |
| 13th & 14th March 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | KILLARNEY | ECSSA Training Room |
| 13th & 14th March 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | GALWAY | The Clayton Hotel |
| 20th & 21st March 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | KILLARNEY | ECSSA Training Room |
| 27th & 28th March 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | DUBLIN | The Louis Fitzgerald Hotel |
| 27th & 28th March 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | KILLARNEY | ECSSA Training Room |
| 27th & 28th March 2023 | Monday & Tuesday | GALWAY | The Clayton Hotel |

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

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

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2023 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):