



# Are you ready for Part P?

Ian McMath

*From day one next year it could be a criminal offence to carry out electrical work that contravenes Part P of the Building Regulations*

From January 1 2005 anyone who undertakes electrical work in dwellings, even the householder in some cases, will have to ensure this work complies with the requirements of Part P of the Building Regulations. Moreover, the majority of such work should be notified to Building Control prior to its commencement. Building Control will wish to inspect the work in order to confirm that it complies fully with the Building Regulations.

Because Building Control officers do not have the resources or expertise to inspect and certify electrical installations, the Government has approved Competent Person Schemes. Firms assessed and registered by such schemes will be able to self-certify that their work complies with the Building Regulations.

Once Part P is implemented it could be a criminal offence if the person or firm carrying out electrical installation work contravenes the Building Regulations. Local authorities will also have the power to require the removal or alteration of work that does not comply with the Building Regulations.

## Contractors

Electrical contractors can however avoid the time and expense of calling in a building control inspector if they obtain 'Competent Person' status.

At present four organisations have been granted permission to run competent persons assessment schemes: BRE Certification (BREC) in collaboration with the ECA and supported by the Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE), British Standards Institution, ELECSA and NICEIC under NIC Certification Ltd, which now includes Zurich Certification. Most recently NAPIT (National Association of Professional Inspectors and Testers) Certification Limited has joined the fray with a Full Scope Scheme (Level A) and Defined Scope Scheme (Levels B&C).

NAPIT says it is the only trade association that insists that all electrical systems must be inspected and tested to ensure that they are safe to use - before they are used and periodically throughout their working life. Further, NAPIT insists that the individual who carries out the inspection, testing, verification and

certification must be proved to be competent. Its aim is to set the standard for inspection and testing through the implementation of a strict company and individual vetting policy, cost effective training courses, technical updates and advice on a regional basis.

There are a number of requirements for achieving Competent Person status, including compliance with BS 7671, technical reference documents and health and safety requirements. Perhaps the most important requirement concerns the Qualified Supervisor. Every firm must have at least one such person who is responsible on a day-to-day basis for the safety, quality and technical standard of the electrical work.

NICEIC believes there are approximately 61,000 electrical contracting firms involved in domestic electrical installation work in England and Wales and as many as 80% of them are not yet registered.

## Fees

Assessment and registration fees vary depending upon who you sign up with but are generally in the order of £300 to £550. As the New Year approaches there may be some special deals so it might be wise to contact all the providers to see what they are offering. A list is included at the end of this article.

## Requirements

The NICEIC web site ([www.niceic.org.uk/partp/partpknow](http://www.niceic.org.uk/partp/partpknow)) describes the main requirements and scope of Part P as follows:

Fixed electrical installations in dwellings shall be suitably designed, installed, inspected and tested so as to provide reasonable protection against their being a source of a fire or a cause of injury to persons. The requirement applies only to fixed electrical installations in dwellings in England and Wales intended to operate at low voltage or extra-low voltage.

**Scope.** Part P will apply to all fixed installations after the electricity supplier's meter in buildings or parts of buildings comprising:

- dwellings
- combined dwellings and business premises having a common supply (such as shops, pubs etc)

## Why Part P?

According to Government statistics, each year on average 10 people die and about 750 are seriously injured in accidents involving unsafe electrical installations in the home. To help address this issue, the Construction Industry Deregulation Task Force recommended in 1995 that electrical safety requirements should be included in the Consultation document issued by the ODPM in May 2002 refers to an average of five fatalities a year

Part P of the building regulations is intended to increase the safety of households by improving the design, installation, inspection and testing of electrical installations in dwellings when these installations are being newly built, extended or altered.

In essence this amounts to a new requirement that has been added to Schedule 1 of the Building Regulations. This requirement, 'Requirement P', has been limited to fixed electrical installations in dwellings, with some minor works in special locations not needing to be notified.

A new Approved Document P is available giving guidance on ways of complying that are based on the fundamental principles set out in Chapter 13 of BS 7671: 2001.

The Approved Document includes:

- Guidance relating to the design, installation, inspection and testing of electrical installations
- Guidance on types of electrical work that would not normally need to be notified to building control bodies
- Appendices that contain illustrations of the sorts of electrical services commonly required in homes, examples of model electrical installation certificates, and illustrations of what equipment may be encountered when work is carried out on older electrical installations

*Copies of the Approved Document P Fixed Electrical Installations in Dwellings can be obtained from the stationary office of the ODPM at £15 a copy; alternatively you can download the document free from the ODPM website, [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)*

- common access areas in blocks of flats (but not lifts)
  - shared amenities in blocks of flats (such as laundries, gymnasiums etc)
  - outbuildings, including sheds, garages and greenhouses
  - garden lighting and power supplies
- Parts of fixed electrical installations external to premises, such as in gardens, sheds and detached garages, for example, will also be subject to the requirements of Part P.



## Part P - An opportunity for IIE members, not an imposition?

John Andrews

Part P which is due to come into force on 1st January 2005 will affect any member who works in the domestic sector of the electrical contracting industry and means they may have to be on a Competent Person's Register.

If you are in a managerial position, as well as getting to grips with the requirements of Part P, you need to remember that the 'Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations (1992)' continues to apply in common parts of flats and similar buildings if people such as cleaners and caretakers are employed to work in them. Moreover, the 'Electricity at Work Regulations (1998)' covering all electrical work being carried out professionally (i.e. at work) and the competence of the individuals carrying out that work, apply whether or not the Building Regulations pertain.

As well as the above parts of the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), there are other parts of the Building Regulations themselves which may apply, depending upon the nature of the electrical installation being undertaken. These include but are not limited to:

Structure (A), Fire Safety (B), Site preparation (C), Sound penetration (E), Ventilation (F), Fuel and Energy Conservation (L) and Accessibility (M) that may have been affected by the electrical installation process.

Many consider having to be on a 'Competent Person's Register' in order to carry out their trade to be a gross imposition, especially when they have been plying their trade professionally for a number of years.

The safety requirement will be applicable to alterations and additions to existing installations (including rewires), as well as to new construction. There will be a requirement to ensure that parts of an existing installation upon which new work depends for safety (such as the earthing and bonding arrangement) comply with the requirements of BS 7671:2001. This requirement for consequential remedial work is a departure from the normal Building Regulations approach.

**Complying with Part P.** Electrical contractors will achieve compliance by following the fundamental principles for safety set out in Chapter 13 of BS 7671:2001.

Official guidance on complying with the requirement is given in the new Approved Document P, Electrical Safety, Fixed Electrical Installations in Dwellings.

Part P applies to all fixed electrical

Rather than view Part P as an imposition all of us in the electrical industry should see it as an opportunity that offers:

- An opportunity for a new level of certificated 'competent' electrical tradesmen
- An opportunity for the crafts and trades of our industry to participate in its future, by actively supporting those organisations that monitor standards
- An opportunity for our industry to support its most important element, its customers, by eliminating or minimising the ever present 'cowboys'
- An opportunity for the trade to have a new voice with a fresh approach to the education of our tradesmen, in order that they not only reach the desired level of competence, but maintain it throughout their working life
- An opportunity to widen our scope of work to embrace the huge demand there will be for Electrical Inspectors to assist Building Control in monitoring compliance with BS7671:2001
- An opportunity to address some of the 'slippage' in both 'status' and 'remuneration levels' that have occurred in our industry over the last 20 years or so

Perhaps our aim should be to not only have a body of electrical tradesmen who are demonstrably competent, but who are paid well for the skills they hold, properly valued by society and managed by equally well paid, qualified technicians and engineers, many of whom are in IIE membership.

*For more information on the above go to [www.napit.org.uk](http://www.napit.org.uk) or contact John Andrews BSc CEO and Technical Director of NAPIT on [john.andrews@napit.org.uk](mailto:john.andrews@napit.org.uk).*

installation work in dwellings, whether carried out professionally or by DIY, whether or not minor work, and whether or not the work is notifiable to a building control body. However, certain relaxations may apply for the inspection, testing and certification of minor work undertaken as DIY.

**Periodic Inspection Reports (PIR).** Part P does not cover the inspection and testing of existing electrical installations. However, any remedial work carried out to correct deficiencies in a PIR will come within the scope of Part P.

**Notifying electrical work.** All proposed electrical installation work in dwellings will need to be notified to a building control body before work commences, unless:

- the proposed work is to be undertaken by a prescribed competent person (an individual or a firm) authorised to self-

certify compliance on completion of the work, or

- the proposed work is minor, and it is not in a kitchen or in an area classified as a special installation or location.

**Minor work.** Minor work is electrical work not involving the addition of a new circuit, such as the addition of socket outlets or lighting points to existing circuits and the replacement of accessories.

The following are classified as special installations or locations and all electrical installation work in such areas (as well as in kitchens) will need to be notified, or self-certified by a prescribed competent person, even if only 'minor works':

- locations containing a bath tub or shower basin
- swimming pools or paddling pools
- hot air saunas
- garden lighting or power installations
- solar photovoltaic power supply systems
- electric floor or ceiling heating systems
- extra-low voltage lighting installations, other than pre-assembled, CE- marked lighting sets
- small scale generators such as microCHP units.

**Self-certification.** Contractors self-certifying in compliance with Part P will also have to certify compliance with other relevant parts of the Building Regulations that have been affected by the electrical work, such as Part B (fire safety), Part F, Part M (accessibility) and Part L1 (energy conservation).

There is also Part A Structures, Part C Site Preparation, Part E Sound Penetration Part G3 Hot Water Storage Approved Document to Support Regulation 7 Materials and Workmanship; but that is maybe another article!

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*Further information from:  
NICIEC Domestic Installer Scheme  
0800 013 0900  
BREC: 01323 664100 / 01623 404515  
/ 0870 609 093  
ELECSEA ECA: 0870 749 0080  
BSI: 0208 996 9001 / 01442 728607  
NAPIT: 0870 444 1392*

*On behalf of its members, IIE is currently exploring the potential for collaboration with all the major parties involved with Part P and expects to make announcements on this subject very soon. Meanwhile, for further information, members should call Richard Armstrong on 020 7395 0267 E-mail: [richard.armstrong@iie.org.uk](mailto:richard.armstrong@iie.org.uk)*