

## 16 GAS SERVICES (inspection and testing)

### Inspection and testing

Gas must be treated with respect. It can escape and silently poison or even cause catastrophic explosions, so it must be carefully managed. Meeting the legislation and standards for gas safety is not easy but duty holders must make sure they understand them.

### The law

Gas safety legislation stems from the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Added to this act are specific regulations: Pipelines Safety Regulations 1996, Gas Safety (Management)

Regulations 1996, Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and five more.

Other legislation for gas includes: the Gas Acts 1986 and 1995, Gas Appliance (Safety) Regulations 1995 and Building Regulations and Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations.

### Codes and standards

In addition to the above, there are ACOPs (Approved Codes of Practice) for gas that support the legislation, plus the relevant British Standards totalling 72, which cover flues, valves, meters and regulators, tubing and appliances.

Knowing, understanding and following these 72 separate standards is an onerous task, yet this is what is required for compliance. As it states in the Gas Safety Regulations 1998: the code has special legal status. If you are prosecuted for breach of health and safety law, and it is proved that you did not follow the relevant provisions of the code, you will need to show that you have complied with the law in some other way or a court will find you at fault.

### Legislation

The essential phrase to consider is in Part F of Regulation 35:

It shall be the duty of every employer or self-employed person to ensure that any gas appliance, installation pipework or flue installed at any place of work under his control is maintained in a safe condition so as to prevent risk of injury to any person.

Regulation 4 qualifies that this means taking reasonable steps to ensure that the person undertaking the work is, or is employed by, a 'class of persons' approved by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). In other words the person undertaking the work must be registered with Gas Safe and qualified to the appropriate ACOPs for the specific job in hand.

In 2009, the Corgi gas registration scheme was replaced in the UK by the Gas Safe Register: the official body for gas safety in UK, Isle of Man and Guernsey, run by Capita Gas Registration and Ancillary Services.

The sole focus of the register is on improving and maintaining gas safety to the highest standards. Gas Safe holds the only official list of 120,000 gas engineers legally able to perform gas work on boilers, hobs, ovens, fires and all other gas appliances. Anyone carrying out gas work must have a Gas Safe Register ID card. If not, they – and you – are breaking the law.

## **Compliance**

The route to legislative compliance begins with risk assessment, as recommended by the HSE, to establish hazards and necessary precautions. That assessment should inform what is subsequently done in terms of a test regime and maintenance schedule. It should be conducted according to that assessment and in line with regulations and ACOPs.

For gas this means **ANNUAL** inspection and test of gas appliances, pipework and flues in every type of property, other than private domestic, but including manses which, for the purposes of the legislation, are deemed to be occupied by 'tenants' with the circuit as 'landlord'.

Test and inspection is not often where compliance is completed; it's where the process starts. For gas, that's easier said than done because of the complex Corgi legacy: there are many, many ACOPs for gas and it is essential to establish that the engineer conducting the assessment is qualified for the specific item or situation.

For example, an engineer qualified to inspect domestic gas appliances may not be suitably qualified for commercial appliances, while an engineer qualified to assess one grade of pipework may not be qualified to assess other grades. In fact, there is training and qualifications for every one of the 72 ACOPs.

It is extremely complicated and requires both awareness and diligence on the part of the duty holder. If an accident were to occur and the HSE to investigate, one of the first things they would scrutinise would be the specific qualifications of the gas engineer. So it is advisable to check the engineer's registration card before allowing access and verifying the details on the Gas Safe online register to establish that the individual's specific qualifications match every aspect of your site's specific requirement.

## **Compliance on a budget**

Get competitive, comparative quotes or tenders. Don't be fooled by cut price testing where charges are loaded on remedial repairs.

Use flexibility to your advantage; plan in advance and build all the timing and site access flexibility in that you can to claim competitive pricing.

Negotiate a longer contract for testing that will span three, four or five years. You are sure to get preferential pricing.

Link the buying of your gas safety requirements to electrical testing and other services to maximise your buying power.

Source a supplier with multi-skilled engineers; it could mean less time on your site and hence reductions in cost to you.

## **Useful sources**

– [gassaferegister.co.uk](http://gassaferegister.co.uk) (Official register of qualified gas engineers)

– [hse.gov.uk](http://hse.gov.uk) (Health and Safety Executive – a source of advice and legal information about health and safety in the workplace)

This guidance is intended to give an overview of some of the main pieces of legislation that cover many workplaces.

Further information can be obtained from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE); in particular: [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg285.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg285.pdf) (for landlords' (circuits') duties) [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cais23.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cais23.pdf) (for gas safety in catering and hospitality) [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cais10.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cais10.pdf) (for ventilation of kitchens for catering)

You should also check any requirements in your insurance policy (Methodist Insurance produce several guidance notes ([www.methodistinsurance.co.uk/resources](http://www.methodistinsurance.co.uk/resources))).

\*\* see also *Guidance Note T8 for Electrical services: Inspection and Testing*

