



Thames House, 29 Thames Street
Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, KT1 1PH
Phone: +44 (0) 20 8549 5855
Website: www.fia.uk.com

Approved Document P of the Building Regulations 2000

The following statement, relating to Approved Document P of the Building Regulations, has been received from the Electrical Contractors Association (ECA) and is likely to be relevant to BFPFA members involved with the installation of fire alarms in dwellings.

While it is evident that ECA would like affected companies to participate in their Competent Persons Scheme, it should be recognised that other organisations are also able to offer similar schemes however the general information included within the statement is important and worth reading and includes references to other sources of information.

A copy of Approved Document P can be downloaded from the Building Regulations pages of the ODPM website – www.odpm.gov.uk and it is advisable to become acquainted with the requirements as these are legally enforceable.

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Part P of the Building Regulations explained by the Electrical Contractors' Association for the Fire and Security Industry

Introduction

On 22nd July 2004, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published the new approved Building Regulations **PART P ELECTRICAL SAFETY** document, which will take effect on the 1st January 2005. This covers the fundamental principals of Electrical Safety set out in Chapter 13 of BS 7671: 2001 incorporating Amendment No 1: 2002 and Amendment No 2: 2004. and is a legal requirement.

The local Building Control Officer enforces Building Regulations, and the HSE Health and Safety, by the use of fines for non-compliance. However, if your installation kills or maims anybody you could face a CPS manslaughter charge, and even prison.

From this date contractors installing “**all fixed installations in dwellings**” will need to be assessed under the **Part P Competent Persons Scheme** in order for the installer to be able to **properly supervise and self-certify** their own work, as and when the Building Regulations require this.

A fixed installation for the purpose of **Part P** is defined in BS 7671 as ‘**an assembly of associated electrical equipment supplied from a common origin to fulfill a specific purpose and having certain coordinated characteristics**’. For the purpose of the Building Regulations an electrical installation means fixed electrical cables or fixed electrical equipment located on the consumer side of the supply meter.

Fixed fire and security installations derive LV power from primary 230v ac mains and are legally regulated under **the new Building Regulations Part P to BS 7671: 2001 and amendments**. The functionality of fire and security systems is regulated under, **Electricity at Work Regulations 1989**. Contractors working within dwellings are also regulated under, **Work Health Safety and Welfare Act 1992**, and **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**. Power supplies, battery chargers and batteries, may themselves, become the source of danger, fire, or injury.

After the introduction of Part P, anyone will still be able to undertake electrical work in Dwellings, even the householder. However, this work should comply with the requirements of Part P. If a firm does not wish to become a competent person, along with a householder, Part P work would have 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, or they will need to have their work certified by a firm who themselves, have been certified as a competent person, and a Part P certificate issued by them, to confirm that the work complies.

It is most important under Part P, to understand that the responsibility for the 230v ac mains supplies for fire and security systems rests with you, the fire and security installer, and not the person who actually installed it.

Because Building Control officers don't have the resources or expertise to inspect and certify electrical installations, Government has approved the ECA's Competent Person Scheme. The firms assessed and registered by such a scheme will be able to self-certify that their work complies with the Building Regulations.

Once Part P is implemented it will be a criminal offence if the person or firm carrying out electrical installation work contravenes the Building Regulations.

Common Questions and Answers for Fire and Security Companies

1. Will my Firm be affected by Part P?

If your Company undertakes fire and security work in Dwellings or anticipates being asked to undertake such work in the future you will be affected. 230v ac fused supplies form an integral part of fire and security installations, and are the responsibility of the fire and security installer, regardless of who actually installed them.

2. Why is Part P restricted to Dwellings?

Other buildings benefit from the electrical safety requirements of the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989. However, it should be noted that in addition to dwellings, Part P will apply to :

- Combined dwellings and business premises such as shops with a common supply;
- Common access parts in blocks of flats;
- Shared amenities in flats (e.g. laundries, gyms)

3. What is a dwelling?

A dwelling can be a domestic property, a block of flats, a business, which shares a common supply with a dwelling, or a new Housing Association estate.

4. What and who is a 'Competent Person'?

This is a somewhat unfortunate legal phrase used to describe a firm that has been independently assessed, by a government approved scheme, as competent to self-certify its own work. Such a firm may be a sole trader, a partnership or a limited Company.

5. Is all electrical work in Dwellings covered by Part P?

All electrical installation work must comply with the requirement of Part P, but certain minor works do not need to be notified to Building Control unless they are in high-risk areas such as the bathrooms or kitchens.

6. How does my firm comply with Part P?

Your firm will meet the requirement of Part P if the electrical installation work it carries out complies with the requirements of BS7671: 2001 The IEE Regulations 16th Edition.

7. Does BS7671 suffice for complying with the Building Regulations?

No! You must bear in mind that the non-electrical, builder's work, you carry out in connection with the electrical installation work, should also comply with all the applicable requirements of Building Regulations – not just Part P.

8. How will Part P be enforced?

Local Authorities have the responsibility for enforcing the Building Regulations. Solicitors responsible for the conveyance of property will seek the appropriate documentation certifying that any electrical work carried out does comply with the Building Regulations. Once the '**Home Information Pack**' is introduced this should reinforce the need for the appropriate documentation and hence the effectiveness of enforcement.

9. Does the ECA run a Competent Person Scheme?

The ECA, working in partnership with BRE Certification, has established a UKAS-accredited scheme using our own technical expertise, and will assess your firm to ensure that you can be certified as a Competent Person under the Part P Electrical Safety Regulations.

10. Will there be sufficient capacity to assess all the fire and security firms that want to become Competent Person prior to the implementation of Part P?

Exact reliable figures exist about the number of firms that are likely want to become Competent Persons. Numbers the government cite are in excess of 100,000 firms. However, it is anticipated that as the implementation date approaches there will be a rush of firms seeking

assessment and there could well be delays. ***Firms leaving their applications till late may well find that they have not achieved Competent Person Status in time for Part P.***

11. When will Part P come into force?

The formal date is the 1st January 2005.

12. How much will certification as a Competent Person cost my Firm?

Firms will be charged for an initial assessment to confirm their competence. Thereafter they will be subject to shorter annual surveillance visits to ensure their work complies with the Building Regulations. .

13. So what do I do now?

Firstly visit the ECA website at www.eca.co.uk, and the partp information site at www.partp.co.uk.

In the event that you do not have access to the web please contact the ECA Part P office on 0870 609 6093 for an application pack.

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DISCLAIMER

The information set out in this document is believed to be correct in the light of information currently available but it is not guaranteed and neither the Fire Industry Association nor its officers can accept any responsibility in respect of the contents or any events arising from use of the information contained within this document.