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Air Conditioning Inspections

Air-conditioning inspections promote the improvement of the energy performance of buildings and form part of the final implementation in England and Wales of the European Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings.

Air conditioning systems in England and Wales with a cooling capacity of 250 kW or more are required to be inspected under the Energy Performance of Buildings Regulations. (Parallel regulations apply in Scotland and Northern Ireland). This came into effect in early 2009. In addition, all systems over 12kW output will need to be inspected by January 2011.

The Regulations require such systems to be inspected by a “competent and accredited person who belongs to a scheme approved by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG).” There are several such schemes, one of which is operated by the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) Certification Scheme. The appropriate methodology is as described in CIBSE TM44 or equivalent. The energy assessor must provide a written report of the inspection to the person who has control of the operation of the air-conditioning system as soon as practicable after the inspection.

Having an air-conditioning system inspected by an Energy Assessor is designed to improve efficiency and to reduce the electricity consumption, operating costs and carbon emissions of the system. Energy inspections should highlight improvements to the operation of existing systems or opportunities to replace older, less energy efficient systems or oversized systems with new energy efficient systems. As the replacement of refrigerant is restricted in older systems there is an additional incentive to improve or replace older systems with more modern energy efficient units.

Facility managers who control air-conditioning systems have statutory obligations and duties of care in the operation and maintenance of air-conditioning systems. The energy inspections required by the Regulations are in addition to the normal activities associated with the ownership and operation of air-conditioning systems. Inspection, maintenance and cleaning programmes maintain the ability of systems to provide healthy and comfortable environments for building occupants, limiting the escape of refrigerant gases and ensuring the safety of equipment.

The Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) maintain a register of accredited Air Conditioning Inspectors which can be searched it www.cibseenergycentre.co.uk/assessors