

Domestic Electrical Legislation and Part P

New Part P Building Regulations for Electrical Safety in the Home

What is 'Part P'?

On 1st January, 2005, in England and Wales, new Part P Building Regulations were enforced in order to reduce the number of fires, injuries and deaths caused by faulty electrical installations. Since this date, all electrical work conducted in domestic properties across England and Wales must comply with the new Part P Building Regulations.

Part P is intended to improve the safety standards of domestic electrical provision by increasing the quality of design, installation, inspection and testing in new-build properties, as well as in extensions and alterations of existing properties.

In an attempt to reduce the number of faulty electrical installations provided by 'cowboy' builders, the introduction of Part P regulations aims to cut down on the risks of shock, burns, and other injuries associated with faulty electrics, such as fires caused by the overheating of electrical components or the building up of dangerous currents.

Part P regulates that all electrical installations must be designed, commissioned, fitted and tested in accordance with BS 7671 which is intended to reduce the risks stated previously.

Does Part P apply to every home?

Yes. All dwellings must comply with Part P Building Regulations. This includes not only houses, bungalows and flats but also combined dwellings and business premises where they share a common electricity supply, including shops, pubs, restaurants and so on.

Shared facilities and common access areas in blocks of flats (excluding lifts) such as gyms or laundries must also comply with Part P.

In addition all outbuildings such as sheds, garages, greenhouses, and so on, as well as garden lighting and power supplies in any type of dwelling must also adhere to the new Part P legislation.

What if I don't follow the Part P Building Regulations?

If you decide not to follow the new Part P regulations in an attempt to save money, you will be running the risk of having an unsafe installation in your home which may cause the aforementioned fire and injury.

If something does go wrong with your installation, you may have difficulty claiming insurance and will ultimately be alerted to the real cost of false economy.

In addition, you will have no record of the work done or electrical safety certificates, which could cause you serious problems when it comes to selling your property.

It is a criminal offence to fail to comply with the Building Regulations. Ultimately, it is within the rights of your local authority's Building Control Department to insist that you comply with the regulations, meaning that you could be forced to remove or alter any work which does not comply. This means that you could end up paying twice for your installation as well as outlaying a considerable amount of additional time and effort.

So, how do I meet the new regulations?

If you are carrying out the work yourself:

You do not need to inform your local authority's Building Control Department if you or a friend will be carrying out the work yourselves. This includes repairs, replacements and maintenance work, as well as fitting extra power or lighting points or making other alterations to existing circuits. However, this does not include work which is to be carried out in a kitchen, bathroom, outdoors or in a specified 'specialist location' (see the section on specialist locations).

For most other work, you will need to inform your local authority's Building Control Department. Contact them before you start work for further information if you are unsure.

If the work is to be carried out by a contractor or installer:

You do not need to inform your local authority's Building Control Department if the work is to be carried out by a contractor or installer. This includes making repairs, replacements and maintenance work and also includes fitting installing additional power points or lighting points, or modifying existing circuits.

For any of the above work which is to be carried out in a kitchen, bathroom, outdoors or other 'specialist location' (see the section on specialist locations), and for most other work, you will need to inform your local authority's Building Control Department. Contact them if you are unsure in advance of starting any work.

If your contractor or installer is registered with a competent person scheme, you will need to inform your local authority's Building Control Department before they start work. The contractor or installer will then take care of all the building regulations for you.

What are 'specialist locations'?

The following locations are considered to be 'specialist'. In all of these areas, including kitchens, bathrooms and outdoors, any electrical installation work will need to be notified or self-certified by a prescribed competent person, even for apparently small jobs.

- Electric floor or ceiling heating systems
- Locations which contain a bathtub or shower basin
- Extra-low voltage lighting which is not pre-assembled and CE-marked
- Garden lighting or power installations
- Hot air saunas
- Swimming or paddling pools
- Solar photovoltaic power supply systems
- Small-scale generators such as microchip units

What are the benefits of using a contractor or installer who is registered with a competent person scheme?

A 'competent firm' has been defined by the Government as one which is registered under one of the following schemes:

- The NICEIC Approved Contractor Scheme
- The Domestic Installer Scheme
- The Electro-technical Assessment Scheme

Ways in which you will benefit from using a registered contractor or installer include the following:

- Scheme members will deal with all of the new regulations for you
- Scheme members are fully-qualified to carry out the required electrical work
- Scheme members will provide you with certification confirming that their work complies to the new regulations
- You will not be required to pay Building Control charges
- You will be able to take out an insurance-backed guarantee for the work
- You will be able to access a formal complaints procedure if you are not satisfied with the work.

What if I don't use a registered firm to carry out the work for me?

If you don't use a registered firm to carry out your electrical installations or modifications, you cannot guarantee that the installation will be safe, which means you are putting yourself and others at risk of fire, injury, or even death.

In addition, you will not have any official record of the work carried out or have the right electrical safety certificates. This means that you might have difficulty in selling your property.

You may also incur substantial extra costs if your local authority's Building Control Department insists that you correct or remove any faulty work

Although it is a criminal offence not to comply with Building Regulations, there is no obligation to for a firm to register with a competent person scheme. If you decide to use a firm which is not registered for such a scheme, you will need to make sure that the company submits notification of the work to your local authority's Building Control Department. This also includes arranging for inspection and certification by the Department once the work has been completed.

Building Regulation Requirements in Addition to Part P

Contractors who self-certify compliance with Part P must also certify compliance with other relevant parts of the Building Regulations which may have been affected by the electrical work which has been carried out.

These include:

- Part B (Fire Safety)
- Part F (Ventilation)
- Part M (Accessibility)
- Part L1 (Energy Conservation)

Periodic Inspection Reports (PIR)

The inspection and testing of existing electrical installations is not covered by Part P, although any remedial work carried out to correct deficiencies in a PIR does fall under Part P.

For full details of inspection and testing, see our Testing Services pages.

Firehawk Limited will provide you with a free survey and design consultation so that you can decide on your requirements. This may be the simple installation of a new socket outlet, to a complete rewire.

As a NICEIC registered company, we will deal with all requirements of your local authority's Building Control Department.