

## Third party certification schemes for domestic electrical work in England

**Chief Engineer Geoff Cronshaw provides clarity on the new Part P third party certification schemes introduced in April this year, and answers some frequently asked questions.**

New Part P third party certification schemes for electrical installation work in dwellings were introduced in England on 6th April this year. The bodies that have been authorised to operate schemes are listed on the DCLG website at [www.gov.uk/third-party-certification-schemes-for-domestic-electrical-work](http://www.gov.uk/third-party-certification-schemes-for-domestic-electrical-work).

A person registered with one of the schemes will be able to check domestic electrical work undertaken by installers who are not registered with a Part P competent person self-certification scheme (typically DIY work) and certify that the work is compliant with the Building Regulations. Before 6th April, only building control bodies (usually local authorities) could certify work by non-registered installers.

### Overview

Part P of the Building Regulations was introduced in England and Wales on 1 January 2005. As part of the government's commitment to cut red tape, significant changes came into effect in England that:

- from 6 April 2013 reduced the amount of 'notifiable' work that must be checked by a building control body unless self-certified by an installer registered with a competent person scheme; and
- from 6 April 2014 introduced the new third party certification schemes.

All electrical installation work in dwellings must be carried out in line with the technical and procedural rules of Part P of the Building Regulations. This means that:

- all electrical work, no matter how minor, should follow the rules in BS 7671 for the design, installation, inspection, testing and certification.
- all notifiable work (certain types of higher risk work specified in the Building Regulations) must be certified as compliant with the Building Regulations.

Installers registered with a Part P competent person scheme are allowed to self-certify that notifiable electrical installation work complies with the Building Regulations. Before 6th April, only building control bodies (local authorities or private, approved inspectors) could certify notifiable work carried out by non-registered installers.

Part P doesn't just apply to flats and houses. Business premises that have a common metered supply that is shared with a dwelling – for example, shops and public houses with a

flat above – are covered too, along with common access areas in blocks of flats and shared amenities such as laundries and gymnasiums. However, if the business unit is separately metered to the dwelling it does not come under Part P.

The legislation also extends to parts of installations in or on land associated with dwellings. This would include fixed lighting, pond pumps in gardens, photovoltaic panels on roofs, or a supply to outbuildings such as sheds, detached garages and greenhouses.

A clear distinction has to be made between residential accommodation that is a place of work – such as university halls of residence and residential care homes – and dwellings. University halls of residence and residential care homes do not come under Part P but are covered by the Electricity at Work Regulations and would be subject to HSE investigations in the event of an incident. The building control body will be able to confirm whether Part P of the Building Regulations applies in a specific case.

The Building Regulations now define notifiable work more simply as the installation of a new circuit or consumer unit, or any addition or alteration to an existing circuit in a special location. For the purposes of the Building Regulations, a special location is essentially defined as the space within the zones in a room containing a bath or shower (see figures 1, 2 and 3), or as a room containing a swimming pool or sauna heater. Additions and alterations to existing circuits outside special locations, and replacements (other than consumer units) and repairs anywhere, are not notifiable. The building control body will be able to confirm whether work is notifiable in a specific case.

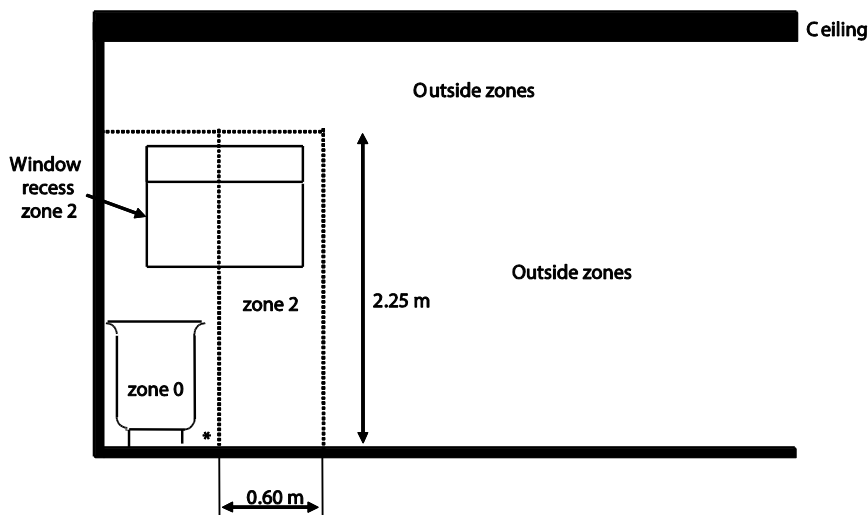


Figure 1: Zone dimensions - elevation view showing a bath tub

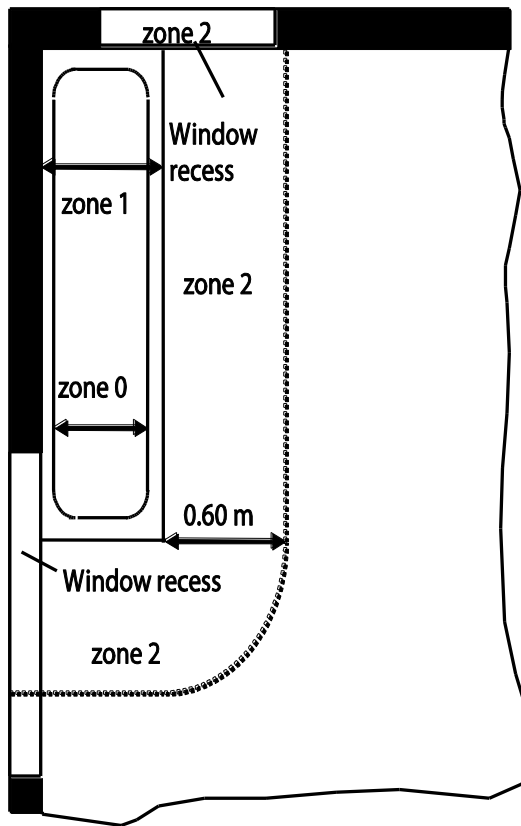


Figure 2: Zone dimensions - plan view showing a bath tub

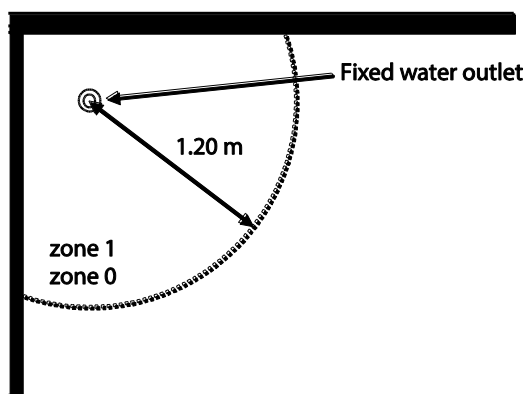


Figure 3: Zone dimensions - plan view showing a shower without a basin

## Certification and reporting

Anyone carrying out domestic electrical installation work must carry it out in line with Part P of the building regulations. Where work is notifiable (new circuits, the provision of a consumer unit and any addition or alteration to an existing circuit in a special location), it must be certified as compliant with the Building Regulations. An installer registered with a competent person scheme is allowed to self-certify compliance; non-registered installers must, before work begins, either appoint a registered third party certifier to inspect and test the work or alternatively notify a building control body (usually the local authority). The extent of inspection and testing needed to establish that the work is safe will depend on the type of work and the competence of the installer and may affect the fee payable.

Where notifiable work is self-certificated by an installer who is registered with a competent person self-certification scheme, the installer's registration body will give a copy of the Building Regulations compliance certificate to the occupier, and the certificate (or a copy of the information on the certificate) to the building control body.

A registered third party certifier will (subject to inspection and testing being satisfactory) issue a condition report to the person ordering the work, and the certifier's registration body will give a copy of the Building Regulations compliance certificate to the occupier, and a copy to the building control body.

A building control body will often contract a specialist to inspect and test some or all of the work. The occupier will receive a Building Regulations completion certificate from a local authority, or a final certificate from an approved inspector.

All work, whether it is notifiable or non-notifiable, should be designed, installed, inspected, tested and certificated in accordance with BS 7671.

## Typical questions

### ***Work in a bathroom – light fitting***

#### *Question*

Is the replacement of a light fitting in zone 2 of a bathroom notifiable work?

#### *Answer*

No, provided that the light fitting is a like-for-like replacement.

#### *Question*

Is the replacement of a light fitting located outside the zones in a bathroom by a number of downlighters notifiable work?

#### *Answer*

No, provided that the alteration work involving the downlighters is all outside the zones.

### **Work in a bathroom – shower**

#### *Question*



If I replace an existing electric shower with a new electric shower connected to an existing shower circuit is this notifiable work?

*Answer*

Even though the shower is within the zones the answer is No, provided that the shower is a like-for-like replacement.

### **Work in a kitchen – additional socket outlets**

*Question*

If I install additional socket outlets wired on an existing circuit in a kitchen is this notifiable work?

*Answer*

No, alteration work in a kitchen is no longer notifiable.

### **Work outside – outside light**

*Question*

Is the installation of a light fitting installed outside notifiable work?

*Answer*

No, provided that the light fitting is connected to an existing circuit, because additions and alterations to existing circuits outside a dwelling are no longer notifiable.

### **Caravans, mobile homes and park homes**

*Question*

Do caravans, mobile homes and park homes come under Part P?

*Answer*

Caravans, mobile homes and park homes are all treated as caravans under legislation and do not ordinarily fall within the definition of a building in the Building Regulations; consequently, these would not normally come under Part P. Most two-unit park homes (those which are delivered in two sections and bolted together on site) fall within the definition of caravans.

### **Extra low voltage wiring – alarm wiring**

*Question*

Is the installation of intruder alarm wiring notifiable?

*Answer*

No, provided that the intruder alarm wiring is not in a special location and does not involve a new connection to the consumer unit.

### **Consumer units**

*Question*

How can compliance with Part M be achieved in new dwellings for mounting multi-row consumer units where it is not possible to have all the switches between 1350 mm and 1450 mm above floor level?

*Answer*

In the case of multi-row consumer units, it is generally recommended that the bottom row of switches should be between 1350 mm and 1450 mm so that they are out of reach of

young children to avoid interference and inappropriate operation of switches, but this would be subject to agreement with building control.

#### **More information**

Please note: this article only gives a brief overview of Part P of the Building Regulations for England and the new third party certification schemes. For more information please refer to:

- the DCLG website at:  
[www.gov.uk/third-party-certification-schemes-for-domestic-electrical-work](http://www.gov.uk/third-party-certification-schemes-for-domestic-electrical-work)
- the DCLG circular at:  
[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/291791/140313\\_dclg-circular-0114-web\\_final.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/291791/140313_dclg-circular-0114-web_final.pdf)
- the 2013 edition of Approved Document P at:  
[www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments)
- details of all competent person self-certification schemes at:  
[www.gov.uk/building-regulations-competent-person-schemes](http://www.gov.uk/building-regulations-competent-person-schemes)