

PART P will for the first time place a legal requirement for safety upon persons carrying out electrical installation work in dwellings. Currently BS 7671 is only a standard – and the recommendation of the IEE – but is not a legal requirement.

The ODPM further announced that Part P would only come into force when self-certification schemes were in place to ensure compliance of the work undertaken, which would help to raise industry standards and create a better-qualified workforce. At the time

intended to operate at low or extra-low voltage, in England and Wales. A fixed installation will mean those parts attached to, or supported from, the building fabric.

The scope of work will be fixed electrical installations in buildings after the supplier's meter including:

- dwellings
- dwellings and business premises which have a common supply
- areas of common access within blocks of flats (but not lifts)
- shared amenities in blocks of flats

requirement to ensure that the parts of the existing installation upon which the new installation depends for safety comply with BS 7671:2001. In some cases this may demand an element of consequential remedial work.

The requirements of Part P will apply to work whether carried out professionally or as DIY, including minor works (with the possible exception of certain minor DIY work).

#### HOW TO COMPLY

It is understood that compliance with Part P will be achieved by following the applicable regulations in BS 7671:2001 and the guidance published in the *IEE On-site Guide*. It is thought that Part P will require installation work to be inspected and tested during and on completion to verify that it is safe (e.g. for compliance with BS 7671:2001).

#### NOTIFICATION TO BUILDING CONTROL

All fixed electrical installation work will become a 'controlled service' under the Building Regulations. It will have to be notified, before work commences, to the Building Control office of the relevant Local Authority, in order that they may inspect the work. This will apply to all work carried out, professionally or as DIY, with the following exceptions:

- (1) where the proposed work is to be undertaken by a prescribed competent person authorised to self-certify compliance on completion of the work;
- (2) where the work is minor and not in a kitchen or other area classified as a special location or installation.

Minor work is likely to be electrical work not involving the addition of a new circuit, such as adding a socket outlet or lighting point to an existing circuit, or replacement of accessories. Special installations or locations are expected to include:

# PART P FOR THE INSTALLER

**In May 2003 the Government announced that it would introduce a new Part P to the Building Regulations which would bring within its scope domestic electrical installation work in England and Wales. This initiative, led by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), has the purpose of curbing the rising number of electrical accidents and fires in the home, it reported.**

By Robin Mellors-Bourne

of writing we still await publication of Approved Document P which will offer guidance on how to comply and news of accepted competency schemes. This article, therefore, can only give an indication of the likely impact of the new Part P.

#### REQUIREMENT & SCOPE

The electrical safety requirement in Part P is likely to be that: "fixed electrical installations shall be suitably designed, installed, inspected and tested so as to provide reasonable protection against being the source of a fire or a cause of injury to persons."

This will apply to fixed installations

Dwellings are defined in Part B of the Building Regulations as follows: "a unit of residential accommodation occupied (whether or not as a sole or main residence): (a) by a single person or by people living together as a family, or (b) by not more than 6 residents living together in a single household, including a household where care is provided for residents."

It is assumed that related areas such as gardens, garages and sheds will be included.

Part P will apply to new installations and also to alterations and additions to existing installations (including rewires). There will be a

- Kitchens
- Locations including a bath or shower or sauna
- Swimming pools, fountains and gardens
- Small-scale embedded generators including solar power supply systems
- Electric heating systems including floor and ceiling heating
- ELV lighting installations unless pre-assembled

It is understood that all work in kitchens, bathrooms and these other special locations will need to be notified, or self-certified, irrespective of how minor.

#### COMPLIANCE WITH OTHER PARTS OF THE BUILDING REGULATIONS

Installation work in new dwellings will need to comply with any other relevant Parts of the Building Regulations.

Certification will be of compliance with all the relevant Building Regulations. It is hoped that OPDM will publish guidance on to what degree this will be true for rewires and alterations to existing installations. See the short article in this issue for some practical advice.

#### COMPETENT PERSONS SCHEMES

Several millions of installations are undertaken annually. Building Control officers will not be able to cope with the work of inspecting them all. The only realistic mechanism to certify compliance will be self-certification by what ODPM calls a Competent Person. It invited schemes to be proposed to assess and ensure the competency of installers in autumn 2003. The successful candidates are not yet known but two candidates are the "Part P Competent Person Scheme" from BRE-Certification and the ECA (backed by the IEE) and the NICEIC's "Domestic Installers Scheme".

Details of how such schemes will operate will be provided by successful scheme operators. However, it is expected that firms or self-employed people will be assessed for competency through a combination of the qualifications and experience of the personnel, the sustainability of the firm (or self-employed person), and site inspections.

The industry has developed a framework for assessing competency, called the Electrotechnical Assessment Scheme (EAS), which can be seen on the IEE website. The major bodies lobbied ODPM for it to be the benchmark for Competent Persons Schemes under Part P. ODPM invited schemes to adopt the EAS "or equivalent".

Once a firm (or person) is registered, it will be able to issue a certificate of compliance on completion of the work which it will send to the relevant Local Authority Building Control office, and the householder. This avoids the need for notification to and inspection by Building Control.

Details of the compliance certificate, and who issues it to whom, are yet to be finalised. However, it is likely to be a simple form certifying compliance with all the relevant Building Regulations, separate from existing BS 7671 forms.

Precise guidance in this area and the roles of individuals within a firm which is acting as a Competent "Person" are awaited from ODPM.

#### WILL THE HOUSEHOLDER CARE?

These processes will add to the price paid by the customer, so what is the incentive for the customer to employ either a Competent Person or a contractor who will notify to Building Control, as opposed to doing the work unregulated? The Government's proposed "home information pack" (or "seller's pack") is expected to require the

householder to provide certificates of compliance with Building Regulations in order for the house to be sold. This should prove a strong incentive to the householder.

#### WHO NEEDS TO REGISTER?

No contractor will be obliged to join a Competent Persons Scheme but many firms will wish to do so to avoid being dependent on Building Control for inspections. If a firm or person operates entirely in commercial/ industrial settings (not domestic), the requirements of Part P do not apply. Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own regulatory system and are not affected by Part P.

A firm's membership of a trade association will not give the status of competency under a Competent Person Scheme. Nor will an individual's membership or qualification, such as holding the ECS card, automatically qualify them as a Competent Person. Only persons registered within an operational Competent Person Scheme for Part P will be able to self-certify compliance.

#### WHEN WILL IT HAPPEN?

Publication of the Approved Document P and successful Competent Persons Schemes is still awaited. The introduction of Part P and the launch of the CPS schemes are unlikely before the end of 2004. Once that announcement is made, large numbers of applicants are expected to register in time for Part P to be launched. With 100,000 electrical installation enterprises, including self-employed electricians, there are major challenges ahead for all. ■

#### WEBSITE REFERENCES

[www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)  
[www.iee.org/technical](http://www.iee.org/technical)  
[www.eca.co.uk](http://www.eca.co.uk)  
[www.niceic.org.uk](http://www.niceic.org.uk)