

# ALL CHANGE – NEW COLOURS AGREED

By Paul Cook

AMENDMENT NO 2 : 2004 to BS 7671 : 2001 is formally published on 31st March 2004 and is now available free on the IEE's website [www.iee.org/technical](http://www.iee.org/technical). Unusually the Amendment is divided into three parts instead of following regulation number order:

- (1) Cable core colours
- (2) The Electricity Safety Quality & Continuity Regulations
- (3) General (thin walls)

This is to keep all the changes associated with the cable colour change together for ease of understanding. The IEE has been considering the change of core colours since 1968 when the changes were made to appliance flexes colours. The Low Voltage Directive standardised safety requirements across the European Union and was, and still is, a valiant attempt to remove barriers to trade.

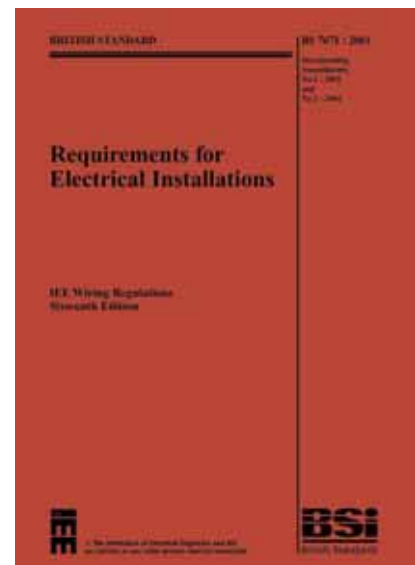
The removal of barriers to trade in the electrical appliance sector has been one of the successes of the common market. Older readers will perhaps remember the allegation that all video recorders imported into France had to go through one particular customs post in Poitiers. This was presumably never true but it expressed the frustrations that manufacturers wishing to export experienced.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### Retrospective?

No. It is important to note that the cable colour changes are not retrospective. There is no intention that existing installations will need to be rewired or remarked with the new cable colours or the alphanumeric marking system. Extensions or alterations to existing installations may be carried out in the old cable colours or in the new cable colours until 31st March 2006. What is required is that, except where there is no possibility of confusion, unambiguous marking shall be provided at the interface between conductors identified in accordance with the harmonised arrangements and those to previous versions of the Regulations. A new Appendix No 7 is included to provide guidance as to how this should be done. There is a requirement that where alterations or additions are made to an installation, such that some of the wiring complies with the harmonised requirements and some is in the old colours, a warning notice shall be affixed at or near the appropriate distribution board. For domestic installations the warning would be adjacent to or on the consumer unit at the origin.

Identification by colours and numbers Installations commencing on site after 31st March 2004 and before 1st April 2006 may be installed in accordance with Amendment No 2 or Amendment No 1, i.e. they may use



To order IEE publications, use order form on page 16

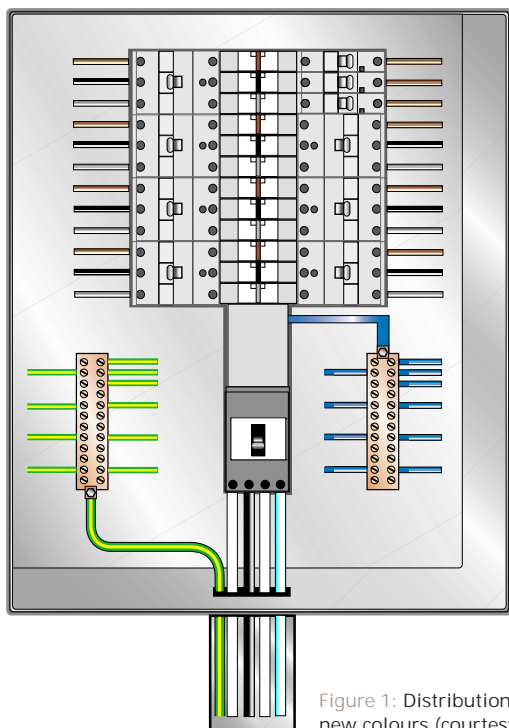


Figure 1: Distribution board – new colours (courtesy of NICEIC)

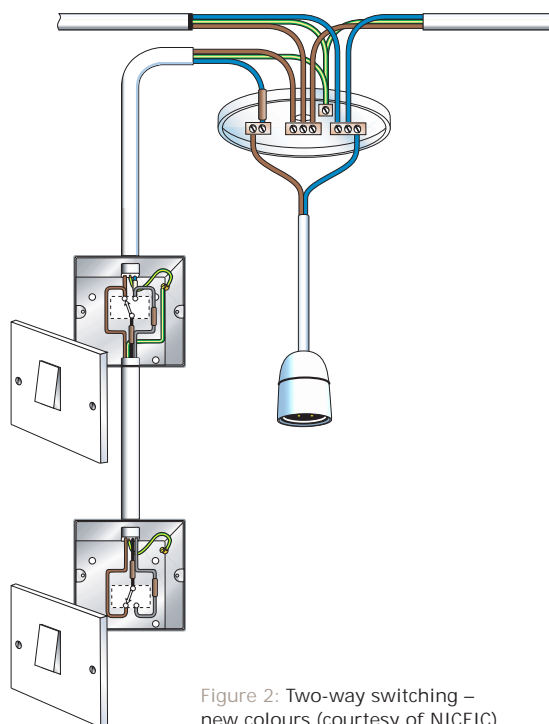


Figure 2: Two-way switching – new colours (courtesy of NICEIC)

the new harmonised colours/marking or the old colours, but not both. Installations commencing on site after 31st March 2006 are required to use the new harmonised colours or marking.

The implementation of changes to the Wiring Regulations has in the past been based on design dates. This Amendment is different; on-site start dates are the key. It is recognised that contractors and their customers will probably want to adopt the new colours in new installations as soon as possible, even if their designs were carried out to earlier versions of the Wiring Regulations.

#### The Electricity Safety Quality & Continuity Regulations

The changes required by the publication of the Electricity Safety Quality & Continuity Regulations are for immediate implementation as they reflect the current law. Copies of the Electricity Safety Quality & Continuity Regulations may be

downloaded from the HMSO website <http://www.hmsso.gov.uk>. You will need to know the year (2002) and Statutory Instrument number (2665). The significance of the Electricity Safety Quality & Continuity Regulations is with respect to the status of BS 7671. The Regulations forbid the use of TNC systems other than in distribution systems, and this a long-standing prohibition in the UK although it was not specifically prohibited in the Electricity Supply Regulations 1989 as amended.

There are many references to BS 7671 in the Electricity Safety Quality & Continuity Regulations and it is of some significance that the Standard is so well recognised in legislation.

#### General amendments

The changes in the section headed General are to clarify existing requirements particularly those for thin walls and partitions. As such, the changes in the general amendments are for immediate implementation.

#### PUBLICATION

Amendment No 2 : 2004 is issued by The IEE and available as a free download from the IEE website. A new version of BS 7671 : 2001 is available for sale, from 31st March, incorporating Amendments No 1 : 2002 and No 2 : 2004. The cover of this new version is brown, an appropriate colour. At the same time a revision of the *IEE On-site Guide* is available, again with a brown cover and also incorporating the requirements of Amendments No 1 and No 2. An Appendix is included in the *On-site Guide*, very similar to Appendix 7 of the Wiring Regulations, summarising the recommendations for marking at the interface between old and new installations. ■

#### WEBSITE REFERENCES

- > The IEE  
[www.iee.org/technical](http://www.iee.org/technical)
- > HMSO  
[www.hmsso.gov.uk](http://www.hmsso.gov.uk)