

Air Conditioning Inspections

Energy Performance of Building Regulations 2007

Background

Did you know that the air conditioning used in your building may account for around a third of your annual electricity costs? If your air conditioning system is older or poorly maintained then it may be using more energy and costing you more to operate than is necessary.

The Government has now introduced new mandatory requirements regarding air conditioning inspections as part of The Energy Performance of Buildings (Certificates and Inspections) (England and Wales) Regulations 2007. The inspections are designed to give building owners and operators important information about the energy performance of their air conditioning systems and highlight possible improvements which can be made to increase efficiency and reduce the electricity consumption, operating costs and carbon emissions of their air conditioning systems.

Implementing some or all of the recommendations should reduce your energy bills for air conditioning and may improve the energy ratings for the building, as calculated for an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) or Display Energy Certificate (DEC).

Will my building require an air conditioning inspection?

Any building where the combined rated cooling output of one or more individual air conditioning units is greater than 12kW will be affected. The requirement for an air conditioning inspection is dependant on the rated output of the system, irrespective of the type of building, so the measures apply to not only commercial and public buildings but also domestic premises.

If your air conditioning system is over 250kW the law requires that you should have had your first inspection by 4th January 2009. If your system has a rated output greater than 12kW but less than 250kW your first inspection must have taken place by 4th January 2011. Further inspections are required every five years.

For all systems first put into service on or after 1st January 2008, the first inspection must have taken place within five years of the date when it was first put into service.

The inspection must be carried out by an accredited air conditioning assessor. Following the inspection, the assessor will produce an advisory report that contains the following:

- An assessment of the overall performance of the air-conditioning system.
- Calculations to assess whether the system is adequately sized or over sized for its purpose.
- Recommendations regarding how to improve the efficiency and reduce the energy consumption and CO2 emissions of the system. These may range from improvements to the maintenance regime, through changes to the way the system is operated, to recommendations on the specification of a new or replacement system.

It is recommended that you keep the inspection report with your ongoing maintenance records in the building log book.

Whose responsibility is it to ensure that the inspections are carried out?

It is the responsibility of the person who controls the operation of the air conditioning system to:

- Ensure an inspection has been carried out in accordance with the requirements and timetable of the regulations.
- Keep the most recent inspection report made by an energy assessor.
- Pass on the current inspection report to any person taking over responsibility of the control of the air conditioning systems.

From 4th January 2011, if the person in charge of the air conditioning system changes and the new person is not given a valid inspection report, it then becomes their responsibility to ensure that an air conditioning inspection is carried out within three months from the date they assumed responsibility of the system.

Complying with air conditioning inspection regulations

Portfolio managers and building owners need to be aware that the lack of an inspection certificate may lead to a fine and certification may be requested by solicitors upon building transactions taking place. Local authorities (trading standards officers) are responsible for enforcing the requirements and they have the authority to issue penalty charge notices for non-compliance and continued non-compliance. The monies raised from fines remain the property of the local authority.

The Government has produced a guide to help users understand air conditioning inspections and what they need to do. This can be accessed by clicking on the link below.

Reducing the Energy Usage and Carbon Emissions from your Air Conditioning Systems:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/airconditioning>