



F Gas Regulations Update: Do you employ air conditioning or refrigeration engineers?

If so, you should read this....

The European Union's F-gas Regulation No 842/2006 became law on 4 July 2006. This imposed obligations on "operators" of equipment that will impact whether your engineers can legally work on equipment containing F Gases. F-gases include HFCs such as R134a, which are the commonest refrigerants in use today. The Regulation aims to minimise emissions of these gases, which affect global warming if they are allowed to escape or leak into the air. Stationary refrigerating and air conditioning equipment containing over 3kg of F gas refrigerant (or over 6kg if hermetically sealed) comes within its scope.

New legal requirements to work on F Gas systems

Operators (defined as the people or organisations that have actual power over the technical functioning of the equipment) are now legally responsible to ensure that:

- Any leaks are repaired as soon as possible by certified personnel
- Refrigerant recovery is carried out by certified personnel during servicing and disposal
- Leak checks are carried out by certified personnel using a specific leak check procedure
- Only certified personnel carry out installation, service or maintenance work
- Records of usage of refrigerants and of servicing by certified personnel must be kept
- The charge size of their equipment is recorded. If it is not already known it must be calculated by certified personnel.

New Training and Certification changes this year

The Commission set the requirements for the certification of personnel to meet the Regulation requirements in December 2007. The existing UK refrigerant handling qualifications (City and Guilds 2078 and CITB) go some way towards this but all engineers will need to undergo a further assessment.

New qualifications are under development by City and Guilds and CITB in association with ACRIB and will be available from July 2008. The Government will be consulting in the early summer on whether an extension of up to three years (to July 2011) should be granted for existing personnel to obtain the new qualification. Special arrangements will be in place for students on existing S/NVQ courses.

Employers should note that until a deadline for personnel to have achieved the new F Gas Certificates is set in UK Regulations, existing certificates C&G 2078 or CITB equivalent will continue to be the only legal national requirement for F gas refrigerant handling.

Company Certification

The companies employing certified personnel will also need to be obtain a company F Gas Certificate by this date. Again, the deadline may be extended until July 2011. If so, companies will need to be issued with an interim certificate by July 2009. The Government will also be consulting on possible arrangements for the issue of interim certificates and the length of the transitional period

Leak checking

The frequency of checking for leaks varies depends on the amount of refrigerant in the system. Details of the requirements and the procedures laid down by the Commission are available from the ACRIB website. If a leak is detected it must be repaired, and a further check must be carried out within one month to ensure that the repair has been effective

Maintenance and service record keeping

The equipment records must include information about the quantity and type of F-gases installed, added or recovered during service or maintenance; system charge size; Identification of the company or technician carrying out servicing and leak checking; dates and results of leakage checks. The records must be made available to the relevant authority on request. A sample record sheet is also available at the ACRIB website.

Labelling of new installations

From 1st April 2008 all new equipment installed must carry a label which details any refrigerant added during installation. The form and contents of the label have been set by the Commission. Further Guidance from ACRIB will be available shortly.

Restrictions on purchasing F Gas Refrigerant

From 4th July 2009 only companies employing certified personnel will be able to take delivery of HFC refrigerant.

Need to find out more?

The Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Industry Board is an umbrella body for trade bodies and professional associations in the refrigeration and air conditioning industry. It has been helping UK government with technical aspects of the regulation and promoting requirements within the industry. The ACRIB website contains links to the Government Department sites (DEFRA and BERR) where you can see the full text of the regulation and download detailed guidance.

See www.acrib.org.uk