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A plumber's guide to building regulations



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A whole host of new building regulations have recently been introduced across England, creating a new set of requirements for the entire building sector to tackle.

To simplify things for the plumbing community, we've worked closely with the professional body for the UK plumbing and heating industry, the Chartered Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering **CIPHE**, to explore these latest changes and to identify how they will affect future work on domestic and non-domestic buildings.

An expert technical manager from the CIPHE, Jerry Whiteley, has highlighted the most relevant building regulations for new builds and existing properties and has even offered his top tips to successfully combat these challenges.



1. Building regulations overview

With a massive push on sustainability throughout the UK, the latest building regulations are designed to improve the overall energy efficiency in buildings. So, the newly approved documents known as parts L, F, O and S introduce requirements that lower carbon emissions and help to prepare for the Future Homes Standard – legislation designed to future-proof new build homes with low carbon heating and impressive levels of energy efficiency by 2025.

England's building regulations

for new homes, extensions, existing buildings and non-domestic buildings are set for big changes this summer (from 15 June 2022). While updates to existing housing stock won't come into play until 2035.



2. Part L impacts most

Out of all the changes being introduced, Part L will have the biggest impact on plumbers as it focuses on the energy efficiency of properties, in particular how to save fuel and power. The most relevant Part L changes which apply to new build properties include:

- ✓ **Reducing carbon emissions in domestic new builds by 31% and non-domestic new builds by 27% by utilising low carbon heating and hot water technology.**
- ✓ **A new maximum flow temperature of 55oC for wet central heating systems in all new builds.**
- ✓ **New non-domestic buildings with a heating or air conditioning system over 180kW will require a building automation and control system.**



For existing non-domestic properties

all heating and domestic hot water boiler systems must include controls that improve energy efficiencies through Part L.

Additionally, to measure energy efficiency, plumbers will have to use the 'primary energy rate' metric. This is a holistic measurement of the efficiency of the heating system, plus the energy used to produce fuel and deliver it to the building, combined with the efficiency of the supplying power station for electricity. This will be used alongside CO2 metrics to assess Part L compliance.

3. Adapt and upskill

Looking at the impact this is likely to have on plumbers, Jerry outlines how to prepare.



“Familiarising yourself with the new building regulations is the best way to understand what’s to come,”

explains Jerry.

“The new regulations pave the way for net-zero and the industry needs to embrace both regulatory and technological change.

“With the Future Homes Standard banning gas boiler installations in new build properties from 2025, and the government’s plans to do the same with existing housing stock from 2035, it’s clear the industry will need to adapt and upskill.”



he adds that



“Being able to update existing housing with the next generation of heating and hot water systems will be just as important as creating suitable new build stock.

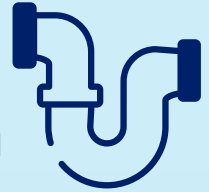
“However, it is a more complicated task as only a tiny percentage of homes in England can have low-temperature heating and hot water systems. Therefore, more extensive works will be needed in the majority of properties.”



Jerry also highlights how plumbers must be open to challenging the traditional way of working to overcome the latest regulations.

“Installers can no longer look at plumbing and heating systems in isolation and instead, should look at buildings holistically.

“To future proof homes, buildings and the industry, we need an army of knowledgeable, competent installers and system designers who understand the intricacies of whole building efficiencies.”



Another step to get ahead, according to Jerry, is to get a clear understanding of the consumer's needs to help break down any barriers preventing them from transitioning their home to the next generation of heating and hot water systems.



“It'll be vital for a plumber to understand the customer's requirements because one size fits all will no longer be suitable,” he explains.

“Consumers won't be familiar with low-temperature heating and hot water systems so the installer will need to fully explain how they operate.

“We as an industry need to dispel some of the myths and distrust around low-temperature heating and hot water systems. While they do include renewables, heat pumps, electric boilers, existing systems also currently include the latest in efficient gas boilers, paired with underfloor heating solutions.”



4. Top tips to stay ahead

With the building regulations in place for all new build properties in England, and more set for the future, Jerry has also shared his top tips and recommendations to plumbers who are navigating the latest requirements.



a: Learn and understand the new regulations

It sounds simple but as installers, you will be on the front line rolling out the regulatory changes, so you must take the time to understand each approved document and how it'll impact the work you do.

We've outlined the most relevant changes above but if you want to digest each part in full, you can access them online [here](#).

b: Understand the future of the industry and invest to upskill

To stay ahead, you will need to understand the path the industry is on and must be willing to continuously upskill to install and maintain a wide range of sustainable technologies.

If you're not sure where to start, the CIPHE provides Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses and access to technical resources for all its members.

You can view the full range of benefits and information on the CIPHE membership online at: www.ciphe.org.uk

c: Communicate with consumers

Communication will be key because consumers will be looking for advice and support on how to insulate their homes to reduce heat loss and heat input while making sure a home isn't affected by poor indoor air quality.

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