

15th January 2002

IMPORTANT CUSTOMER INFORMATION

Dear Sirs,

RE: BUILDING REGULATION DOCUMENT PART 'L'

Many customers have been telephoning us regarding the proposed introduction of the new Building Regulation document part 'L' and the impact it will have on their business.

The introduction of part 'L' will herald the biggest change our industry has ever seen, and in a "nut shell" it means that with effect from April 2002 all window and door installations will be expected to comply with the new regulation. Under normal conditions this would require a replacement window company to notify the local building control office of their intention to replace windows, and submit plans of the proposals along with a cheque for £180. They would then have to wait until the plans had been approved, and agree an installation date with the building control officer, who would then visit the site to confirm compliance with the regulations, and issue a certificate. Not, I'm sure you would agree, the most efficient of processes. In addition, given that installations take place at 1.2 million addresses each year, this would swamp the building control departments who simply would not cope. Delays in getting approvals would be horrendous and the installation process would grind to a halt.

Obviously this is not acceptable to industry, nor to government who want to see as many windows as possible improved thermally to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Something had to be done. The Glass and Glazing Federation, "encouraged" by government, set up FENSA Limited to develop and oversee a scheme whereby installers could self-assess compliance with the regulations, and submit certain information concerning each installation to FENSA who would maintain it on a database for any body, at cost, to access. This could be the building control officer checking on a particular installation; it could be a conveyancing solicitor at the time of purchase of a house with replacement windows, in the same way that an extension would be checked for compliance; it could be anybody with a legitimate interest.

So what exactly is part 'L' all about?

Document part 'L' is the part of the Building Regulations for England and Wales that sets the standards of energy efficiency in buildings. The equivalent section of the Scottish Building Regulations is known as part 'J'. Please note that there are some variations between the documents.

The new document part 'L' comprises two separate sections. L1 refers to dwellings and L2 refers to non-dwellings.

Why are the changes being introduced?

As part of the Kyoto agreement, the UK Government has made commitments to reduce emissions of green house gases, such as carbon dioxide, which are harmful to the environment.

What has this got to do with energy efficient buildings?

Generation of the energy we use to heat, light and cool our buildings accounts for almost half of the carbon dioxide emissions in the UK. Energy efficient buildings help to reduce pollution that damages the ozone layer and conserve dwindling resources of fossil fuels for future generations.

What will be impact on the glass and window industry?

With this new document, the installation of double-glazed units manufactured with standard glass will not longer be acceptable in most situations.

In the case of replacements, all windows and doors have to be double-glazed with a low-E glass, and meet a certain standard of thermal performance or U-value. By windows and doors, we mean the frame and the double glazed unit combined.

For new build, both dwellings and non-domestic buildings, windows, doors and rooflights also have to meet a certain U-value, although compliance is more complicated and further advice should be sought.

What is a low-E glass?

It is a glass which has a thermally enhance coating designed to reflect heat back into buildings, therefore reducing energy wasted.

What is a U-value?

The U-value measures the rate at which heat is lost through a material. The lower the U-value, the lower the amount of energy wasted. U-values are measured in Watts per square metre per degree of temperature difference (abbreviated as W/m^2K).

What U-value do my windows and doors need to meet?

The U-value to be achieved by windows, doors and rooflights refers to the energy efficiency of the frame and the double-glazed unit combined.

The average area standard U-values depend on the frame material of the windows, doors and rooflights.

If the frame material is pvc-U then the required U-value is $2.0 W/m^2K$ if the frame material is aluminium the required U-value is $2.2 W/m^2K$.

Conclusion

It is our understanding that all window and door installations that are signed up after 1st April will need to comply with the new regulations, therefore you should at least allow for the additional cost of low-E glass when pricing up for new installations.

You should definitely register with FENSA so that you can self-certify your own installations, as the alternative of going the building control department route is too horrible, expensive and slow to contemplate. It is recognised that the scheme has to be simple, cheap and efficient or it will all end in tears. The anticipated costs are not bad. £100 plus VAT for the registration plus the costs of a set of Building Regulations (this will ensure that at least you have one copy of the regulations); £200 plus VAT for initial admin/vetting; £100 annual fee; inspection costs are guesstimated to be around £150 per installation on the basis that an inspector would charge in the region of £750 per day and could carry out 5 inspections per day. It has been proposed as a basic rule that 1 to 2% of the installations of each company should be inspected annually, but whether this is to be during or after installation is not yet decided. The inspection rate can be reduced if a company consistently demonstrates compliance. You will obviously need to make an allowance for these charges when calculating your installation price.

Of course, some companies are going to ignore the whole thing and, of course, some householders will be stung when they come to sell their house and find out that they have to get retrospective building control approval for their windows that Fred put in for them, but, over time, the vast majority of installers will either register or go out of business

Fensa are currently accepting preliminary registrations, they can be contacted at the Glass and Glazing Federation on 020 7207 5864 or Fax 020 7357 7458.

We are awaiting an information pack from REHAU which will contain additional information on the overall subject however in the meantime if you have any questions or queries please do not hesitate to contact a member of our technical staff.

Yours faithfully,

Stephen Barker
Director