The full story of new Part L Regs

A revised version of Part L of the building regulations came into force in October of last year. The new Part L will have implications for all sectors of the construction industry, with engineers, designers and manufacturers in the plumbing and heating industry no exception.

The key approach for the new Part L is to achieve a 25% improvement in energy efficiency across all buildings compared to Part L 2006. This is a significant step to achieve the target that government set out in its Building a Greener Future - Policy Statement (July 2007) that new homes will be net zero carbon from 2016.

Buildings account for 43% of UK carbon emissions and are therefore critical to the government’s strategy in meeting the various internationally agreed targets that the UK is signed up to for the coming years and decades, including an obligation to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050.

The new Part L improvements will mean that all new homes will meet the energy requirements of Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3, with further improvements scheduled for 2013 and 2016.

Improvements in the efficiency of dwellings will also go some way to reducing fuel poverty, and in particular poverty in off-gas areas, where householders are forced into more expensive fuel sources.

Limits in design flexibility for building services have been tightened across all buildings, with detailed information provided in revised and the equivalent figure for detached houses still being around 33%.

Part L marks a significant step to achieving the target set out by the government in its Building a Greener Future - Policy Statement.

In practice this will have little effect on unvented cylinders as these products have had at least this level of insulation performance for some time; however, most vented cylinders will need more insulation.

Cylinder Labelling

Many plumbers’ merchant chains and indeed manufacturers hold significant stocks of vented hot water cylinders, resulting in the risk of companies being left with substantial numbers of effectively worthless cylinders if they could not be legally sold. As a result, the Hot Water Association has agreed with government that a period of grace will be given until 31 March to allow these stocks to be sold and installed.

To assist merchants and installers in their choice of products, member manufacturers of HWA have agreed to label their cylinders accordingly to display the suitability of a product to particular buildings.

Cylinders that conform to the higher levels for newbuild have the Part L sticker with a blue surround, while those suitable only for replacement in an existing building show Part L1B with a green surround.

Updated SAP Model

Building performance and efficiency will be calculated by a new version of SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) and also by SBEM (Simplified Building Energy Model) that acts as the National Calculation Model for the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive.

A more accurate prediction of building performance is expected as SAP 2009 uses monthly weather data based on the average record from 1987 to 2006, whereas SAP has hitherto used annualised weather data from 1960 to 1979. The recent rise in the installation of heat pumps is reflected in SAP.

Heat pump performance based on test data is used in the calculations, similar to the SEDBUK data for boilers, encouraging heat pump manufacturers to improve the performance levels of their products. SAP will also allow easier calculation for buildings with multiple fuel sources, which are typically found where renewable energy is used.