

What the law requires of an aircon energy assessor

Under carbon-cutting regulations, air conditioning owners must ensure that their equipment is inspected regularly. This guide outlines the owners' obligations



What is the regulation and what does it require?

The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) places an obligation on air conditioning owners to have systems with an effective rated output of more than 12kW regularly inspected by an energy assessor.

The inspection and report is designed to ensure that building owners or managers are provided with basic information about the efficiency of their air conditioning systems together with advice on how the energy efficiency or effectiveness of these systems might be improved.

Note that one or more air conditioning units within a building controlled by a single person are considered to comprise a single air conditioning system for the purposes of the regulations.

When are air conditioning inspections required?

Inspections must be a maximum of five years apart. The first inspection of air conditioning systems must be carried out as follows:

- For all systems first put into service on or after January 1, 2008, the first inspection must have taken place within five years of the date when it was first put into service.
- For other air conditioning systems, where the effective rated output is more than 250kW the first inspection must happen by January 4, 2009.
- For other air conditioning systems, where the effective rated output is more than 12kW the first inspection must happen by January 4, 2011.
- From January 4, 2011, if the person in control of the air conditioning system changes and the new person is not given an inspection report, they must ensure the system is inspected within three months of the day they assume control.

Why are air conditioning inspections required?

To cut carbon emissions. Having an air conditioning system inspected by an energy assessor is designed to improve efficiency and reduce the electricity consumption, operating costs and carbon emissions for the system.

What does an air conditioning inspection cover?

The inspection examines:

- The refrigeration and air movement equipment and their controls. Access is likely to be needed, for example, to the inside of air handling units or ducts.
- Documentation that helps to understand the systems or indicates the extent to which the systems have been maintained. Evidence of any existing planned maintenance schedule, or of other recent maintenance activities will be sought.
- The energy assessor is also required to estimate whether the system is suitably sized for the cooling loads in the treated spaces and to provide advice on ways in which the performance of the system might be improved.

What is not covered?

- Building owners and managers should not expect the air conditioning inspection to identify hazards or unsafe aspects of the installation, operation or maintenance of systems. These should be identified and addressed by other arrangements.
- The energy assessor should not be expected to fix any problem identified as part of the inspection.

Who is responsible for ensuring inspections are done?

The person who controls the operation of the system is responsible. This is someone who controls the technical functioning of the system, not someone who can just alter the temperature.

The system owner has responsibility to:

- Ensure an inspection has been done in accordance with the requirements and timetable of the regulations.
- Keep the most recent inspection report made by an

energy assessor.

- Give inspection reports to any person taking over their responsibilities with respect to the control of the air conditioning system.

Who carries out the inspection?

An inspection must be carried out by an accredited energy assessor who is a member of an approved accreditation scheme. The currently approved accreditation schemes for air conditioning inspections are run by:

- Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers
- Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors ● EPC Ltd,
- Quidos ● HIC Ltd ● Napit ● Besca.

The energy assessor must provide a written report of the inspection to the person who has control of the operation of the air conditioning system as soon as is practicable after the inspection.

What are the penalties for not having an inspection report?

- Failure to commission, keep or provide an air conditioning inspection report when required to do so by the regulations means you may be issued with a penalty charge notice. The fine is £300.
- The regulation is enforced by local authorities (usually through trading standards officers).
- Trading standards officers may ask owners to provide them with a copy of an air conditioning inspection report. If asked, the owner must provide this information within seven days of the request or be liable to a penalty charge notice.

A copy of an air conditioning inspection report can be requested by an enforcement officer at any time up to six months after the last day for compliance with the obligation to make it available.

Where can I go for further details?

The Department of Communities and Local Government publishes guidance on EPBD regulations for owners of air conditioning. Download it from www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/889248.pdf.

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