



The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive

Air conditioning inspections

LEGISLATION

AC INSPECT L010

The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive is designed to help reduce carbon emissions from buildings. One of its articles states all air conditioning systems over 12kW should be inspected regularly – at least every five years. These inspections will highlight ways to reduce carbon emissions and may also reduce running costs.

The purpose of an air conditioning inspection is to help reduce carbon emissions from buildings. The report resulting from an air conditioning inspection will offer practical advice and guidance about how to increase the efficiency of an air conditioning system, which, as well as reducing carbon emissions, will provide landlords and tenants with a real opportunity to reduce a building's operational costs.

What is the legal requirement?

All air conditioning systems, over 5 years old, with rated outputs over 12kW must undergo regular inspections by qualified energy assessors at least every five years. Systems with outputs of more than 250kW should have had their first inspection before 1st January 2009 and the deadline for those with outputs of between 12kW and 250kW to have had their first inspection was 1st January 2011.

What is the purpose of the inspection?

The purpose of an inspection is to record the operating efficiency of an air conditioning system, such as the size and effectiveness of the plant installed in relation to cooling loads and to examine maintenance regimes and identify operating anomalies. A major part of the inspection is its subsequent report which will offer advice on how improvements in performance can be made – vital information in providing even higher reductions in a building's energy usage. A certificate is required if the building is sold or re-leased.

Who is responsible for ensuring an inspection is carried out?

The person who controls the operation of the air conditioning system is responsible for ensuring an air conditioning inspection is carried out. This is usually the owner of the system, although, if the tenant has undertaken total responsibility for a building and its services then the tenant is seen as controlling the system. Where a Facilities Management company is employed to operate and manage the system, the contract will normally specify who controls the system. It is important to note, however, that even if it specifies that the FM company controls the system, usually the landlord or tenant retains a parallel duty to ensure the air conditioning inspection is carried out. If a tenant has installed the system, then the tenant is responsible.

What is involved in an inspection?

An inspector will examine:

- Documentation and records
- Systems controls and settings
- Plant sizes
- Air handling units and duct work
- Waterborne cooling and air conditioning systems
- Refrigeration plant
- Heat rejection equipment
- Outdoor air inlets
- Building requirements in relation to its operation.

The inspection is non-invasive and will rely on information provided, observation and detailed assessment of the premises.

What are the benefits of an inspection?

The report arising from an inspection will serve as a fresh view of the whole building and will offer recommendations to reduce carbon emissions and running costs which may be possible – both immediate and in the long term, regarding plant life and replacement. It provides landlords and tenants with a genuine opportunity to increase efficiency and reduce running costs of an air conditioning system.

