

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Guidance for Fire Protection Sectors

Guidance: F Gas and Ozone Regulations

Information Sheet FP 5: Qualifications and Certificates

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This was archived in January 2015
For current guidance search GOV.UK for "F Gas"

This Information Sheet provides information relating to the full requirements for qualifications and certification for personnel and companies working on HFC fire protection systems.

A Summary of the F Gas Regulation

For fire protection systems containing HFCs the basis of all personnel and company certification is set out in the EU Regulation on certain fluorinated greenhouse gases (the F gas Regulation, EC/842/2006). A further Commission Regulation, 304/2008 provides extra details and defines the training and certification requirements for fire protection systems.

The relevant EU Regulations as listed above provide the basis for the full minimum certification requirements.

The GB Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases Regulations 2009 (Statutory Instrument No. 261) lists the minimum required qualifications for those working on fire protection systems.

The above regulations are collectively referred to as "the F gas Regulations".

Personnel Requirements: fire protection equipment

Personnel carrying out certain operations on fire protection equipment and systems containing F gases must have appropriate qualifications. End user companies ('operators') have an obligation to ensure they only use contractors and/or in-house personnel with these qualifications to work on their fire protection systems. Personnel need to hold a valid certificate to prove this.

Note that the requirements do not apply to any manufacturing and repairing activity undertaken at manufacturer's sites for containers or associated components of stationary fire protection systems containing F gases.

Personnel carrying out the following activities in regards to fire protection systems must be certified under the EU F gas Regulation:

- Installation;
- Maintenance or servicing.
- Leakage checking of applications containing 3 kg or more of F gases;
- Recovery;

The obligations are described in general terms in Article 5 of the EU F gas Regulation are fleshed out further in the supporting Commission Regulation 304/2008.

1 What does certification demonstrate?

The minimum requirements for qualifications for personnel handling F gases in fire protection systems are described in Commission Regulation 304/2008. Certification will show that personnel that hold a fire protection systems qualification that meets the minimum requirements of EC/304/2008 have the appropriate training to handle HFCs and minimise emissions in fire protection systems. It covers:

- Knowledge of the applicable regulations and standards.
- Necessary competence in:
 - Understanding the requirements of the regulation,
 - The obligations placed on them and the system operator,
 - Emissions prevention,
 - Leakage checking,
 - Installation,
 - Recovery, in this case the safe removal and transport of the containers back to the filling facility, and
 - Handling safely during maintenance or servicing the specific types and sized equipment.

Note: The qualification requirements apply to all personnel working with F gases be they in-house staff or fire protection system contractors.

2 What qualifications are required for personnel?

From 4 July 2010 all personnel wishing to work on fire protection systems containing F gases need to hold a full certificate that meets the minimum requirements for certification of personnel handling F gases as set out in Commission Regulation 304/2008.

Personnel wishing to undertake installation, servicing and maintenance on fire protection systems containing 3 kg or more of F gas need to hold either a:

- Fire Industry Association F-Gas Competency Certificate, or
- Equivalent appropriate European qualification recognised under mutual recognition provisions, see Section 5.2

Contact Fire Industry Association (FIA) for more details:

- Telephone: 0203 166 5002, email: info@fia.uk.com; website: www.fia.uk.com

3 Company Certification Requirements under the F Gas Regulations

All businesses (including sole traders) undertaking work with fire protection equipment must hold a full Company Certificate if they carry out installation, maintenance or servicing on fire protection systems containing F gases.

Defra has named the Fire Industry Association (FIA) as the Company Certification body for the Fire Protection sector. To obtain a full Company Certificate companies will need to prove that:

- 1) They employ appropriately certified personnel in a sufficient number to cover the expected volume and type of activities;
- 2) The necessary tools and procedures are available to the personnel engaged in activities for which certification is required.

For the purposes of Company Certification each separate legal 'person', including sole traders, needs to hold a Company Certificate.

Company Certificates are valid for no less than five years from the date of issue and thereafter should be renewed if the activities mentioned above continue to be performed.

Contact Fire Industry Association (FIA) for more details:

- Telephone: 0203 166 5002, email: info@fia.co.uk; website: www.fia.co.uk

The Company Certification requirements provide a means for the operator to verify the scope and certification of the Company and Personnel it employs to install, maintain and service its fire protection systems that contain F gases by inspecting the Company Certificate issued by the FIA or checking the list on the FIA website.

4 Taking Delivery

The taking delivery obligation applies to an organisation taking delivery of F gases to undertake the activities described in Articles 3 and 4 of the EU F gas Regulation, namely leak checking, repair and recovery. A business involved in carrying out these activities can only take delivery of containers of F gas if it employs relevant personnel that are appropriately qualified and certificated. For many businesses working on fire protection equipment this is not relevant as manufacturing sites are exempt from personnel and Company Certification requirements, as mentioned on page 1.

The qualification obligation only applies to those personnel who are actually using the F gases to carry out the activities in Article 3 and 4 of the EU F gas Regulation. This does not prevent unqualified personnel from physically taking delivery of the F gases, providing that they do not carry out the activities in Articles 3 and 4 of the EU F gas Regulation.

5 Other Useful Information

This section provides further details of issues related to qualifications and certification of personnel.

5.1 Exemptions from Personnel Qualifications

The following exemption applies to trainees:

- Trainees are exempt for up to 1 year, but they must work under the supervision of a technician with a valid F gas personnel qualification and must be enrolled on a relevant training course to obtain an appropriate F gas qualification.

An employer must ensure that the training will enable an employee to carry out relevant work satisfactorily and must retain records for each employee trained (name, training provided, date provided, date of certificate issuance).

5.2 What is the status of a non-UK personnel qualification?

The EU F gas Regulation requires that Member States give mutual recognition to certification of suitable qualifications from other EU countries. This will only apply to a “full qualification” that meets the minimum requirements specified in Commission Regulation 304/2008. In some EU countries the existing qualifications already meet or go beyond these minimum requirements.

5.3 What is the status of a non-UK company certificate?

As with personnel certificates, an appropriate Company Certificate issued in another EU Member State is valid in the GB.

The information in this document is intended as guidance and must not be taken as formal legal advice or as a definitive statement of the law. Ultimately only the courts can decide on legal questions and matters of legal interpretation. If you have continuing concerns you should seek legal advice from your own lawyers.

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