



Background

In order to ensure that electrical installations remain in a safe condition and have not deteriorated, the electrical fixed wiring systems in commercial and residential properties require periodic testing and inspection by a suitably qualified electrician.

The Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) was introduced in 2012 to replace the previously named Periodic Inspection Report (PIR). It covers specific tests and renders a property as being 'satisfactory' or 'unsatisfactory' where electrical wiring is concerned.

The inspection frequency is normally 5 yearly, however, the requirements allow for a shorter inspection frequency due to specific circumstances such as the:

- Type of site or building (see below)
- Exposure of a system to inclement weather
- General condition of the system
- Age of the system.

The EICR contains certain key pieces of information that will identify whether there are further actions that require arranging / completing, for example:

- Whether the system is in a 'satisfactory' or 'unsatisfactory' condition
- Remedial actions are required to bring the system to a satisfactory condition
- Priorities / timescales for completing a particular action
- Limitations of the inspection (areas / circuits excluded) (see below)
- Inspection frequency.

The EICR documents form part of your compliance records and should be stored on William Martin Compliance's Meridian system, or be readily available on site or within any other compliance management system you use.

The document will be checked during your routine health and safety and fire risk assessments and audits, with specific checks on whether the system is in a satisfactory condition, or unsatisfactory with C1, C2 or FI remedial actions (see below).

Checks will also be made for records that adequately demonstrate the completion of any remedial actions, such as Minor Works Certificates provided by the competent electrician.



Periodicity

Electrical wiring should be tested at frequencies of between 1 and 5 years depending on the type of business. For most commercial businesses electrical wiring should be tested every 5 years. For rented residential properties that is also now the case (see below).

However, environments which, for example, are exposed to moisture, dust, extreme temperatures or which are open to the general public, constitute a higher risk and therefore, require more frequent testing, such as installations in public areas of shopping centres. These workplaces require testing every 1 -3 years, with more frequent routine inspections also required.

Typical workplaces or environments which require 1 or 3 year testing includes:

Annually

- Cinemas, front of house (back of house 3 yearly)
- Fish farms, laundrettes, petrol stations
- Medical locations in hospitals or clinics
- Swimming pools and saunas
- Caravan parks and marinas.

3 Yearly

- Theatres and places of public entertainment
- Agricultural or horticultural establishments
- Spa hotels and leisure centres
- Industrial units
- Caravans.



Other Critical Elements Of The EICR

Limitations: You will need to be aware whether any circuits or areas have been excluded from the inspection and test. Where there are exclusions then arrangements will be required to ensure such areas have been checked.

20% Testing Regime: Inspections can take place on an annual basis by inspecting 20% of an installation each year over a 5 year period. However, to convert to this testing regime an initial 100% inspection must be completed in the first year. This approach is useful for larger sites as, with the exception of the first year of the new testing regime, the testing costs and remedial works will be spread out over the testing period.

EICR Observation Codes Explained: EICR Observation Codes will be recorded during the process and coded appropriately in terms of their severity and danger level. It may even be possible that items found to present immediate danger will need to be identified to you straightaway and in some cases switched off and isolated until such time that the unsafe condition is remedied. The observations will be coded as below:

- C1 - There is a danger present, risk of injury and immediate remedial action required.
- C2 - There is a potential danger present and urgent remedial work is required.
- C3 - Improvement is recommended.
- FI - Further Investigation required without delay. These are observations that are departures from the requirements of the current edition of BS 7671 and therefore, need to be recorded separately as FI.

Where an EICR contains either a C1, C2 or FI coded observation then it is not reasonable for the installation to be assessed as 'satisfactory' for continued use and will therefore be categorised as 'unsatisfactory' on the report. However, if there are C3s on the report then it is at your discretion whether any action is taken.

Once the remedial works are completed a minor works certificate must be obtained as it will form part of your due diligence record and obtaining evidence of completed minor works a number of years later is often problematical.

In addition, it should be noted that the date for a new EICR is driven by the date of the original inspection, and not the anniversary of completing the remedials.

Commissioning Certificates: Should be obtained for new electrical systems and for new circuits installed into an existing system. Records should be maintained as part of your compliance record.

Thermal Imaging: Does not constitute a test but may be seen as an additional way of monitoring and maintaining your electrical installation, however, it will not be a substitute for testing. It can be used as an inspection / Planned Preventative Maintenance tool to highlight hotspots due to overloading, loose connection etc.



The Law

EICRs involve Fixed Wire Testing to check the current condition of electrical systems in terms of their design and safety. Such Fixed Wire Testing is required in order to comply with the Electricity at Work Regulations of 1989.

BS 7671:2018 'Requirements for Electrical Installations' (18th Edition) came into effect on 1st January 2019 and any new installations, alteration or additions made from 1st January 2019 onwards will need to comply with the new standards.

In January 2020, the government also announced the much-anticipated introduction of mandatory electrical safety inspections for private landlords. The new regulations, titled The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020, were officially brought in on 1st April 2020.

They apply to all new tenancies in England from 1st July 2020 and will apply to all existing tenancies in England from 1st April 2021. (In Scotland, electrical testing became a mandatory legal requirement under The Housing Act 2014).



At William Martin Compliance we have a nationwide team of experts who can provide compliance advice and risk assessment services to property management professionals.

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