

EU F-Gas Regulation Guidance

Information Sheet 23: Training and Certification Requirements for Stationary Fire Protection Systems

Target audience for this Information Sheet

This Information Sheet is aimed at individuals and organisations that carry out F-Gas handling operations related to Stationary Fire Protection Systems (FPS).

The guidance will also be useful for operators of equipment using F-Gases that need to use certificated companies and technicians for installation and maintenance.

1. Background

This guidance is for organisations affected by the 2014 EU F-Gas Regulation (517/2014). The F-Gas Regulation creates controls on the use and emissions of fluorinated greenhouse gases (F-Gases) including HFCs, PFCs and SF₆. The 2014 EU F-Gas Regulation replaces the 2006 Regulation, strengthening all of the 2006 requirements and introducing a number of important new measures.

Training and certification is an important feature of the F-Gas Regulation as it ensures that technicians understand how to minimise emissions during installation, maintenance and at end-of-life of equipment containing F-Gases.

This Information Sheet describes the requirements that apply to training and certification related to:

- Stationary Fire Protection Systems (FPS) using HFC fluids

Further guidance is available – see Information Sheet 30 for a full list and a glossary of terms.

Training and Certification Requirements for EU F-Gas Regulation

Personnel training and certification for F-Gas handlers is required for:

- ✓ stationary fire protection systems

Company certification for contractors is required for:

- ✓ stationary fire protection systems

Important note: training and certification requirements in the 2014 F-Gas Regulation are based largely on the existing requirements in the 2006 Regulation. Existing qualifications remain valid.

2. Personnel Training and Certification – General Requirements for FPS

Activities covered by personnel training requirements

Personnel involved in certain activities on equipment that contains or is designed to contain F-Gases require an F-Gas handling training qualification. In particular, this applies to:

- Installation
- Leakage checking
- Maintenance or servicing
- F-Gas recovery
- Decommissioning

Sectors requiring mandatory personnel training

The end user sectors for which these training requirements apply include:

- Stationary fire protection systems – this includes equipment of any size that contains an F-Gas fire extinguishing fluid (e.g. HFC 227ea).

Who should hold a personnel training certificate?

All technicians that carry out the activities detailed above on equipment in the sector listed above that contains F-Gases must hold an F-Gas handling certificate. This requirement applies both to in-house staff and to personnel employed by external contractors.

An appropriate qualification for personnel working on these systems can only be awarded by an approved certification and evaluation body. These are bodies that have been approved by the UK Government, as detailed in GB Statutory Instrument 261/2009¹.

Scope of personnel training

The F-Gas Regulation requires all EU Member States to provide suitable training programmes for personnel working in these areas. The training programmes must cover:

- applicable regulations and technical standards,
- emission prevention,
- recovery of fluorinated greenhouse gases,
- safe handling of equipment of the type and size covered by the certificate,
- **NEW:** information on relevant technologies to replace or to reduce the use of fluorinated greenhouse gases and their safe handling.

The detailed scope of training is defined in European Commission Regulations published to support the 2006 F-Gas Regulation. These Regulations are still valid. The relevant training Regulation is:

- Regulation EC/304/2008 Stationary fire protection systems

This Commission Regulation specifies the required practical skills and theoretical knowledge and it specifies the conditions for mutual recognition of certificates between EU Member States.

¹ Note, this Statutory Instrument is being replaced, although it is still in force in the first quarter of 2015. A new SI will replace it during 2015; it is not expected that the list of approved bodies will change.

Validity of existing personnel certificates

Existing certificates issued in accordance with the 2006 EU F-Gas Regulation remain valid, in accordance with the conditions under which they were originally issued.

It is important to note that the training requirements have been slightly extended in the 2014 Regulation, but this will not invalidate any existing certificates. Member States need to ensure that all personnel holding existing certificates have access to information regarding each of the following:

- relevant technologies to replace or to reduce the use of F-Gases and their safe handling,
- existing regulatory requirements for working with equipment containing alternative refrigerants to F-Gases.

It is not yet clear how this requirement will be fulfilled in the UK. It is likely that standard information material will be prepared by experts and circulated to certificate holders via Certification Bodies or training centres.

3. Personnel Training and Certification – Specific Requirements for FPS

UK Personnel Certification Body for FPS

Personnel wishing to undertake installation, servicing and maintenance on stationary fire protection systems containing any quantity 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.

Contact Fire Industry Association (FIA) for more details:

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

4. Company Certification

In addition to personnel certification, contractors working on stationary FPS systems require a Company Certificate.

Activities covered by company certification requirements

Companies (including sole traders) require an F-Gas Company Certificate if they carry out the following activities on stationary FPS equipment containing F-Gases:

- Installation
- Maintenance or servicing
- F-Gas recovery
- Decommissioning

Who should hold a Company Certificate?

A Company Certificate is required by contractors providing services related to stationary FPS. All businesses that carry out the above activities for other parties² require a Company Certificate.

This requirement applies to sole traders as well as limited companies. Each separate “legal person”, including both companies and sole traders, needs a Company Certificate.

Requirements for a Company Certificate

To gain a full Company Certificate, businesses need to show that:

- a) they employ sufficient personnel to cover the expected volume of activities and those personnel hold qualifications that meet the minimum requirements of EC/304/2008 as described above,
- b) they have the necessary tools and procedures available to their trained personnel to ensure that their clients’ F-Gas emissions can be minimised.

UK Company Certification Body for FPS

Defra has named the Fire Industry Association (FIA) as the Company Certification body for the Fire Protection sector.

Contact Fire Industry Association (FIA) for more details:

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

5. Other Related Information

NEW: Purchase of F-Gases

The F-Gas Regulation states that:

“Bulk supplies of F-Gases shall only be sold to and purchased by undertakings that hold the relevant certificates or attestations”

Companies selling F-Gases will need to screen their customers to ensure compliance with this requirement. In most cases the required proof is a Company Certificate. See Information Sheet 19 for further details about customer screening.

Exemption from Personnel Certification

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.

² All contractors working for other parties need a Company Certificate. An end user of FPS equipment that employs its own staff to carry out the above activities on their FPS equipment must ensure their staff have the appropriate personnel certificate, but they do not require a company certificate.

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).

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

The EC F-Gas Regulation requires that Member States give mutual recognition to certification of suitable qualifications from other EU countries. This will apply to certificates that meet the minimum requirements specified in Commission Regulation EC/304/2008. The European Commission has published a list of qualifications that meet the minimum requirements.

What is the status of a non-UK Company Certificate?

A Company Certificate issued in another EU Member State is valid in GB.

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This Information Sheet has been prepared by Gluckman Consulting

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This document can be used and distributed for no charge. It contains the best information available to date and will be updated as more or different information is made available. It does not seek to provide a definitive view on the legal requirements; only the courts can provide such a view. If there are uncertainties you should always refer to the text of the Regulation and seek qualified legal advice.

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