

Health and Safety Executive		Sector Information Minute	
Field Operations Directorate			
CACTUS		SIM 05/2005/08	
Cancellation Date	16/08/2009	Open Government Status	Fully Open
Version No & Date	1: 16/08/2005	Author Unit/Section	CACTUS – Utilities Section

Target Audience:
All FOD staff dealing with gas safety

CHANGES IN THE GAS METERING INDUSTRY

This SIM explains new arrangements for work in the gas metering industry.

- 1 The industry regulator Ofgem published proposals in 2000 to secure effective competition in the provision of gas metering services, previously carried out by the gas transporter, at that time Transco. HSE, Ofgem and the industry worked together to ensure that technical and safety issues were addressed. At HSE's request, Ofgem arranged for a formal risk assessment to determine whether the proposals gave rise to additional risks and how they should be controlled.

- 2 The metering installation includes both the meter and the regulator, which is the means by which pressure in the downstream system is controlled. It is essential that gas appliances operate at the correct pressure to ensure safe gas combustion and hence the regulator is a vital component in the gas safety system. Overpressure can lead to incomplete gas combustion and the production of carbon monoxide.

- 3 An additional recent development is the increased use of medium pressure gas supplies to domestic premises. These operate between 75mbar and 2 bar (low pressure operates at less than 75mbar). Different pressure control arrangements and additional competences are required for medium pressure work.

- 4 A number of new players in the gas industry have emerged with metering competition and many of the key responsibilities lie with the Meter Asset Manager (MAM). This is the company with whom a gas supplier or gas transporter contracts to provide metering services to customers.

- 5 Many of the standards and systems for metering work were contained within Transco's company procedures and there has been extensive work by standards bodies such as British Standards and the Institute of Gas Engineers and Managers to translate those into industry wide standards. CORGI has developed a new ACS for medium pressure metering work.

6 An outcome of the industry work referred to above is the production of an Ofgem 'Code of Practice for Gas Meter Asset Managers' (MAMCOP). The risk assessment concluded that this should be legally underpinned, consequently Ofgem amended gas suppliers' and transporters' licence conditions to require them to use MAMs who comply with the MAMCOP.

7 Governance arrangements for the MAMCOP include two specific actions.

- Ofgem has set up a Scheme Management Board, which will maintain the MAMCOP, agree and effect changes, and monitor its effectiveness. HSE is a reporting observer to this Board.
- Ofgem has appointed Lloyds Register (EMEA) Ltd to assess and audit compliance with the MAMCOP. MAMs are required to register with Ofgem; there is a list of current MAMs on the [Ofgem website](#).

8 The new arrangements went live in July 2004, but British Gas as one of the larger gas suppliers, had introduced new metering arrangements over the preceding 18 months. Inspectors and gas officers alerted the sector to a significant increase in the number of reports of dangerous gas fittings [F2508G2s, reportable under RIDDOR Reg 6 (2)] following metering work. In consequence, a visit was paid with the operational lead inspector to the MAM concerned to discuss competence assessment and the company's investigation, monitoring and auditing procedures.

9 Gas operatives replacing meters will undertake a limited range of duties, i.e. isolate the supply, replace the meter and regulator, purge and relight gas appliances and tightness test the installation. Although they will not have specific appliance competences, their core training enables them to identify most visual defects on appliances and apply the Industry Unsafe Situations Procedure to appliances that are Immediately Dangerous or At Risk.

10 Transco still owns the bulk of gas meters currently in use and will continue to carry out some metering work through its own MAM, Transco Metering Services. The recent sale of some gas networks did not include the meters, which transferred to a Transco subsidiary, but future arrangements are still subject to industry and Ofgem consultation/agreement.

11 The result of the Ofgem initiative is that metering work, including installation/replacement of the regulator is now undertaken by a variety of new companies. Gas transporters have made arrangements to authorise MAMs for this work to meet legal duties. Although all parties have arrangements for work monitoring and auditing, there have been problems with staff turnover in what is seen as an entrance route to the gas industry.

12 The sector has asked that local offices forward copies of F2508G2 reports concerning metering work; this has provided useful information on the effectiveness of the industry arrangements for safe working. It would be very helpful if these reports could continue to be forwarded, as they enable HSE to provide intelligence to the Scheme Management Board, both on the numbers of reports and the issues identified. There is currently no mechanism to enable these reports to be identified on

the ICC database. CORGI has also agreed to provide anonymised information for the Scheme Management Board on the numbers of reports referred to them.

13 Analysis has shown that there are some common faults – e.g. failure to tighten joints, omission of washers, and these have been brought to industry’s attention. One MAM as a consequence is considering the use of pre-assembled packages. Of particular concern are two reports of low-pressure meters connected to medium pressure supplies, which gives rise to dangers both of gas leaks and serious overpressure of the gas system.

14 The contractorisation of metering provision has highlighted some issues about the safety of external low pressure meter boxes, often provided to facilitate meter reading:

- Installation faults include lack of sleeving for gas pipework passing through the cavity wall into the property, and damage to the box structure. Industry procedures have been reinforced to ensure these defects are addressed when found.
- Some external meter boxes are prone to vandalism allowing access to the Emergency Control Valve (ECV). GSIUR does not address this issue and responsibility for rectifying the situation, which may include resiting the meter will generally rest with the building owner, but the gas transporter and/or the gas supplier/meter owner (if different) may also have a role. In practice, the MAM will mend locks/meter boxes where damage is minor and any further work would have to be agreed between the parties involved.

15 Local offices should continue to treat dangerous gas fitting reports in the usual way in accordance with the Gas Procedure, which in future will be contained within the Gas Guidance of the Investigation Procedure.

16 Please contact Utilities section, CACTUS, for further information.

Date first issued: 16/08/2005