

June 2013

CORGI News



Expect more from CORGI

Taking the gas safety message to Parliament

With over 4,000 people still passing through our health service each year with varying degrees of CO poisoning and on average 50 preventable deaths each year, it has never been more important to push gas safety issues at all levels.

We were delighted to be asked to put forward our views and those of the Association of Gas Safety Managers at yesterday's All Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group seminar in Westminster. Attendees were Chief Executives of Housing Associations, government departments, CO charities and MPs. The message was clear - more needs to be done to improve gas safety. Read more about the seminar in the article below.

You can also read, below, the summaries of the other key outputs from the Gas Safety Management Conference 2013 which weren't in the last newsletter. Planning is well underway for the Gas Safety Management Conference 2014 - please put the 29th and 30th April in your diaries.

Please also encourage your local Primary Schools to enter the CO Gas Safety Charity's schools poster competition for ages 10-11. It is never too early to start raising CO awareness issues with children. More details can be [found here](#).

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CORGI & AGSM put views to All Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group

"We need to take big strides forward over the coming months and years to reshape what we do as an industry and how we do it" were the views of the AGSM and CORGI Technical Services at All Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group seminar

At the All Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group seminar on "Improving gas safety in social housing" on 12 June 2013, the views of CORGI Technical Services and the Association of Gas Safety Managers (AGSM) were put forward, highlighting the importance of raising standards, sharing best practice and moving the industry forward.

Claire Heyes, CEO of CORGI Technical Services, spoke on behalf of members of the AGSM who are Gas Managers from Housing Associations across the UK, collectively responsible for over 1.5



million homes. Attendees at the seminar were Chief Executives of Housing Associations, representatives from government departments, carbon monoxide charities and MPs.

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Addressing the leaders of housing associations, who can have a big impact on achieving the industry's goals, Claire urged them to be proactive on the basic safety issues within their organisations. This should include ensuring their workforce is consulted on safety matters and making sure that safety concerns in the workforce are reaching the board.

"As the principle duty holders, you cannot delegate your responsibilities to gas safety," said Claire. "You have to demonstrate that all reasonable steps have been taken in carrying out your responsibilities as senior management. The members of the AGSM are qualified experienced Gas Managers and the Association will have a significant impact on gas safety in this sector. There is much scope for rethinking the way we do things, refocusing resources where most value can be added, ensuring there is adequate education, training and on-going CPD. Creativity, collaboration and new skills will be key to developing long term benefits and moving the industry forward. This in turn will lead to cost savings and increased safety."

"The AGSM is at last providing one voice for the industry, working with its members to provide leadership, innovate and reshape the sector for the benefit of the whole group. We will be developing these plans over the coming months and communicating through our newsletters and events."

Claire also urged organisations to ensure they are getting real value for money from their gas safety contracts. "Tenders for contracts need to have gas safety at their heart and not

just price. In this climate for cost savings, safety mustn't be compromised."

Addressing the specific issue of Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning, Claire continued: "There are still far too many incidents of CO poisoning - it is estimated that around 4000 people pass through the health service each year with varying degrees of CO poisoning and on average we still have 50 **preventable** deaths each year. Whilst CO alarms play an invaluable role in gas safety they are only one of the building blocks to managing gas safety."

Claire presented the seven building blocks to gas safety. "A fundamental building block is regular servicing and maintenance by competent qualified Gas Safe Registered Engineers," said Claire. "You must have rigorous policies and procedures in place, including for Quality Control. It is crucial that you have full compliance with the latest legislation and best practice – ensuring that your Gas Managers are part of the key professional bodies such as the AGSM will play a key role. And finally, you need to ensure that all frontline housing staff and tenants have a high level of education and awareness of CO issues. A CO alarm is just one final measure to round off the holistic approach to CO poisoning."

The seminar also addressed the key issue of Landlord's Gas Safety Records and delegates discussed the alarming number of cases of cookers being the cause of CO incidents.

The art of effective communications

With welfare reforms and budgetary pressures placing an added burden on Gas Managers, Jean Dowson from the Chartered Management Institute spoke to the Conference about the importance of developing effective communications skills.

"The ability to communicate effectively is a crucial skill," said Jean. "Whether this is an upward communication to Board members or a routine communication to your engineers or other staff, getting your message across can be the key to preventing accidents or fatalities as well as ensuring successful outcomes to what you want to achieve."

Jean asked the delegates to carry out exercises to demonstrate listening and speaking skills taking into consideration visual, auditory and kinaesthetic influences – how we make decisions

based on what we see, what we hear and our gut feelings on what is right.

"We aren't all the same," continued Jean. "We all react to information in a different way and we all need to receive information in a different way in order to be able to deal with it and understand it. Developing an understanding of these communication methods and adapting your style to suit the recipient and circumstances can be the key ensuring you get the successful outcome that you want."



Managing gas safety in new builds

The issues surrounding the management of gas safety in new builds were discussed by Lee Carter, Technical Safety Manager at CORGI Technical Services, addressing concerns raised by Gas Managers as well as the experiences encountered by CORGI during inspections.

“It has become clear that Teams working on new developments appear to be working in isolation without adequate inspections and checks. Completion certificates might be produced by a registered gas contractor, but at handover of the building, defects have been identified which social housing providers are having to rectify at further cost. Control of this work by the social housing providers appears to have diminished and for mixed tenure schemes there seems to be no clear processes for maintaining gas safety in void periods.”

“The issue of Flues in concealed Voids has drawn attention to the practices in new builds,” continued Lee. “Clients must have a presence during building work to undertake a level of Gas Quality Control. There need to be regular inspections during



the work and at final sign-off. Be Proactive – ensure the work is being carried out by properly qualified teams, hold regular monthly progress meetings, carry out on-going inspections and ensure that you have gas technical representation.”

“Social Housing providers have a joint responsibility for the new buildings – Health and Safety responsibilities are defined by criminal law and cannot be passed from one party to another.”

Focus on Renewables

Putting forward an option for producing a renewable heat source in houses, David Matthews of the Ground Source Heat Pump Association explained the benefits of using a ‘Heat Pump’.

“Ground Source Heat Pumps are safe and reliable,” said David. “There is no danger of an explosion, CO poisoning or scalds. They are good value, low carbon and run very quietly. Ground source heat pumps use pipes which are buried in the garden to extract heat from the ground. This heat can then be used to heat radiators, under-floor or warm air heating systems and hot water in a home.”

“A ground source heat pump circulates a mixture of water and antifreeze around a loop of pipe – called a ground loop – which is buried in the garden. Heat from the ground is absorbed into the fluid and then passes through a heat exchanger into the heat pump. The ground stays at a fairly constant temperature under the surface, so the heat pump can be used throughout the year – even in the middle of winter.”



St Vincent's Housing Association leading the way in Renewables

Setting up an innovative renewables scheme for tenants, Charlie Norman, CEO of St Vincent's Housing Association described how 'St Vincent's Cosy Home' was receiving support from tenants and staff.

"Our Cosy Home project is our flagship for sustainable homes," said Charlie, "and takes a retrofit approach to our older properties. It incorporates fresh air features, water saving devices, energy saving measures, insulation and eco-gardens. It aims to help tenants save money, get out of fuel poverty and cut CO2 emissions. The savings for the tenant are considerable and we believe that we have created a 'Code' for sustainable homes which could apply to all properties, ensuring that they are fit for the future."



Securing standards in gas safety

The Standards Officer for the Institution of Gas Engineers and Managers (IGEM), Nick Cowling, spoke to the Conference about some of the key legislation and standards to which all gas work should conform. With the Health & Safety at Work Act, Gas Safety Regulations and Building Regulations forming the key standards to be met, he also talked about the IGEM standards that had been around since the 1960s and were widely respected.



Nick highlighted three key areas for particular consideration for which the IGEM had set specific standards - Gas in Flats, Domestic Testing and Shared Flues. With existing installations for Gas in Flats, several key requirements were identified in IGEM/G/5, including responsibility for plant location, ventilation, jointing, external stresses, valves, and meter locations.

For Domestic Testing, standard IGEM/UP/1B addressed specific situations such as where there is a known suspected gas escape, or complete loss of supply pressure or the routine testing of existing installations. The Standard for Shared Flues, IGEM/UP/17, was a new standard whose scope included traditional and new flue systems, their use and maintenance and the connection of appliances.

Nick concluded by highlighting the importance of adhering to these standards to ensure the highest level of safety in flats. More details about all IGEM standards can be found on their website.

Focus on Fire, Legionella, Asbestos and Electrical

Having an awareness of responsibilities and legal requirements in other non-gas related areas is crucial for Gas Managers, as their work will often be closely linked to Fire, Legionella, Asbestos and Electrical issues.

Ian Softley, Managing Director of SaferSpaces focused on Asbestos, Fire and Legionella and commented: "Asbestos is the biggest occupational health problem ever encountered in the UK. Over ten million tonnes of asbestos have been imported into the UK and over three million buildings still contain some form of asbestos. Currently over 4,000 people a year die from asbestos related diseases and is expected to peak at over 5,500 per year by 2025. These deaths are caused by breathing in the microscopic fibres released from asbestos-containing materials when they are disturbed. Anyone who invades the fabric of the building, services or equipment is at risk of disturbing asbestos. Working with these buildings is covered by Health & Safety legislation, Asbestos Regulations and many guides to dealing with these situations, with which you should be familiar."

"All buildings should have a Fire Risk Assessment," continued Ian, "both for normal occupancy and for any temporary operations that are being carried out. When you install a new heating system, the Fire Risk Assessment must be reviewed and any changes in risk must be considered at the planning stage."

Ian also discussed the impact of Legionella, which is a bacteria normally found naturally in Rivers, Lakes and Soil: "There are 300 – 400 reported cases a year in the UK, although only about 1% of those exposed to infectious levels actually catch the disease. Once admitted to hospital, about 30% of cases are fatal. When infected water droplets become airborne, they can be inhaled deep into the lungs where the bacteria grow and create a Pneumonia-like illness in the lungs. The key requirements and actions are to have comprehensive risk assessments, a monitoring and control programme and comprehensive records. The temperature of water in systems can play a key role as Legionella will only grow between 20 and 50 degrees C."

The speakers also tackled the hidden perils of poor electrical installations. "The average age of distribution assets is 40 years with the recommended period for re-wires being 25 years. The assets degrade over time so inspection and testing is essential."

Describing the numerous pieces of legislation that effect electrical installation work, the speakers highlighted The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 which stipulated that all electrical installations need to be safe to use at all times – failure to comply can result in prosecution. "You need to know your asset base. You need to check the competence of suppliers and check documentation against real life installations. All buildings need an Electrical test certificate or an Electrical Installation Condition Report, which will highlight any remedial work that is needed. Work should only be carried out by registered or approved electricians and you should check that your Contractors have the correct qualifications for the work."



“In-house staff vs contractors” – the Debate

“Keeping the work in-house gives us greater control, keeps the responsibility within the organisation and gives VAT savings,” were the opening arguments in favour on In-house staff.

“Contractors allow us greater flexibility, have a wider variety of skills and give a level of impartiality that allows us to carry out our responsibilities in a much better way,” were the counter arguments by those in favour of Contractors.

The debate was chaired by Keith Simpson of Just Housing (UK) and he was joined by Paul Ruston of Nottingham City Homes and Dave Horrocks of Eastland Homes who were in favour of In-house staff for gas safety work. Alan Keers of Red Kite and Richard Hazard of Lambeth Living put views forward in favour of using Contractors.

“Not all organisations are suited to run internal teams,” argued those in favour of contractors. “A third party auditing programme gives us the specialist skills and experience that we need. Contractors can provide better records, more flexible resources, can cover a wider geographical area and don’t leave us with any Union issues.”

Those in favour of in-house staff disagreed claiming that greater management control was ensured by keeping key roles within the organisation. “We are willing to invest in training our staff and in providing the latest technology and believe that gives a safer service.”

Questions from the floor also suggested the views were divided, and many stated that they used both in-house staff and contractors, using contractors to add skills that they were missing or to carry out specific tasks for them.



Bill Paton closes Conference and looks to the future

“This has been a very successful first Conference and with your feedback and guidance we will look forward to building on that success with next year’s event,” said Bill Paton, Joint CEO of CORGI Technical Services as he closed the Gas Safety Management Conference 2013.

“This Conference is the realisation of a vision by Claire Heyes, Joint CEO of CORGI Technical Services,” continued Bill. “It was set up as a new and exciting event to bring people together, share best practice and help to move our industry forward with one vision for the future. It has certainly done that today, so thank you to Claire for having that vision.”

Bill highlighted the very moving talk by Stacey Rodgers as a key moment to bring home the important messages of gas safety. Her son Dominic died in a Carbon Monoxide incident and she has been a passionate campaigner for a raised awareness of CO poisoning ever since his death.

“I must thank the sponsors without whom this wouldn’t have been possible, the CORGI Team who have done an incredible job and the delegates, who engaged with great enthusiasm and have helped us to look to the future.”

“Thanks you to everyone for coming and I shall look forward to seeing you at next year’s event,” concluded Bill.



Events

Level 2 VRQ in Gas Safety Awareness in Social Housing

Course dates for 2013 for the new Level 2 VRQ in Gas Safety Awareness in Social Housing:-

- Yorkshire – 13 June
- Bristol – 2 July
- Newcastle – 3 July
- Cardiff – 17 Sept
- North East – 19 Sept
- Liverpool – 17 Oct
- Birmingham – 23 Oct
- Leeds – 26 Nov

Details about how to book on the course can be found at:-

www.corgitechnical.com or by contacting **training@corgitechnical.com** or 01256 548040

Level 4 VRQ in Gas Safety Management for Social Housing

Course start dates in 2013:-

- Yorkshire – 13 June
- Birmingham – 10 July
- Manchester – 18 July
- Portsmouth – 11 Sept
- Glasgow – 19 Sept
- Cardiff – 24 Sept
- North East – 22 Oct
- London – 20 Nov

Level 4 VRQ in Gas Safety Facilities Management

Course start dates in 2013:-

- North West – 18 July
- Manchester - 10 Sept
- London – 1 Oct
- London – 16 Oct
- Glasgow – 19 Nov
- Cardiff – 4 Dec

In-house courses can also be run on request.

Your Feedback is needed!

We very much value your feedback on the VRQ courses, the Gas Forum events, the AGSM and any other aspects of the services we are providing. Please make comments using this email link **tellus@corgitechnical.com** and we will follow up.



Dates for next Regional Inter-Authority Gas Forum events

Glasgow

Wed 10 July 2013
Wed 20 Nov 2013

North East

Wed 30 Oct 2013

Midlands

Wed 26 June 2013
Wed 13 Nov 2013

Yorkshire

Wed 16 Oct 2013

London

Wed 3 July 2013
Wed 27 Nov 2013

South West

Wed 18 Sept 2013

Contact us at **gasforum@corgitechnical.com** if you would like to attend.

Corgi in the News

Nottingham City Homes first to complete CORGI Accreditation – 31/5/13

– www.heatingandventilating.net **Read Further**

– Heating and Plumbing Monthly **Read Further**

Industry News

Care home provider fined after dangerous gas work put lives of elderly residents at risk - HSE 29/5/13.

Read Further

Illegal gas work leads to court for Swindon builder - HSE - 10/6/13. **Read Further**



CORGI Technical Services supports Gas Safety Week on 16-22 September 2013

Badly fitted and poorly serviced gas cookers, fires and boilers can put you at risk from carbon monoxide poisoning, gas leaks, fires and explosions. Just like you get your car MOT every year, you should have your home gas safety checked every year by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

CORGI Technical Services Ltd

CORGI Technical Services Ltd has over 30 years of technical expertise in all aspects of gas safety. With comprehensive site audits, training for employees, a new VRQ gas safety qualification, legal advice and expert witness testimony, CORGI works with local authorities, housing associations, private landlords, contractors, energy suppliers and the travel industry, to support them with their gas safety obligations, compliance and continued improvement.

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