



## Case Study - The F-Gas Regulation in Great Britain & Northern Ireland

### Three mechanisms to successfully implement the F-Gas Regulation: F-Gas Support – Refcom – ACRIB

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The purpose of this case study is to show how Great Britain and Northern Ireland has implemented the F-Gas regulation's requirements, and how compliance with this Regulation has been continuously increasing thanks to the development of the **public F-Gas support team, company certification schemes and voluntary industry initiatives**. These three separate mechanisms mutually enforce each other and greatly contributed to better implementation of and compliance with the F-Gas Regulation in GB & NI. It should be noted that Northern Ireland has its own Governance and therefore its own F-Gas Regulation. This legal difference means that the generic term UK has been replaced with GB & NI in this study.

Thanks to these initiatives, now an estimated **80% of known businesses in the contracting chain** affected by the regulation are believed to be compliant.

The work of F-Gas Support, the company certification schemes and voluntary initiatives have proven to be key to promote further compliance and are continuing their efforts in trying to fill the implementation gaps. A short overview of their activities is described below:

#### I- **The UK F-Gas Support Team: awareness raising, training and support.**

In 2008 the UK Government established '[F-Gas Support](#)', which generally oversees the implementation of the Regulation across the different industry sectors. It offers help, guidance, legal interpretations and support to end-users, contractors and equipment suppliers and staff working for regulators. It maintains a central database of contacts that covers all relevant industrial sectors.

As such this initiative is unique and genuinely helps to facilitate implementation and to increase compliance. Even though the F-Gas Support team does not have any enforcement powers, it successfully works to raise awareness on requirements under the F-Gas Regulation through several activities:

- **General Awareness for the sector.** F-Gas Support supports the sector by providing information, writing articles, speaking at conference, etc. It also has a Telephone Help Line, which provides advice about qualifications and company certification, and regularly publishes information sheets (available on [www.defra.gov.uk/fgas](http://www.defra.gov.uk/fgas)). F-Gas Support also has an ongoing programme of visits and information gathering with those organisations that may pose the greatest risk of causing emissions (e.g. supermarkets, large building operators) and the contractors that carry out installation and maintenance work at their sites.
- **Supporting Regulators.** Besides supporting the sector, the team also works to educate and support the regulator through specialised "e-training" material on the F gas and Ozone Regulations and by providing F gas expertise to support any regulatory activity.
- **Other support.** Other types of activities are personnel training, the raising of awareness to hold a valid qualification, specialised technical support and giving of information on company certification.

## **II- Company Certification: a key element of the F-Gas regulation implementation.**

Company Certification requirements are a key element of the implementation of the EC F-Gas Regulations in GB & NI for the stationary fire protection and refrigeration & air-conditioning sectors. Company certification is therefore actively supported by the UK and NI Governments in general, and by the F-Gas Support Team specifically.

4 certification bodies (REFCOM, Quidos, Bureau Veritas and Stroma) have been designated by Defra for the stationary refrigeration & air-conditioning and 1 for the stationary fire protection sector. Between them they have **more than 4,700 companies** (of which REFCOM has 4,323) registered and this figure continues to rise. The majority of these hold Interim Certification and have yet to switch to Full Certification but the numbers making the change are increasing month by month. The certification bodies are required to audit a percentage of the organisations with a full Company Certificate.

### ***The REFCOM Voluntary Scheme as a basis for the certification schemes in GB and NI.***

Well before the F-Gas Regulation came into force, company accreditation already existed on a voluntary basis. Already in 1994, the Register of Companies Competent to Handle Refrigerants ([REFCOM](#)) started providing this type of certification by creating a voluntary scheme. Still existing today, the REFCOM Elite scheme seeks to raise standards by ensuring that any accredited company has properly trained and competent engineers, adequate investment in specialist tools and equipment, an auditable trail of refrigerant transactions across its sphere of operation and is compliant with all other RAC sector specific legislation.

Its specificity is that it relies on a web-based information and application system, therefore reaching out to all stakeholders that install, maintain or service stationary refrigeration, air-conditioning and/or heat pump equipment containing or designed to contain F gas refrigerants.

The UK Government has taken most of the main components of the REFCOM voluntary scheme and used this as a model to set the criteria for meeting the F-gas Regulation's requirements for company and operative certification. It expressively is a 'light touch and low cost' scheme. These GB & NI Governmental Schemes distinguish between businesses wanting interim certification and full certification and asks for different requirements.

## **III- Voluntary industry initiatives to promote certification**

Industry body the Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Industry Board (ACRIB) is working with the UK national sector skills council Summit Skills to help encourage employers make the most of the F-Gas individual certification requirements.

In 2010 they produced a leaflet to explain the various types of individual certification and outline the benefits to be gained for the employer and the individual. The leaflet was endorsed by the two certification bodies approved to offer qualifications in the UK, City & Guilds of London Institute and CITB Construction Skills.

It has been distributed to employers via the delivery network of colleges and independent training providers as well as being made available to individuals joining a voluntary register of certified individuals run by ACRIB. The company certification bodies appointed in the UK have used the leaflet to encourage compliance with the 4<sup>th</sup> July 2011 deadline. Copies of the leaflet are available at: <http://www.acrib.org.uk/>.

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