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Quality control of gas installations and competence assessment of gas operatives in Spain

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Abstract

This paper provides a summary of the quality control activities for installations developed by gas distribution companies according to the safety regulations in force in Spain, and summarises the activities for assessing and certifying the competence of gas installers; of personnel dedicated to commissioning, maintenance, repair and conversion of gas appliances to other gases; and of personnel engaged in performing operations at customer's installations in Spain (emergency services, commissioning of installations and periodic control of installations and appliances).

In Spain, the gas distribution companies are responsible for the following activities: verification of installations prior to commissioning, gas installation commissioning operation, safety control of gas installations and the combustion of appliances through inspection every 5 years and emergency services derived from accidents both on the network and at the customer's installation. Furthermore, customers are bound by regulations in force to have an annual inspection of boilers and heating installations.

The inspections for which the distribution companies are responsible are performed using a checklist of defects that are determined nationally, to which the regional governments can add others locally.

The Distribution Companies carry out the operations for which they are responsible usually through subcontracted personnel complying with qualification requirements, and Sedigas assesses the compliance with these requirements. This certification is being managed through schemes to be certified according to EN-ISO 17024. Sedigas is already notified in accordance with EN-ISO 17024 to certify polyethylene welders for gas distribution networks. The Distribution Companies controls the quality of the personnel engaged in this work using a quality control service through inspection, applying statistical sampling to the tasks carried out by each Subcontractor Company and inspector.

To assess the competence of gas installers involved in the construction of gas installations and the competence of installers engaged in commissioning, maintenance, repair and conversion of gas appliances to different gases of gas appliances (competences established according to regulations), the Spanish Gas Association (Sedigas) and the National Confederation of Installers (Conaif) created the company Conaif-Sedigas Certificación SL. This company will provide certification according to EN-ISO 17024 for the above mentioned scope.

Common training programs have been developed according to the requirements of current regulations, and programs of theoretical and practical exams have already been prepared. The company started its business activities in December 2008, and it will soon be audited by the national accreditation entity (ENAC).

Both Sedigas and Conaif are likewise participating jointly with regional governments on customer communication programs to inform about the need for annual boiler maintenance, about avoiding the modification of ventilation conditions of premises containing gas appliances and about hiring authorised installers for doing installation work and for making changes to installations.