

NEW ACT BAD NEWS FOR COWBOYS

The Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers (PGD) Act 2006 came into full force, finally, on 1 April 2010, laying down the regulations for this industry. The PGD Board gives *Plumbers' Journal* the low-down on the new Act. It all spells bad news for cowboys out there...

Cowboy operators are the curse of lots of trades and professions and often give an industry sector a bad name. Publicity last year about gasfitting work in Auckland highlighted that there may be a potential safety risk if work is not compliant with acceptable standards.

Despite the Board regularly prosecuting people working illegally, the 'grey trade' continues to be a problem.

In recognition of the need to protect the public from shoddy and potentially dangerous work the Government has, through the PGD Act 2006, enabled the PGD Board to put in place a wide range of changes that all competent plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers should be delighted to see introduced.

The major changes of which you need to be aware are outlined below.

Requirement to carry ID card

Under the new rules all licensed people, limited certificate holders and exempt workers must carry an identification card. Consumers will be encouraged to ask to see a practitioner's 'authorisation' card so they can be certain the work will be done competently. The Board is planning a public education campaign which will help raise awareness and make it harder for the cowboys who are not licensed to continue to operate. We have produced a brochure for consumers that you can view on our website. If you would like copies of this brochure to give to your customers, please contact the Board.

“ CARRY IDENTIFICATION CARD ”

As has always been the case, the Board will continue to prosecute people working without a licence. If you know of such people you are able to make a complaint to the Board so that we can take action if necessary.

Name changes

Under the new Act there are still two classes of plumbers and gasfitters, but those previously known as 'registered', are now

described as 'licensed'. This better reflects the fact that the practitioner has a licence to practise, rather than simply being on the Board's register.

The other class previously known as 'craftsman', has changed to 'certifying'. This better reflects the current role of certifying gasfitters, and allows for the possibility of plumbers and drainlayers self certifying in the future. Changing the rules to allow self certification is not the Board's responsibility but we understand that the Department of Building and Housing (DBH) is intending to look into this matter reasonably soon. Of course, Territorial Authority building inspectors continue to be responsible for signing off Code Compliance until self-certification is formally introduced. DBH is currently consulting on this.

A new class for a 'certifying drainlayer' has also been introduced. See page 57 for details of the transition.

“ THE OTHER CLASS PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS 'CRAFTSMAN', HAS CHANGED TO 'CERTIFYING' ”

Limited certificates replaced with 'exemptions'

Limited certificates are now only available for those in formal training (including apprentices). However, workers who are not intending to become registered can continue to work under supervision as they always have. They are described as an 'exempt person' and are issued with a card with the description – for example 'exemption gasfitting under supervision'.

One important change is that if you are a certifying practitioner (previously a craftsman) you are now responsible for notifying the Board and paying the fee for all exempt workers under your supervision.

As has always been the case, these workers must, for their first two years, work in the presence of their supervising certifier, or a licensed practitioner (previously 'registered') who is also supervised by the same certifier. Time served working in the presence of a supervisor under the old limited certificate counts towards the two years' requirement. Of course, even after the two years, the supervisor still must have sufficient control and direction over their work to ensure it is done competently, complies with all regulations, and is done safely.

Limited certificate trainees

Limited certificates for those in formal training remain largely unchanged. However, in the first year these trainees are required to work 'in the presence of' the certifying practitioner who supervises them, or a licensed practitioner who is supervised

by the same certifying practitioner. After one year, the certifying practitioner must continue to supervise the trainee(s).

Testing

Where testing is necessary to meet the requirements of the Building Code or the gas regulations, this testing is the responsibility of the certifying practitioner. Typical tests required are described within the following documents:

- Plumbing G12 and AS/NZS 3500
- Gasfitting NZ 5261
- Drainlaying G13 and AS/NZS 3500

Testing may be undertaken by licensed practitioners and limited certificate holders, but cannot be undertaken by exempt workers. Regardless of who does the tests, the certifying practitioner has ultimate responsibility for ensuring the work is performed competently, and the completed work complies with relevant regulations and legislation.

When gasfitting work requires a gas certificate, the certifying gasfitter supervising the work must issue the gas certificate, using the Board's online gas certification system.

Upskilling – Continuing professional development (CPD)

Being better than the cowboys requires a bit more than just telling customers how good you are. The Board's CPD programme is designed to help you maintain your knowledge and skill levels to keep you ahead of the cowboys. Gasfitters have for several years been required to complete 16 CPD points per year to qualify to hold a licence. Generally one hour of participation in an approved CPD programme earns the gasfitter one CPD point. This continues to be the case for the year to April 2011. In the following year, all plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers will need to earn CPD points. The points required depend on the number of licences held. The following table shows the points that will have to be gained by 1 April 2012 in order to re-license.

“ ALL PLUMBERS, GASFITTERS AND DRAINLAYERS WILL NEED TO EARN CPD POINTS ”

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points required by 1 April 2012

Licence held	Minimum technical points required per licence	Minimum total points
One licence (gasfitting or plumbing or drainlaying)	8	12
Two licences (for example, plumbing and gasfitting or drainlaying)	16 (8 per licence)	20
Three licences (plumbing plus gasfitting plus drainlaying)	24 (8 per licence)	24

Need more information?

We hope that this article has helped you to understand the important changes introduced on 1 April, and that you see them as positive changes. The Board's website (www.pgdb.co.nz) has more information about all aspects of the Board's role and responsibilities, including the guidance documents already referred to, as well as an additional guidance document about testing and supervision. If you can't find what you need, please feel free to email us (registrar@pgdb.co.nz) or phone 04 495 2920.

New brochures explaining changes

To help you understand the changes and how they affect you, the PGD Board has produced a series of brochures, which have been sent to all practitioners. If you missed out or would like more copies you can contact the Board, or visit the website at www.pgdb.co.nz and download information brochures that explain all the changes in plain English. ■





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