



The EU F-Gas Regulation – What does it mean for you?

The European Union's F-gas Regulation No 842/2006 became law on 4 July 2006. Here is a brief summary of its requirements for the UK's Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Industry, which will come into force (unless otherwise stated) on 4 July 2007. (F-gases include all HFC refrigerants, such as R134a, R407C and R410A.)

You the Operator

If you operate stationary refrigeration and air conditioning systems, you must prevent leakage and ensure leaks are repaired as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to arrange the proper refrigerant recovery by certified personnel. If you operate other products including mobile equipment, appropriately qualified personnel must be used to recover gases as long as this is technically feasible and not disproportionately costly.

You must ensure that only certified competent personnel carry out leakage checks, and that these are done to the laid down schedule. The European Commission (EC) will establish standard leak checking requirements. Where leakage detection systems are used on large systems, these must be checked at least once annually. You will need to maintain records of all refrigerants in equipment with a charge of 3kg or more (if hermetic, 6kg or more). You must keep specific records identifying equipment containing a charge of 30kg or more.

The Contractor (New-Air (Southern) Ltd)

Companies and personnel involved in installation, maintenance, servicing, containment and recovering activities will be affected by minimum requirements for training and certification. By 4 July 2008 at the latest, the Government will establish training and certification requirements based on EC requirements. It is hoped that these will be linked to existing requirements relating to the handling of ozone depleting refrigerants (e.g.R22). Special interim requirements will be put in place between 4 July 2007 and 4 July 2008 regarding minimum training requirements. All EU Member states have to establish reporting systems to acquire emission data where possible. Contractors (e.g. New-Air (Southern) Ltd) will have to help implement these systems.

Contractors will be able to accept some of the operator's responsibilities under an appropriate contract.

Review

The EC will review requirements by the end of 2007 and optionally propose legislation by the end of 2008, to extend containment requirements to transport refrigeration. The EC will report within 5 years on experience of the Regulation. If the Regulation is not showing reduced emissions, further restrictions are likely.

All users of air conditioning, heat pumps or refrigeration should read this.

The European Union's F-gas Regulation No 842/2006 became law on 4 July 2006. This imposes obligations on "operators" of this equipment from 4 July 2007 that you should know about. F-gases include HFCs, which are the commonest refrigerants in use today. The Regulation aims to minimise emissions of these gases, which affect global warming if they escape into the air.

User responsibilities

“Operators” are defined as people or organisations that have actual power over the technical functioning of the equipment. The legal responsibility for compliance with the Regulation lies with the operator. Any equipment small enough to plug in rather than have to be permanently wired is likely to be excluded from the requirements, other than an overall requirement to prevent leakage and to repair any leaks as soon as possible.

For stationary refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pump units over 3kg charge (6kg if hermetic), operators must:

- Prevent leakage, and repair leaks as soon as possible.
- Arrange proper refrigerant recovery by certified personnel during servicing and disposal.
- Carry out leak checks to the schedule shown below.
- Ensure that only certified and competent personnel carry out leakage checks.
- Maintain records of refrigerants and of servicing.

For non-stationary equipment (e.g. mobile units on trucks) any other products containing F-gases, operators must ensure that appropriately qualified personnel are used to recover gases, as long as this is feasible and not excessively expensive.

Leak checking schedule

The checking (to be done in a way to be defined in detail by the EC) varies depending on the amount of refrigerant in the system, as follows:

- At least once annually for applications with 3kg or more of F-gases (unless the system is hermetically sealed, in which case this goes up to 6kg).
- At least once every six months for applications with 30kg or more of F-gases.
- At least once every three months for applications with 300kg or more of F-gases.
- Leakage detection systems must be installed on applications with 300kg or more of F-gases, and when these are in place, checking requirements are halved.
- If a leak is detected and repaired, a further check must be carried out within one month to ensure that the repair has been effective.

Maintenance and servicing records

Operators of all stationary systems containing 3kg or more of F-gases must maintain records including:

- Quantity and type of F-gases installed, added or recovered.
- Identification of the company or technician carrying out servicing.
- Dates and results of leakage checks, specifically identifying separate pieces of equipments containing 30kgs or more of refrigerant.

It is the operator's responsibility to ensure that the relevant servicing personnel have obtained the necessary certification, which shows that they understand the regulations and are competent.

How to know how much F-gas in the system

The system should be labelled with this information, but if not, there is an estimate calculator on the Defra / DTI website.

Information taken from literature received from the ACRIB in association with HRP and supported by the dti and defra. Further details are available at www.dti.gov.uk/innovation/sustainability/fgases/page28889.html and www.acrib.org.uk