



The Final Count Down to Display Energy Certificates 1st October Deadline

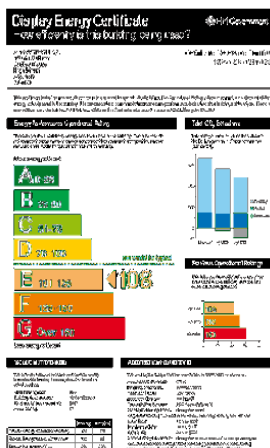
By Philip Emsley, Director and Chief Operating Officer at Green 2020 Ltd

If there have been any government initiatives that have really tested the patience of energy and facility managers in the public sector it is the 1st of October deadline for displaying Display Energy Certificates (DECs) in public buildings.

Public buildings over 1,000 square metres will need to display one of these certificates by the 1st October 2008 or be at risk of receiving a fine.

What is a DEC?

Display Energy Certificates (DECs) show the actual energy usage of a building, and its Operational rating, and provide information to the public on the energy efficiency of a building. DECs need to be displayed in public buildings such as libraries, hospitals, schools, universities, swimming and leisure facilities, public golf clubs and council buildings. The certificate must be accompanied by an advisory report that will make specific recommendations on how to improve the energy efficiency of the building although the recommendations do not have to be implemented at this stage.



The certificate will show both an asset rating and an operational rating. The asset rating shows the energy estimated to meet the needs of the building based on its function and the operational rating shows the amount of energy consumed in the previous 12 months.

Challenges being faced by public sector

The whole concept of a DEC is warmly recognised and encouraged, the challenge has been getting to the point where there are certified auditors accredited to issue DECs and software tools that make it easy to produce the certificates and both have come very late in the day.

The original target date for the legislation to come in was the 1st April 2008 but that slipped to the 1st October 2008. Pundits have suggested that the date will move again, but this has been categorically denied and the date remains fixed.

So the problem is that there are tens of thousands of public buildings that need DECs, County Councils have on average 300 to 400 buildings to certify but with only a handful of DECs certified energy auditors available this is going to be a mammoth task.

It has been suggested that there will need to be at least 4,000 qualified auditors to able to issue DECs but with only a handful currently qualified new challenges are looming on the horizon. For public sector bodies to meeting the deadline energy managers have started enrolling on courses to be able to issue DECs but some have identified an issue around personal liability. Some blue light energy managers feel that the personal liability of getting it wrong is currently too high and that outsourcing it to accredited auditors is a much safer option as external auditors will have energy assessors professional indemnity cover and are more likely to ensure that the work is done to a high standard because of the liability issue.

The other issue is the expected number of small companies that will claim to be able to offer DECs certification and some are already offering the remote provision of a certificate without having an energy auditor visit the building. Green 2020 believe that it is important for an auditor to be able to visit the building to be able to prepare an accurate advisory report and without seeing the energy profile of a building an accurate report cannot be produced.

What are the penalties for not showing a DEC?

Failing to display an energy certificate will result in a £500 fine and failing to have a valid advisory report will result in a £1,000 fine. A maximum of £5,000 could be imposed depending on the breach.

A Display Energy Certificate needs to be renewed each year and the work to conduct the renewal should still be done by a certified auditor. It is easy to go through the motions of displaying a certificate but the whole intention of the scheme is to encourage building and energy managers to actually reduce the carbon footprint of the building year on year until it reaches a sustainable level of efficiency.

At Green 2020 we apply a three stage energy efficiency process that more often than not savings of 10% to 15% in the first year without capital investment and savings of 35% are typical over three years.

Next Steps

We would suggest any organisation wanting to comply to the 1st October deadline that they book one of our certified auditors as soon as possible. Schools, colleges and Universities should aim for the summer holiday period to get the onsite audits and reports completed. Organisations will need to provide reasonable accurate energy consumption data to help the auditor provide the report and

those with energy monitoring and targeting systems such as T-Mac provided by Green 2020 will find the job much easier and much faster.

Green 2020 is a supply chain carbon management specialist and has a team of certified energy auditors and DECs assessors. To find out more or book a DECs assessor call 01223 714928/ 0207 193 7341 or email energycertificates@green2020.co.uk