



## **Risk classification made simpler- The appliance is either safe, or it's not.**

On 1<sup>st</sup> July this year, the Gas Industry Unsafe Situations Procedure (GIUSP) Edition 7 came into force. This follows an extensive review period involving relevant industry experts and organisations. The review was in part prompted by the tragic death of Katie Haines in February 2010 from Carbon Monoxide poisoning. Her boiler had serious safety issues with the appliance flue and ventilation. Indeed a registered gas operative had correctly classified the appliance “At Risk” some months earlier, meaning it was deemed that it may constitute an immediate danger in future. At the Coroner’s inquest into Katie’s death it was accepted that a mere change in weather conditions caused the situation to deteriorate to one of immediate danger. Failure of the appliance flue resulted in toxic CO spilling into the premises.

The Coroner expressed surprise and concern at how an “At Risk” appliance could become “Immediately Dangerous” with no human intervention and felt that the consumer may not fully understand the potential consequences they face in a similar situation. In a narrative verdict, he said “if there was any risk, then the gas appliance should be condemned”.

A working group convened to review the procedure with the aim to clarify the safety message received by the customer and additionally simplify the reporting process for the engineer. It culminated in a public consultation on the document last year where 425 comments were received ahead of publication this summer.

The GIUSP is an industry document designed to assist registered gas operatives with identifying common unsafe situations and providing guidance on “classifying” them. This in turn should lead them to take the correct course of action in dealing with any issues. Edition 6 of the procedure, as with its predecessors included examples of ‘Not to Current Standards’ (NCS) situations, where by definition these are not “Unsafe” but not in compliance with current standards and codes of practice.

Edition 7 has removed reference to such situations to simplify the use of the document for gas engineers and ensure any safety message to the customer is not diluted with reporting of minor defects not constituting a danger. Engineers are free to advise customers of such issues but this should be viewed as a separate process and be useful information for the customer based on the need and likelihood of any changes being made.

It was decided early on in the review process that where an unsafe situation existed, it would still be classified “At Risk” (AR) or “Immediately Dangerous”(ID) as appropriate but that the end message for the gas user would be simple - “DANGER, DO NOT USE”.

The actions to be taken with an AR or ID remain the same, with the engineer seeking to turn off or disconnect the relevant appliance or installation respectively. As before, the message in either case to the gas user will be one of "DANGER, DO NOT USE". There is a requirement to place a label worded to this effect in a suitable and visible position. Extensive research was carried out to finalise a design for the label including consumer focus groups and the HSE's behavioural scientist. The reporting engineer should give a detailed explanation of any faults and ensure the customer is fully aware of the dangers present and notified in writing with a suitable warning notice.

There are At Risk situations listed in the procedure where following the traditional guidance to "turn off" makes no difference to the level of safety remaining. For example, an exposed (not installed in a GRP sleeve offering UV protection) low-pressure PE service pipe above ground would be made no safer by turning off the ECV downstream. The engineer would still be required to notify the customer of the issue in writing and provide a full explanation and recommend remedial work. In this example the ESP would need to be contacted. Importantly, the installation would not need to be labelled as the "DANGER, DO NOT USE" message would be of no benefit as the service pipe remains "live" allowing no immediate improvement to safety.

A further amendment includes a streamlined process for the ESP to follow when attending consumer properties. This has seen the removal of the "Concern for Safety" category historically used by the ESP. The change allows consistent implementation of the safety message by different sectors of the industry.

The procedure takes the legal status of "guidance" and aims to help the gas engineer discharge their legal duties under the relevant legislation (e.g. HASAWA 1974, GSIUR 1998). Engineers are free to deviate from the procedure using sound engineering judgement but in following its recommendations will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. GIUSP appears on the Gas-Safe Register's normative document list and may be cited in a court of law as common industry practice when dealing with Unsafe Situations encountered. An engineer would need to prove that alternative actions taken provided at least an equivalent level of safety.

GIUSP Edition 7 can be viewed on the Gas-Safe Register website by logging into your official engineer account. When printed the document is uncontrolled so always ensure you review the latest version via the website as it may change with further review. Although current, the Gas-Safe Register will not be inspecting to the requirements of GIUSP edition 7 until 1st July 2016. It is recognised this is a significant change for the industry and an appropriate lead-time is required to communicate and publicise the changes made. Engineers are free to adopt the procedure immediately and are indeed encouraged to do so.

With the new procedure in its infancy it will be some time before we can gauge its effectiveness but it is hoped that with industry support customers will be fully aware of any dangers they may face in their homes and businesses caused by faulty gas appliances and installations. The competent gas engineer plays the vital role of an expert with the knowledge to identify and repair or report unsafe occurrences. The latest procedure puts safety at the very heart of our industry and aims to avoid the terrible consequences we see when things go wrong.

Of course, competent gas engineers will only be able to identify unsafe situations through periodic inspection when invited into customers' homes in the course of their work.