



F-GAS Support, the body set up by Defra to provide guidance for companies and individuals in achieving F-gas certification, has confirmed reports that over 50% of UK air conditioning and refrigeration companies are now trading illegally.

AREA president and ACR News blogger Graeme Fox first highlighted the possibility on Friday that on the eve of the July 4 deadline only 50% of companies had upgraded to the mandatory full certification leaving around 2,500 companies trading illegally.

F-Gas support today confirmed that this was indeed the case and that it would now be working with its certification bodies to identify and follow up organisations that previously held an interim certificate and should now hold a full certificate.

With around 4,700 companies holding either an interim or full certificate, recent estimates suggest that around 300-800 companies hold neither.

The UK's overall position compared to several other European countries was, however, seen as reasonably positive according to F-Gas Support project manager Jo Gradwell.

"The UK is actually doing well compared to several other member states in the EU in terms of having domestic regulations in place and certification/qualification schemes up and running," she said.

"Regarding personnel numbers, the most recent industry estimates suggest the total size of the workforce in the UK is approximately 18,000-20,000. The latest updated figures towards the end of June suggested about 18,700 were fully certificated."

Personnel who do not now hold a full Personnel Certificate and organisations who do not hold a full Company Certificate are committing a criminal offence.

"The Local Authority or the Environment Agency is the regulator for the F gas Regulations. A regulator has a range of options at its disposal to protect the environment and will use the option or options it believes will best ensure compliance with these Regulations, including prosecution," she said.