

— ADMIRAL —

HOMESPACE

IMPARTIAL WINDOWS ADVICE

WINDOWS AND DOORS ADVISORY

All replacement glazing comes within the scope of the Building Regulations. Anyone who installs replacement windows or doors will have to comply with strict thermal performance standards.

One of the main reasons is the need to reduce energy loss. The Building Regulations have for many years controlled glazing to new works but as the ever increasing need grows to reduce global warming It is also essential to improve the performance of the much larger numbers of existing buildings.

When a property is sold you may be asked to provide evidence that any replacement glazing installed after April 2002 complies with the new Building Regulations. There will be two ways to prove compliance:

- A certificate showing that the work has been done by an installer who is registered under the FENSA Scheme
- A certificate from the local authority saying that the installation has approval under the Building Regulations.

THE FENSA SCHEME

This scheme allows installation companies that meet certain criteria to self-certify that their work complies with the Building Regulations. The scheme is known as FENSA, which stands for Fenestration Self-Assessment. It was set up by the Glass and Glazing Federation, in association with all key stakeholders, and meets with central Government approval. A sample of the work of every installer will be inspected by FENSA appointed inspectors to ensure standards are maintained. FENSA will also inform local authorities of all completed FENSA installations and issue certificates to householders confirming compliance.

Any installation done by a firm which is not registered to self-certify, or done as a DIY project by a householder, will need full local authority approval under the Building Regulations. Local authorities will know of all the approved installers in their areas and will be able to identify unauthorised work very easily. You should note that you, as the house owner, are ultimately responsible for ensuring the work complies with the Building Regulations.

Before you sign a contract to buy replacement glazing, be sure to ask whether the installer is able to self-certify via FENSA. If not, either they, or you, will need to make an application to your local authority for approval under the Building Regulations and pay any relevant charges.

LOCAL AUTHORITY APPROVAL

If the installer is not registered with FENSA they must give a Building Notice (and relevant fee) to the local authority detailing the proposed installation. The local authority will then make the necessary inspections and issue a Completion Certificate to the homeowner.

Replacing windows on your property can change the visual appearance of your home considerably. You should choose a style that matches your property and enhances its looks. This is particularly important with products fitted to older properties. It's a good idea to look at properties similar to yours in the area and compare the effect of various replacement window types. It is also a good idea to make sure you have adequate numbers of opening windows. It's been known for some salespeople to promote designs with very few openings and of a very simple nature. The simpler the design and the fewer the openings, the lower the price. Whilst you may end up with a price you like badly designed windows can even lower the value of a property. We have known of buyers of properties negotiating a reduced price for a property just because of this.

Sometimes planning permission may be required in order to fit replacement windows. This is particularly the case in listed buildings and conservation areas.

Always ask your supplier how long the delivery will be. It's also a good idea to have this stipulated on your contract. Additionally ask for an "estimate" of how long the work will take to complete once they are on site.

Double-glazing will reduce heat loss through your windows by an estimated 15 %. You will save money on your heating bills. However it will be a considerable time before you save enough money to pay for the windows, so don't fit double-glazing for this reason alone.

Check out the Guarantee and what it covers and bear in mind that most guarantees are only as good as the company giving them. Some companies have better moral standards than others.

Always ask if the windows have any special easy clean or fire escape features. Special hinges can be fitted to help with this - but these are not usually standard items and will cost more.

Ask your supplier if you will be responsible for making good around the new frames when they are fitted. Most suppliers will include this as part of their work - but you should check.

For the full facts and helpful advice on condensation visit the following website:

www.ggf.co.uk

Where you will find an informative PDF guide.

Aluminium is a good choice for commercial locations and any situation where rigidity is an issue. Its main advantage is its strength. Windows and doors manufactured with aluminium are more resistant to warping, twisting or sticking when subjected to the elements. They are also virtually intruder proof. Additionally, aluminium neither absorbs water, rots or rusts and is 100% recyclable.

When designing most modern replacement windows it is normal for there to be smaller areas of glass wherever there are openings fitted. Where the frames are fixed the glass area will be larger. This unequal sight line is quite normal and acceptable to most people.

However on a lot of older properties (and indeed some newer ones) it was more common to have an equal sight line. (Here you would not be able to tell which windows opened and which did not.) Fitting dummy sashes or into the frames creates this equal sight line, which enhances the appearance of the windows.

Safety of glass in new buildings has been controlled for several years by a requirement under The Building Regulations 1991 Approved Document N. This requirement has now been extended to replacement glass intended to be used in critical areas. Approved Document N defines critical areas as any area between floor level and 800mm above floor level in internal, external and partition walls, and between floor level and 1500mm above floor level in a door or a side panel within 300mm of the edge of any door. Replacement glass for use in these areas must satisfy the requirements of BS 6206, which means in effect that it must be toughened, laminated, wired or have a plastic film coating.

You should always get a written contract for major improvement work. Read the terms of the contract carefully and discuss any points which you may feel unhappy about or don't understand. A contract may be amended to suit you if necessary. Remember that a contract works both ways. You are legally bound to pay the agreed price when the goods and services have been supplied.

The Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982 provides you with some basic rights. Firstly you are entitled to expect the work to be carried out to a reasonable standard i.e. using the skill and expertise you would expect from an experienced company. These rights are no substitute for choosing your supplier wisely.

Finally a quote:

"There is hardly anything in the world that someone cannot make a little worse and sell a little cheaper, and the people who consider price alone are that person's lawful prey.

It is unwise to pay too much, but it is also unwise to pay too little. When you pay too much, you lose a little money, that is all. When you pay too little, you sometimes lose everything because the thing you bought is incapable of doing the thing you bought it to do.

The common law of business balance prohibits paying a little and getting a lot... It can't be done. If you deal with the lowest bidder it is well to add something for the risk you run. And if you do that you will have enough to pay for something better."

attributed to John Ruskin (1819 - 1900)