



visual inspection only

Until an obvious fault develops, most householders appear to assume that their electrical installations are safe, and will remain so forever. Even those who appreciate that electrical installations eventually need to be checked appear reluctant to pay for a full BS 7671-style periodic inspection, except perhaps when they are buying or selling a property. Therefore, even given the significant limitations of 'visual inspection only' such inspection by a competent person can usefully serve to identify damage, deterioration and, to some extent, defects, which might otherwise go unnoticed by those using the installations.

The NICEIC accepts that, in principle, visual inspection of the electrical installation in a dwelling by a competent person is an important part of the assessment of the condition of that installation. Visual inspection can identify damage, deterioration and some defects in installations.

Given the potential benefits, the NICEIC does not consider the practice of 'visual inspection only' to be non-compliant with the requirements of BS7671, provided that:

- ✓ The visual inspection is carried out by an electrically competent person with good knowledge and experience of the electrical

installation practices existing at the time the installation was first constructed.

- ✓ The inspection is carried out in accordance with all the requirements of BS 7671 that are applicable to visual inspection.
- ✓ The limitations of 'visual inspection only' are made clear in writing to the person ordering the work.
- ✓ No claim is made that 'visual inspection only' can or will fully determine whether an installation is safe for continued use.
- ✓ An objective report of the findings of the visual inspection is given to the person ordering the work, whether or not specifically requested by that person.
- ✓ The scope of the condition report includes all the aspects of the model periodic inspection report given in BS 7671 which are relevant to visual inspection.
- ✓ Visual condition reports do not include items that can only be checked with test instruments (such as the adequacy of earthing arrangements).
- ✓ Any quotation for proposed remedial work is given separately from the visual condition report.
- ✓ A full periodic inspection is recommended to the customer if it is suspected that the installation is in an unsafe condition.

A customized report form for the 'visual inspection only' of domestic premises by Approved Contractors, to help ensure that consumers are fully informed of the limitations, as well as the benefits, of such inspections.

In providing the overall assessment of the condition of an installation, it may well be reasonable for a competent person to come to the conclusion that it is in an 'unsatisfactory' condition, solely on the basis of visual inspection. However, it would not be appropriate report that an installation is in a 'satisfactory' condition solely on the basis of a visual inspection because, amongst many other things, the

intended means of earthing and / or the protective conductor arrangements could be unsatisfactory.

Therefore, where a visual inspection does not reveal any damage, deterioration or defects that would reasonably result in the overall condition being reported as 'unsatisfactory', the alternative would be to report the condition as 'visually not unsatisfactory'. This summary reflects the significant limitations of 'visual inspection only'.

Any complaints about the standard of visual inspections carried out by Approved Contractors will be investigated under the NICEIC Complaints Procedure.

Visual only inspections are not considered appropriate for places of work, where duty holders and others have legal obligations under the Electricity at Work Regulations.

periodic inspections – see other leaflet

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