

Technical Bulletin 008 (Edition 2) CIP-RACL

Developed by Industry



Title: Room-sealed fanned-draught chimney/flue systems concealed within voids – Consumer Information Pack and Risk Assessment Checklist

Date issued: 1 December 2010

This Technical Bulletin has been developed in association with TB 008 (Edition 2) (published 1 December 2010) and contains details of a Consumer Information Pack which can be provided to consumers/responsible persons and also an example of an appropriate Risk Assessment Checklist as referred to in Appendix 3 of TB 008 (Edition 2)

Introduction

This Technical Bulletin (TB) has been developed in association with [TB 008 \(Edition 2\)](#) (published 1 December 2010) and contains:

1. An example of the Consumer Information Pack referred to in [Appendix 3 – Figure A3.1 of TB 008 \(Edition 2\)](#), which should be used to provide consumers/responsible persons affected by the gas safety concern with helpful information regarding, next steps (See [Note 1](#)).
2. An example of an appropriate Risk Assessment Checklist as referred to in [Appendix 3 of TB 008 \(Edition 2\)](#). This can be used as a template to enable registered businesses to develop suitable documentation to support the application of the industry developed guidance provided in [TB 008 \(Edition 2\)](#).

Note 1: *The information as it is written, applies predominately to Great Britain. However, similar requirements apply in other geographical areas covered by Gas Safe Register. For details of current gas safety legislation, building legislation and industry standards for the geographical areas covered by Gas Safe Register, see [TB 999^{\(1\)}](#).*

Note 2: *For general information about the process behind the development of Gas Safe Register Technical Bulletins and the expectations for all Stakeholders, see [TB 1000^{\(2\)}](#).*

Bibliography

(1) [TB 999 – Gas Safe Register Normative Document List](#)

(2) [TB 1000 – An introduction to Gas Safe Register Technical Bulletins](#)

Note: Gas Safe Register Technical Bulletins can be viewed at: <https://engineers.gassaferegister.co.uk> - login and visit the Technical Information area.

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IMPORTANT SAFETY NOTICE – THIS IS NOT A CIRCULAR

Some of the properties in your development have been built with boiler flues which cannot be inspected because they are hidden behind walls or ceilings. If you live in one of these homes, this document tells you what you need to do next.

Gas engineers need to be able to see the flue – which take fumes away from the boiler – as part of essential safety checks. A flue in poor condition, combined with a boiler that is not working properly, could put you and your family in danger from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, which can cause death or serious injury.

If your boiler is situated on an outside wall, it's unlikely you have this type of flue. Alternatively, if the engineer can see the entire flue, you will not need to take any further action in relation to this letter.

If you do have a boiler where all, or part of, the flue cannot be seen, you, or your landlord, will need to arrange for inspection hatches to be fitted. **This does not mean, however, that your flue system is suddenly unsafe.** As long as the boiler passes a series of safety checks – including having audible CO alarms fitted – it can be used normally for the time being.

CO alarms are not an alternative to being able to see the flue and you will still need to have inspection hatches fitted. You have until **31 December 2012** for this work to be completed. It is recommended, however, that inspection hatches are fitted as soon as you are able to do so. From **1 January 2013**, any registered gas engineer will turn the boiler off and formally advise you not to use it until inspection hatches have been fitted in appropriate places.

Although most of the affected boilers and flue systems are relatively new (installed since 2000), the risk of faults leading to the release of CO increases as the system gets older, especially if it is not serviced regularly.

You need to take action now.

If your property is less than two years old, contact your builder. If your property is between two and ten years old, contact your home warranty provider, as you may be covered by them if there are defects in the flue. However, the warranty providers listed overleaf have advised that cover is not provided for installing inspection hatches in homes over two years old. If your property is 10 years or older you should contact a Gas Safe registered engineer.

If you are a tenant, it is the responsibility of your landlord to ensure that inspection hatches are installed and that the boiler and flue are checked every year. You should pass a copy of this document on to your landlord.

If you have any questions that are not answered on the attached **Frequently Asked Questions** document, please visit: <http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/fluesinvoids>.

To find a Gas Safe registered engineer in your area please visit: <http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk> or, alternatively, ring 0800 408 5500.



List of main home warranty providers	Contact details
NHBC (National House-Building Council)	☎ 0844 633 1000 (Ask for Claims) 💻 www.nhbc.co.uk ✉ claimsc@nhbc.co.uk
Premier Guarantee	☎ 08444 120 888 💻 http://www.premierguarantee.co.uk/home.aspx ✉ info@premierguarantee.co.uk
Zurich Building Guarantee	☎ 01252 387 535 💻 http://www.zurich.co.uk/buildingguarantee ✉ zmpropertyclaims@uk.zurich.com

This Safety Notice has been developed by the Flues in Voids cross-industry team. It is made up of representatives of Gas Safe Register, house builders, home warranty providers, gas engineers, appliance manufacturers (including HHIC) and others, assisted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), to provide clear communication to industry and consumers around the issue of flues in voids.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is carbon monoxide (CO) dangerous?

CO is a colourless, odourless, tasteless, poisonous gas produced by incomplete burning of carbon-based fuels, including gas. It is only when the gas does not burn properly that dangerous levels of CO are produced. CO stops the blood from bringing oxygen to cells, tissues, and organs and can kill quickly. Around 20 people in Great Britain die each year from CO poisoning caused by faulty gas appliances and flues.

CO poisoning can easily be confused with food poisoning, viral infections, flu or tiredness. Symptoms to look out for include headaches, breathlessness, nausea, dizziness, collapse, loss of consciousness, tiredness, drowsiness, vomiting, pains in the chest, stomach pains, erratic behaviour or visual problems.

What should I do if I think I am suffering from CO poisoning?

If you have immediate safety concerns, or think you are suffering the [symptoms of CO poisoning](#), turn off the appliance immediately and contact the **National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999**.

If you or your family experience any of the above symptoms and you believe CO may be involved, you should seek urgent medical advice from either your GP or an accident and emergency department.

If there is an immediate safety issue, why have I got two years to fit inspection hatches?

Getting the work completed may take time, especially if you are contacting your builder or home warranty provider, or you may be waiting for your next scheduled boiler service. By getting your boiler serviced by a Gas Safe registered engineer and fitting audible CO alarm(s), to BS EN 50291:2001, you are helping to manage any risk until the inspection hatches have been installed.

If I am safe to use my boiler for the next two years with CO alarms and boiler checks why must I have inspection hatches installed at all?

Gas engineers are required by law to be able to see the flue to inspect it. Unless inspection hatches are fitted, they cannot confirm that your flue is safe and will have to turn the boiler off. Having your boiler serviced and the fitting of CO alarms are only being allowed as a short-term measure to help you manage the risk until inspection hatches have been installed. They are not an alternative to having access to the flue.

How much will inspection hatches cost me?

It will vary from property to property. Inspection hatches should be at least 300mm x 300mm and wherever possible, be positioned within 1.5m of any joint in the flue system. Therefore, some properties will only need one while others may need more.

Basic inspection hatches must comply with the Building Regulations and are likely to cost from £75, though you may choose to fit more expensive ones for cosmetic reasons. Costs for the fitting of the inspection hatches will be extra.

Why didn't my gas engineer raise this issue when they visited last time?

If your flue could not be inspected, your gas engineer should have informed you that your system was 'Not to Current Standards', unless there was evidence of an additional safety issue that would have required your boiler system to be declared 'At Risk' or 'Immediately Dangerous'.

Technical instructions to gas engineers have changed following a number of cases where, once inspection hatches had been installed, faults were found in flue systems. There have also been several cases where CO from a faulty boiler has been found to be entering properties from faulty flues that are concealed within voids.

In light of this evidence, industry organisations have now decided it is right for gas engineers to classify installations with concealed flues as 'At Risk' for the safety of the occupants.

What does 'At Risk' mean? Can I still use my boiler?

If your system is 'At Risk' it could become dangerous in the future. Having inspection hatches installed will mean your system is no longer classified 'At Risk' (as long as there are no additional safety issues found with the boiler or flue system).

If your flue cannot be inspected, you can continue to use your boiler as normal until **31 December 2012**, as long as it has undergone an appropriate safety check by a Gas Safe registered engineer and audible CO alarms (meeting BS EN 50291:2001) have been fitted.

If you do not meet this deadline, your gas engineer will have to turn the boiler off.

Why was my property built without inspection hatches in the first place?

Advances in technology allowed boilers to be put in a greater variety of positions, not just on an outside wall, suiting the development of flats and apartments where space was at a premium. This resulted in some boilers being installed, but in a way that the flue cannot be inspected to make sure it is correctly fitted and safe.

I think I have a home warranty but don't know who it is with

When you purchased the property your solicitor should have told you who was providing the home warranty. It is possible that you have correspondence from the warranty provider. The main warranty providers in the UK are NHBC and Premier Guarantee. Depending on the age of the property Zurich Building Guarantee may have provided the warranty. The contact details for these are listed in the associated Safety Notice.

My home warranty has expired. What does that mean for me?

If your home warranty has expired, you or your landlord will have to meet the cost of the inspection hatches and any defects to the boiler or its flue. If you receive benefits you may be entitled to financial assistance. Further details can be found on the Health and Safety Executive website at: www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/financialaid.htm.

It may still be worth contacting your home builder who may be willing to assist in some way, or be able to recommend reputable building services companies to carry out the work.

Where do I get CO alarms and what will they cost me?

CO alarms installed by one of the main energy companies should cost between £20 and £30. Costs from independent gas engineers will vary.

Alternatively, you can purchase long life battery CO alarms (to BS EN 50291:2001) from most DIY stores, supermarkets and high street stores from around £20 each. If you are installing them yourself always follow the manufacturer's instructions on where to fit them.

CO alarms can continue to be used once inspection hatches have been installed and are recommended as an additional precaution.

Who do I approach to install inspection hatches?

A competent builder or building services company should be able to fit the inspection hatches. The builder will need to speak to a registered gas engineer on how many inspection hatches are needed and where they should be located.

If you do not know a builder, the government supported 'Trustmark' scheme should be able to provide advice on how to find a reputable building company to carry out the work. Go to: <http://www.trustmark.org.uk> or phone: 01344 630 804 for further details.

What if I don't have inspection hatches fitted?

From **1 January 2013** you will not be able to have any work, including servicing, carried out on your boiler, as the gas engineer will be breaking the law.

If all answers are entered in the left hand (green) column of this Checklist then the appliance may be left operational until means of access have been provided, or until 31 December 2012. If any response is given to any question or statement in the right hand (red) column of this Checklist, then the installation should be classified as 'Immediately Dangerous' ('ID') or 'At Risk' ('AR') as appropriate in accordance with the current Gas Industry Unsafe Situations Procedure and the information contained in [Table A3.1](#) of [TB 008 \(Edition 2\)](#).

Chimney systems in voids risk assessment checklist where there are inadequate inspection facilities					
Regarding access facilities to chimney system			YES	NO	
Is it possible to determine the likely route of the whole chimney system?					
Where the chimney system is routed through neighbouring properties or areas, is access available in the neighbouring properties to carry out this risk assessment?					
Where the chimney system is visible, is it possible to confirm that the correct materials have been used?					
Where visible, does the chimney system (e.g. length of flue, angle of fall back to boiler, material, etc.) and the termination comply with the manufacturer's instructions for the appliance and chimney system and/or BS 5440-1?					
Where the chimney system is not fully visible, is the ceiling or other enclosure free from evidence of distress or surface staining within the vicinity of the likely chimney route and which cannot be attributed to other causes (e.g. water leaks)?					
Question for gas user/responsible person			NO	YES	
Is the responsible person/gas user and/or Gas Safe registered engineer aware of any previous history within the property or on site that could be related to flues in voids issues?					
Regarding the presence of carbon monoxide (CO) alarms			YES	NO	
Where carbon monoxide (CO) alarms are installed, can the gas user/responsible person confirm that there has been no history of alarm activation in the property?					
Are CO alarms conforming to BS EN 50291 installed/located in each room along the suspected route of the chimney system including where necessary neighbouring properties (see Appendix 4 of TB 008 Ed 2)?					
Are the existing CO alarms installed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions or industry guidance (see Appendix 4 of TB 008 Ed 2)?					
Do the CO alarms 'alarm' when the test button is pressed?					
Will all CO alarms be within the manufacturer's recommended lifespan on 31 December 2012 or, where this information is not available, will they be less than 5 years old on 31 December 2012 ?					
Appliance operational checks			YES	NO	
Is the burner pressure and/or gas rate in accordance with the appliance manufacturer's specifications?					
Is satisfactory combustion performance being achieved? (See manufacturer's instructions, TB 126, BS 7967-3/4). Where combustion performance analysis is not feasible but it is possible to inspect the flame picture, is the flame picture visually satisfactory?					
Enter combustion analysis results High Range (HR) & Low Range (LR) (as appropriate)	CO (ppm) HR:	CO ₂ % HR:	CO/CO ₂ ratio HR:	-	-
	CO (ppm) LR:	CO ₂ % LR:	CO/CO ₂ ratio LR:		
Does the appliance appear to be functioning otherwise safely (e.g. all safety controls operating correctly, no signs of distress or staining around the appliance)?					

The resulting risk assessment of the installation is considered as:

Immediately Dangerous		At Risk		Left operational based on risk assessment	
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Company Name:	
Gas Safe registration number:	
Engineer's name:	
Date of check:	
Engineer's Signature:	
Gas user/responsible person's Name:	
Property address:	
Post Code:	
Gas user/responsible person's Signature:	
Date:	