

Gas Industry Registration Scheme (GIRS) – FAQs

What is the Gas Industry Registration Scheme?

The Gas Industry Registration Scheme (GIRS) has been developed to allow Utility Infrastructure Providers (UIP's) to carry out installation, commissioning and connection of gas mains and services to be adopted by Gas Transporters (GTs). Any UIP wishing to carry out work must be accredited under this scheme. All the GTs on mainland UK recognise this scheme and, provided that UIP's hold the appropriate scope of accreditation, will allow that UIP to tender for, and if successful, undertake installation and commissioning of gas mains and services work. Under the terms of a pre-start adoption agreement, once the work has been completed the host GT will adopt the system for the remainder of its lifetime. The foundation of GIRS was laid out in the technical publication IGE/TD/101 (Adoption of Pipe Systems by a GT management of UIP activities) in 2002.

Who is Lloyds Register EMEA?

Lloyds Register EMEA is a world-wide accreditation and inspection body that has been appointed as Scheme Operator of GIRS (GIRSO). The controlling body of GIRS is the GIRS Advisory Panel which is made up of representatives from LR, GTs and UIPs. This group meets every two months and agrees the requirements of the scheme.

Who needs accreditation?

All contractors who wish to undertake any part of the new connections process including project management, design, construction and audit.

What categories of accreditation are available?

There are four main categories:

Project management – for UIP's who do not have any construction site staff but wish to negotiate contracts with clients for connection work and be a party to the adoption agreement with the host GT. The Project Manager would then subcontract the construction phase of the connection to an appropriately accredited UIPs.

Design – for contractors wishing to undertake the design element of the connections. All designs have to be submitted to the host GT for approval, and generally GTs will only accept designs from GIRS registered companies.

Construction, commissioning and connection – for those UIPs who wish to undertake the construction phase of the installation and commissioning of gas mains and services.

Audit - for those contractors wishing to undertake third party technical audit process on behalf of another GIRS accredited UIP or GT..

What scopes of work are available?

Work associated with the construction of new gas infrastructure operating up to 7 barg pressure, in the following scopes:

- Design
- Construction/Commissioning/Connections (Routine) [CCCR]
- Project Management
- Audit
- Connections (Non Routine, Basic) [CNRB]
- Connections (Non-Routine, Complex/Iris Stop)
- Connections, (Non-Routine, Complex, Stopple)
- Connections, (Non-Routine, Complex, Hot Welding)
- Specialist PE Branch Connections

The UIP can request any of the above scope but must be able to demonstrate competence of personnel and must have accreditation for routine connections before progressing to non-routine accreditation.

What is the cost of the accreditation?

The costs of accreditation are fixed and are given in GIG 2. The cost will depend on the scopes requested and the size of the UIP.

How long does the accreditation take?

The assessment process is in two parts:

Partial - The Assessor will verify that you have the appropriate Health and Safety Systems, Method Statements and Competencies in place.

Full - The Assessor will verify that you have all other systems in place. In addition a site visit will be undertaken to ensure that you are applying the correct procedures and that your site staff are competent.

As a guide, the overall assessment process takes about 5 days but this generally spread over several days/weeks. If a UIP has all the processes, procedures and competencies in place and on site work available then it is possible to achieve full accreditation in a short period. However this is unusual and means that no major deficiencies have been identified during the assessment.

What is the difference between Partial and Full Accreditation.

Partial accreditation is the first element of gaining GIRS accreditation. In order to gain partial you must demonstrate that you have all the necessary processes, procedures and competencies in place to undertake the scope of work applied for, in a safe and competent manner. This element is purely office based. Once partial accreditation is achieved you can then bid for work.

Full accreditation can only be achieved once you have been awarded work and are undertaking the full scope of works that you have applied for. The Assessor will visit one of your sites to assess the quality of the work being undertaken, and to ensure that the process and procedures demonstrated in the partial assessment are being correctly applied.

How do you apply for accreditation?

If you visit the Lloyds Register EMEA website at www.lloydsregister.co.uk you will find an application form which can be downloaded and emailed to the Utilities team on utilities@lr.org. For any queries please call the team on 02476 518626.

Are there any guidance notes available?

Yes there are guidance notes available for the Scheme, the Gas Industry Guidance (GIG/2) and the Implementation of Gas Safety Passport Schemes. You will find them on the GIRS website at www.lloydsregister.co.uk

What happens after I have agreed the quotation?

Once you have accepted the quote and returned the signed Request for Services Form, an assessor will be nominated for your company. The assessor will contact you and agree the dates for the assessment. Please note, that no payment is required at this stage unless after a financial check your credit limit is below the quoted amount

Does Lloyds Register EMEA provide any consultation services to assist in compiling the GIRS procedures?

No, as LR is the Accreditation Body they are unable to offer any consultation. They can, however, carry out desk top reviews and/or office visits prior to the main assessment in order to carry out gap analysis of your procedures to check if you have any omissions etc. The utilities team will be able to provide you with a quote for this service.

What will the LR Assessor be looking at during the assessment?

In order to gain partial registration for Construction, Commissioning and Connections (Routine) you must have the following in place:

- 1) Health and safety policies and procedures
- 2) Appropriate risk assessment procedures
- 3) Quality procedures especially related to the purchasing and delivery of gas pipework and fittings such that all materials can be traced back to ensure compliance with national standards
- 4) Method statements for all activities as detailed in IGE/TD/101 and GIG2. These method statements must give clear guidance to site staff on your requirements ie they must almost be a 'workshop manual'. Other documents should not be referred to within the method statements unless they are provided to staff eg 'Carry out backfilling and reinstatement to the HAUC specification' (unless the HAUC specification is also provided to staff). A method statement must be available for all the activities that may be required within a given scope, even if you do not intend to carry out that activity on a routine basis eg steel main laying and welding which falls within the scope of CCCR.
- 5) A competency matrix (similar to the Transco STC process). You must ensure that all staff engaged in the GIRS process from Gas Engineer to site staff are competent to carry out the work. This must be carried out on an annual basis and be a formal documented system.
- 6) Training records and proof of qualifications must be available for all staff.

7) Technical audit process. There has to be a formal technical audit process which ensures that appropriately qualified staff undertake technical/quality site audits. These are not just site H&S audits but should also include checks on the quality of the works eg depths of pipework, sand bedding, pipe storage, fusion process, test/commissioning process, material storage, equipment calibration etc. You can sub-contract this requirement to a company registered under the Audit category of GIRS.

The above is not an exhaustive list but these are the key areas which must be in place to gain partial. For companies wishing to gain registration under the Design, Project Management and Audit categories you will need to meet the competency requirements of these respective categories and also have method statements in place for the design, project management and audit activities as appropriate. Details of the competency requirements are given in GIG2.

To gain full accreditation there are six core system elements subject to assessment:

- 1) human resources
- 2) contract and document control
- 3) work control
- 4) health safety and environment
- 5) procurement and storage
- 6) tools and equipment.

In addition a site visit is required to ensure that your staff are competent and carrying out the works strictly to your method statements

A sample programme is given in Appendix 1.

What happens if the LR Assessor finds things wrong during the assessment?

As the assessment progresses your Assessor will tell you where he thinks the requirements of GIRS are not being met. He will discuss the issues with you and agree the actions that need to be taken to address the deficiency. There are 2 types of deficiency:

Major – this is when you do not have a procedure in place as required by GIRS. You will not be able to gain accreditation until you have addressed this type of deficiency.

Minor – this is when you have a procedure in place but it doesn't quite meet the GIRS requirements or you are not adhering to it. Provided that you only have limited number of minor deficiencies you will still be able to gain accreditation. Close out of these deficiencies will be confirmed by your Assessor at surveillance visits.

What happens after I have gained accreditation?

Your company's name and scope of registration will be entered onto the GIRS website. This has the advantage to you that any prospective clients can use the website to find suitable UIPs to carry out connections works. You will also receive a GIRS Certificate listing your scope of approval and you will be entitled to use the GIRS logo on your letterheads etc.

How long does accreditation last for?

Accreditation lasts for three years subject to successful surveillance audits by your LR Assessor. The number of surveillance visits you will receive is dependent on the number of staff undertaking connection work and your scope of works. Most UIPs have 3/4 surveillance visits a year, although a small company just undertaking design may only have one.

Can I use subcontractors to carry out the works?

Yes provided that the subcontractor is accredited under GIRS for the scope of work you want them to undertake or they are acting purely as a "Labour Only" Sub Contractor as defined in GIG 2.

What happens if I fail to comply with scheme terms of registration once accredited?

If, during a surveillance visit, the Assessor notes a deficiency he will discuss this with you. If it is a major deficiency, for instance, breaking the scheme rules by using a non-accredited subcontractor or working outside the scope registration, then you will have 1 month to take appropriate corrective actions. If you fail to take action then your accreditation will be suspended and you will not be able to carry out any more installation and commissioning of gas mains and services to be adopted by GTs until you have successfully closed out the deficiency.

If it is a minor deficiency then you will have until the next surveillance visit to take corrective action and this will be verified by your assessor at that time. If you have not taken any action, then you will be issued with a Major Deficiency, which will place a time limit of 1 month on the close out of the deficiency.

What recourse to appeal do I have if I do not accept a judgement of the scheme operator?

If you do not agree with any of the findings that your assessor has highlighted to you then you can appeal against the decision. The full appeals process is shown in the Scheme guidance document.

Appendix 1. Draft Programme for 3 Yearly GIRS Accreditation Visit

Partial Assessment.

Safety management System
H&S Organisation
H&S Planning
Measuring performance
H&S Auditing and reviewing performance
Assessment of risk
Quality management System
Competency of personnel

- Project Management
- Construction
- Administration

Gas Escapes and Incidents
General Training
Method Statements – full review
General documentation – discussion
Technical Audit process

Full Assessment

Human Resources

Selection and assessment procedures for new employees
Job descriptions and responsibilities
Training
Employment/use of sub-contractors

Contract, Document and Change Control

Contract receipt and review
Contract variations
Interface procedures
Document control
Drawing control

Work Control

Issue of work instructions to staff
Work programming
Site supervision
Hand over procedures
Communication
Safe systems of work

Safety, Health and Environment

Policies and procedures
Risk assessments
Method statements
COSHH
Manual handling
PPE
Tool box talks

SHE audits
CDM

Procurement and Storage

Estimating
Specifications
Procurement of material for contestable works
Supplier approval
Procurement of goods/materials from site
Goods receipt (depot and site)
Storage (depot and site)

Equipment

Availability and storage of tools
Calibration and inspection
Lifting equipment
Access equipment
PPE
Specialist equipment

Site Assessments

Sample works covered by the scope of registration eg pipelaying and jointing, connections, testing and purging, commissioning.