

Water Industry Registration Scheme (WIRS) – FAQs

What is the Water Industry Registration Scheme?

The Water Industry Registration Scheme (WIRS) has been developed to allow contractors to carry out installation and commissioning of water mains and services to be adopted by the Water Utilities (WU). Any Self Lay Organisation (SLOs) contracting to carry out contestable work (as defined by OFWAT and detailed in the National Self-Lay Code of Practice) can be accredited under this scheme. All the WUs within England and Wales recognise this scheme and allow SLOs holding the appropriate scopes of WIRS accreditation to tender for, and if successful, undertake design, installation and commissioning of water mains and services. Once the work has been satisfactorily completed the host WU will adopt the system for remainder of its lifetime, subject to the SLO meeting all the adoption requirements.

Who is Lloyd's Register EMEA?

Lloyd's Register EMEA is a world-wide accreditation and inspection body that has been appointed as the Scheme Operator for WIRS. The controlling body of WIRS is the WIRS Advisory Panel which is made up of representatives from OFWAT, WUs Water UK, Lloyd's Register and SLOs. This group meets approximately every two months and agrees the requirements of the scheme. Minutes of these meetings can be found on the WIRS website.

Who needs accreditation?

All SLOs who wish to undertake any part in the installation and commissioning of water mains and services to be adopted by the Water Utilities (WU) process including Project Management, Design and Construction need WU approval. Water Utilities fully support WIRS, which removes the need for them to operate their own approval schemes, and encourage all SLOs engaged in the construction of new water mains and services for adoption to seek and gain WIRS accreditation.

Note – contractors wishing to just install private service pipes do not need WIRS accreditation though they may wish to gain 'approved plumber' status from their local water utility.

What categories of accreditation are available?

There are three main categories:

Project Management – for contractors 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 WU. The Project Manager would then subcontract the construction phase of the connection to an appropriately accredited SLO.

Design – for contractors wishing to undertake the design element of the infrastructure installation. All designs have to be submitted to the host WU for approval.

Construction – for those SLOs who wish to undertake the construction phase of the installation and commissioning of water mains and services. Construction is split into 3 categories covering:

- a) work on development sites with mains up to 355mm diameter, and
- b) off-site work with pipe diameters over 355mm diameter
- c) service laying on development sites (where mainlaying is not done by the SLO laying services and service diameters do not exceed 63mm)

What scopes of work are available?

Work associated with the construction of new water infrastructure, in the following scopes:

Design

Construction/Commissioning/Connections

- a) Work on development sites with mains up to 355mm diameter
- b) Off-site work and on-site work with pipe diameters over 355mm diameter
- c) Service laying on development sites

Project Management

What is the cost of the accreditation?

The costs of accreditation are fixed and are given in the WIRS Guidance document. The cost will depend on the scopes requested and the size of the SLO.

How long does the accreditation take?

The assessment process is in two parts:

Partial - the Assessor will verify that the SLO under assessment has the appropriate Health and Safety Systems, Method Statements and Competencies in place. This normally incorporates a desk top review followed by a visit to the SLO offices to verify implementation of the systems and competencies included within the submission for the desk top review and to verify close out of deficiencies identified in the DTR report. The achievement of partial, in terms of time frame, is dependent upon how responsive the SLO is in dealing with any issues arising from the DTR and the extent to which working practices and competencies actually align to documented systems. Partial may be achieved within a six week time from submission of documentation for the DTR.

Full - the Assessor will verify that you have work control, contract change control, HR, Procurement and storage systems in place to ensure that a consistency of working process and competency is maintained and that this is applicable equally at the site in performing the scope of work for which registration is sought as to the office based services which support the site activities.

As a guide, the overall assessment process takes about 10 mandays but this generally spread over several days/weeks. If an SLO has all the processes, procedures and competencies in place and on site work available then it is possible to achieve full accreditation in a relatively short period which could be as short as 2 months but a more

typical timeframe from submission of documents for the DTR to full registration is 3 months.

What is the difference between Partial and Full Accreditation.

Partial Registration was established as a means for contractors, who did not possess a track record in the water industry, to gain a toe hold in the SLO market. If a contractor possessed the competencies and method statements together with safe systems of work which indicated that they could safely and competently perform the services for which they are seeking registration, then they would be awarded partial registration which would enable them to bid for contestable work, within the water industry and once successful then they would be required to advise Lloyd's Register who would perform a site assessment on their first contract to enable them to gain full registration. Without the partial registration phase then contractors with no water track record would never be able to enter the market.

Full registration can only be achieved once the SLO has been awarded work and is undertaking the full scope of works for which registration was sought. The Assessor will visit one or more of the sites where work is being undertaken to assess the competency and methods of work applied, to ensure consistency with the competency and method statements reviewed under the partial assessment process.

All SLO work will be subject to site supervision by the WU who will be adopting the installed network. The extent of the supervision will be determined by the registration status of the SLO, so if the SLO has partial registration they will be exposed to a more stringent supervisory regime than if they have full registration and the cost of the supervision will be commensurate with the level of supervision assigned.

How do you apply for accreditation?

If you visit the Lloyds Register 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 Water Industry Registration Guidance. You will find this document it on the 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 WIRS procedures?

No, as Lloyd's Register 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 Lloyd's Register Assessor be looking at during the assessment?

The Assessor will send you an agenda prior to the visit. Sample agendas for Partial and Full Registration are attached in Appendix 1.

What happens if the Lloyd's Register assessor finds things wrong during the assessment?

As the assessment progresses your Assessor will tell you where they think the requirements of WIRS are not being met. They will discuss the issues with you and agree the actions that need to be taken to address the deficiency. There are two types of deficiency:

Major – this is when you do not have a procedure in place that is a requirement of WIRS. 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 WIRS requirements or you are not fully 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 full accreditation?

Your company's name and scope of registration will be entered onto the WIRS website which may be used by developers as a tender list. You will also receive a WIRS Certificate listing your scope of approval and you will be entitled to use the WIRS logo on your letterheads etc.

How long does accreditation last for?

Accreditation lasts for three years subject to successful surveillance audits by your Lloyd's Register 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 SLOs 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 WIRS for the scope of work you want them to undertake.

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

If, during a surveillance visit, the Assessor notes a deficiency they will discuss this with you. If it is a major deficiency, ie breaking the scheme rules eg by using a non-accredited subcontractor or working outside your scope, then you will have one 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 water mains and services to be adopted by the WU 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 to close out a minor deficiency, then you will be issued with a Major 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 three yearly WIRS accreditation visit

Partial Assessment.

- Safety Management System
- H&S Organisation
- H&S Planning
- H&S Auditing and reviewing performance
- Assessment of risk
- Compliance with water hygiene requirements
- Quality Management System
- Measuring performance
- Competency of personnel
 - Project Management
 - Construction
 - Administration
- Induction and General Training
- Method Statements – full review
- General documentation and technical library
- Technical Audit process
- As required
 - Design processes
 - Project management processes

Full Assessment

Human Resources

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

Document, Contract and Change Control

- Document organisation
- Specification and technical standards
- Company management documents
- Contract documentation
 - Tender/specification
 - Planning
 - Construction
 - Variations
 - Drawings and Records

Work Control

- Issue of work instructions to staff
- Work programming
- Site supervision
- Hand over procedures
- Communication
- Quality control

Safety, Health and Environment

Policies and procedures
Risk assessments
Method statements
COSHH
Manual handling
PPE
Tool box talks
SH&E audits
CDM
Accident investigation
Environmental standards

Procurement and Storage

Technical evaluation
Supplier approval
Purchasing procedure
Goods receipt (depot and site)
Storage (depot and site)

Equipment

Availability storage and control
Calibration and inspection
Lifting equipment
Access equipment
PPE
Specialist and hired equipment

Training

Organisation
Induction training
Minimum requirements
Refresher training

Design (where applicable)

Design organisation
Design procedures
Competence of designers
Design specifications
Design methods and documentation
Authorisations and easements

Project Management (where applicable)

Project management organisation
Project planning
Site management through construction
Testing and commissioning
Project completion and handover

Audit Process

Audit process

Roles and responsibilities
Auditor competency
Audit programme and reporting
Audit close-out

Site Assessments

Sample works covered by the scope of registration e.g. pipelaying and jointing, connections, hygiene and chlorination, testing and commissioning.