



Services - condition rating elements that can kill

At every one of our HBR seminars and workshops, condition rating of services quickly becomes the most controversial topic. Surveyors are torn between:

- Wanting to clearly advise their clients without calling in an unnecessary army of 'specialists', and;
- Not commenting on specialist installations they know little about which could land them in hot water (forgive the pun).

This edition of the HBR Factsheet will give you a few hints and tips.

Services that can kill

If gas, electrics, oil and solid fuel appliances are not properly installed and maintained, occupiers can be exposed to fatal risks. Although this is emotive language, every time a death or serious injury does occur, it usually makes the local papers. Also, regulatory standards have gradually tightened and in our view this has reduced the scope for surveyors to comment. For example:

- Electrical systems have to be tested every ten years **AND** on change of occupancy;
- The Gas Safe Register's website reminds home buyers they should have gas fires, boilers, ovens and hobs checked by a 'gas safe' registered engineer before they buy a property;
- Rented property has been closely regulated for many years resulting in a different safety standard for rented and privately owned homes.

These more stringent rules are nothing to do with the new HBR as they apply equally to the existing survey products.

Balanced advice

At BlueBox *partners*, we adopt a clear and simple approach to assessing electrics, gas, oil and solid fuel systems:

- If you are shown evidence of an inspection or test certificate and there is no visual evidence of alteration or damage, a **CR1** is appropriate;
- If there is no evidence, or you notice worrying visual signs, then a **CR3** may be the right decision.

We find it difficult to imagine a situation where a **CR2** would be right; surveyors simply do not have the knowledge to make a sophisticated judgement.

The HBR Factsheet

The final deadline for the current version of the HSV is fast approaching. To help you prepare for the new format, BlueBox *partners* will regularly publish this Factsheet. Each one will cover a topical issue creating the most debate at our HBR workshops. This issue looks at condition rating services and assumes you have some awareness of the structure and content of the new format.

This 'black and white' approach worries many, especially how agents and other intermediaries will react. Additional 'red dots' in the summary section could confirm their impression that we are 'deal killers' interested only in protecting our own liability. Our response is:

- Our clients must be properly advised about the serious safety hazards that poorly installed and maintained service installations can pose;
- We are reflecting statutory regulations that are clearly in the public domain.

Any negative reaction can be minimised by:

- Talking to your clients **before** you carry out the inspection so you can discuss the issue before they receive the report, and;
- Spend some time with local agents and panel managers to explain your approach. Not only will this help inform them of changing standards but it may help you drum up a little more business - something we could all do with!.

Other HBR products from BlueBox *partners*

We have a range of other training and development products designed to help you get ready for the new format. These include:

- One-day HBR workshop in the West Midlands on the 23rd March 2010

New London Date

Due to popular demand, we have organised a HBR Workshop at Mabledon Place in London on March 30th. Please contact our office for more information

- A four module package of distance learning materials written to suit the new HBR;
- The *HBR Assessment Service* where you convert a recent HSV into a HBR, we assess it and give you a full feedback report.

If you want more information of any of these, please contact the BlueBox *partners* office at 3 High Street, Chipping Sodbury, Bristol BS37 6BA. Tel. 0845 260 3500 or email info@blueboxpartners.com. Alternatively, you can visit our website at www.blueboxpartners.com and book on-line.