

Staff



Stuart Webster
Marketing manager

What is your role at the Chamber?

I'm the marketing manager. I've only been in the role for a few months and have been working with the other departments to improve all of our communications and to develop a new marketing strategy. It's a great challenge, but we have a great group of people here.

What goals do you plan to achieve for the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the next 12 months?

I'd really like to raise our profile in the business community. I think that once businesses know about what we do they are in awe of the number of services that we offer, but I believe that there is a lack of knowledge, with some businesses still believing that we are part of a government body. I'm also working on making our services easier to understand to potential and new members.

What made you want to join the Chamber?

I am passionate about London and really wanted to move here and get involved with the city. I met some people at my interview that I genuinely liked and I was very flattered to be offered the role.

What was your last job?

I worked for EMAP, the magazine publishers, in Peterborough. I was the subscription executive on the Country Titles: Trail, Country Walking, Bird Watching and Practical Fishkeeping. I sourced the subscription gifts, designed the page and dealt with customer queries – I was the pioneer of the video subscription ad!

What would you like your next job to be?

Could I be Ken Livingstone's apprentice? Or perhaps I could be chief taster at any one of the restaurants that the Chamber has recently held events at.

How do you occupy yourself away from the workplace?

I live in Stanmore, on the edge of a common, and like to go walking there, beside the ponds and through a vast wood. I also enjoy going to the theatre and eating out under the bright lights of the city

If you were chief executive of the LCCI, what is the first thing you would do?

Have you seen the Silver Surfer on the London Eye, I think I'd get the London Chamber logo there!

Air conditioning and the new F-gas rule – are you ready?

Something in the air

LOVE them or loathe them, environmental issues are always in the news. But there's a new piece of 'green' legislation about to come into force which seems to be going unnoticed and yet, with few exceptions, will affect every one of the thousands of businesses in London that has any form of air conditioning.

It's the F-gas regulation – in force from July 4th

It all stems from the famous Kyoto Protocol which the UK, along with the rest of the EU, signed up to in order to bring about a reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases.

One group of gases that, if released into the atmosphere, can contribute to the greenhouse effect, is the group of refrigerant compounds containing the element fluorine – hence the "F-gas" tag.

The new legislation puts into effect a whole series of controls on these gases, designed to prevent, as far as is practically possible, any leakage into the atmosphere.

These new legal controls don't just affect new systems, though, they also apply to all existing systems out there, no matter how old, which contain any one of these gases – i.e. about 99 per cent of all air conditioning systems in London, and anywhere else in the UK, for that matter.

At the heart of the new law is the duty it imposes on the operators of all systems containing any quantity of F-gas – however small. This obliges all operators to "take all technically feasible measures which do not entail disproportionate cost in preventing leakage and, as soon as possible, to repair any leaks detected."

The definition of "operator" is widely drawn and may be either the owner or the occupier of the premises depending upon the circumstances.

The law goes on to prescribe specific intervals for leakage tests, to be conducted: once every 12 months for



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any system containing 3kg or more of refrigerant, once every six months if the content is 30kg and every three months for large systems containing 300kg or more.

These tests can't be conducted by just anybody. Minimum training requirements have been laid down and only operatives certified to the relevant standard are allowed to carry out this work.

It doesn't end there. The regulation also lays down very specific requirements in terms of record-keeping, so that any topping-up, removal or recovery of gas from the system is logged.

So, you're asking yourself: "How do I know if I have a system that contains an F-gas?" "How can I tell how much it contains?" "How can I comply with the law on record-keeping to account for how much gas may be lost, recovered, "topped-up", etc. when it is serviced?"

"What you can't afford to do is to do nothing. Apart from the fines, what about the reputation of your organisation if you should get prosecuted?"

"Who is qualified to do this work for us?" and maybe more questions besides!

The best advice is to get in touch with a reputable air conditioning service company as soon as possible. An established and reputable company specialising in this sector will not charge you for an initial meeting to assess what systems you have and what steps you need to take in order to comply with the new legislation.

Don't make the same mistake as the facilities manager at one company we spoke to. He was convinced that the new regulation would not apply to him because his air conditioning system had chilled water and not refrigerant pipework. We had to point out gently, however, that his water chiller did contain F-gas, and was very definitely subject to the new law.

What you can't afford to do is to do nothing. Apart from the fines you could incur, what about the environmental reputation of your organisation if you should get prosecuted?

Look on the positive side too. A well-maintained air conditioning system will use less energy than one that is inadequately maintained and is much less likely to fail when you need it most.

By the way, the forecast is for another hot summer again this year.

Ozzy Niyazi is business development manager at Quantech Environmental Ltd.