

1. Introduction

As a requirement under APHC Ltd., companies must operate a customer complaints procedure designed to achieve a speedy and amicable resolution to a customer complaint. The complexity of the procedure will need to be commensurate with the size of the firm and the number of staff employed. With smaller firms this procedure need not be documented in writing, with larger firms the procedure should be fully documented and be available to all relevant staff as part of its quality procedures.

The customer complaints procedure must take account of the following:

- Company obligations under the requirements of statutory legislation such as the Sale of Goods Act.
- The requirements of the APHC Ltd. 'Licensed' Customer Charter or the APHC Certification Ltd. 'Competent Persons Scheme' Customer Charter.
- Required technical installation standards such as Building Regulations and supporting standards documentation.
- Requirements of the APHC Ltd. 'Licensed' Rules or the APHC Certification Ltd. 'Schemes' Rules.
- Accepted industry practice.

In the first instance all customer complaints must be referred to the company for resolution.

2. Complaints Procedure

The following outlines the **minimum requirements** of a complaints procedure that must be in place in each company:

- A designated individual or individual(s) must be identified in the company for the purposes of dealing with customer complaints, in a small firm this will usually be the working principal.
- The complaints procedure must include for the following:

Initial logging of the complaint and identifying full details of the complaint – simple complaints can be taken verbally from the customer using a simple customer complaint form, with more complex complaints, companies should request that complaints are forwarded by customers in writing. All complaints whether verbal or written must be logged by the company in a complaints recording system.

At the initial logging/ acknowledgement phase the company must identify the timescale in which a response to the complaint will be provided to the customer, this timescale should ordinarily be no longer than 14 days.

Information gathering – the complaint handler (if required) must obtain all relevant information in order that the complaint can be considered in full by the company e.g. feedback from operatives, check that the work has been undertaken correctly etc.

Feedback phase – the company must convey the findings of its review of the complaint to the customer within the agreed time period, providing the reasons for the decision that it has reached which may or may not be in favour of the customer. A summary of this feedback must be logged on the complaint sheet. The complaint sheet together with all appropriate paperwork must be kept in a company's complaints file and be retained for a period of not less than 6 years.

In the event that remedial work is necessary a mutually convenient time must be agreed with the customer to undertake the work.

3. Additional Notes

- On request APHC Ltd. can provide a simple complaints log sheet and standard letters designed to be used in a complaints procedure.
- Most complaints arise through a failure of communication between the two sides and a lack of understanding of each other's position. So the company should endeavour at all times to keep the customer informed of all salient matters (particularly any increase in the price of work or change in the nature of the work in progress) concerning the work being carried out and in reviewing any subsequent complaint.
- Where the company believes the complaint to be without justification and has satisfied itself that due diligence has been shown in completing the works in line with key requirements such as the APHC Ltd. 'Licensed' Customer Charter or the APHC Certification Ltd. 'Competent Persons Scheme' Customer Charter then the firm may initiate its own legal or debt recovery action.
- Where the company and customer cannot resolve a genuine complaint using the company's complaints procedure then the dispute can be referred by the customer only to APHC Ltd. under its complaint procedure. To initiate such an investigation the company should advise the customer to contact APHC Ltd.
- Companies must be aware of their requirements under the APHC Ltd. 'Licensed' Rules or the APHC Certification Ltd. 'Schemes' Rules, in particular failure to acknowledge or rectify a deficiency in customer service standards or technical installation standards may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Any questions?

If you require any further guidance on the requirements of a customer complaints procedure, then please contact APHC Ltd. during normal office hours on **0121 711 5030**.