

Energy Performance Certificates - Common Misconceptions

The roll out of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) for commercial properties began in earnest in April, but many property owners and tenants are still unsure about their responsibilities when it comes to implementing them. David Baybut, Stephensons' Head of Commercial Real Estate, answers the most common EPC questions:

All commercial properties an EPC after April 6th 2008

This is not the case, yet. Yes, properties with a total useful area over 10,000 square metres were affected from April 6th, and from July 1st, buildings over 2,500 square metres were also included. Most other commercial properties will require an EPC after October 1st 2008.

However, the need for a certificate is only triggered when the property is to be sold or let, or if it's a new building, or it has been modified. Certain commercial buildings are also exempt, for example, a place of worship, non-residential agricultural buildings such as a barn, and properties that are due to be demolished.

Do I have to act on the recommendations of an EPC report?

No, legally you don't have to act on the recommendations but the advantages of doing so are various. Taking action is likely to improve the energy efficiency of your property, could cut its carbon emissions, and will reduce energy bills. A more energy efficient building will also be more attractive to potential buyers or tenants in the future.

How much is an EPC going to cost?

This is obviously one of the first questions a property owner will want to know. The short answer is that the cost of producing an EPC will vary depending on each building, but once obtained it will last for ten years.

An energy assessor will take into account various factors, including the size of the property, its location, age and whether there are accurate floor plans available for the building already. If there are no plans, the cost of producing these will up the EPC cost considerably. Estimates so far suggest that a medium sized commercial property will cost a minimum of several thousand pounds, with a very large office building potentially costing tens of thousands.

Under no circumstances should property owners ignore the requirement to produce EPC when selling or renting out. Trading standards officers are instructed to enforce the law, and they have the power to impose penalties of up to £5,000 for those who ignore the need for an EPC.

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