



DON'T LET DECEMBER 2019 BECOME A PARTY FREE MONTH....

Like the Olympics, World Cups, US presidential elections and leap years, heat network notification deadlines come round every four years. I look forward to some of these more than others...

The [Heat Metering and Billing Regulations 2014](#) require heat suppliers (heat, cooling or hot water) to notify the Secretary of State if they have an existing heat network. The first deadline for notifying the [Office of Product Safety and Standards](#) for the first time was 31st December 2015, resulting in notifications representing around 17,000 communal and district heating networks being submitted.

Back in December 2015, when I was responsible for heat networks at a large housing association with nearly 50 heat networks covering over 4000 properties, this initial notification deadline was looming. Each December morning, I opened my inbox like a child excitedly opening an advent calendar door – wondering what gifts lay inside.... Low and behold, like surprise presents appearing under the Christmas tree, new heat network information seem to be magically delivered daily to my inbox (even though I had requested this for this for my birthday, a lot earlier in the summer).

Sadly, these presents did not come beautifully wrapped or with an explanatory gift tag saying what the information was, where it had come from (how would I be able to send thank you cards for these wonderful gifts?) or who was responsible.

What was I to do with these parcels' mysterious information? What about the full list of heat information presents that I had requested on my list to Santa but must have got lost in transit – or had I been too badly behaved in 2015? I remember lots of questions and lots of doubt:

- What counts as a heat network?
- Why don't we have any heating system data or records for all of these properties?
- What should we do about ESCO's?
- Who can I ask for help?
- When will this be over?

As the advent calendar doors continued to open, the Christmas treats stacked up in office kitchens and colleagues moved into the festive spirit, I found myself working late to pull together the organisations regulatory return, missing opportunities for Christmas parties and drinks.

Who needs festive fun and frolics when you can go on numerous wild goose chases - cajoling colleagues and contractors for missing information, tracking down health and safety files in dark basements and cross-examining asset management and repairs databases - wondering which version of the various spreadsheets provided is the most accurate or if any of them were even accurate at all?



Who said heat network regulation can't be fun? I found myself singing my own version of Love Actually's Christmas anthem to myself in a deserted office¹:

*♪ I feel it in the laterals.
♪ I feel it in the risers.
♪ Heat networks are all around me,
♪ And so the notification grows.
♪ It's written in the pipes,
♪ Should I include the ESCO?
♪ So if you really love heat networks,
♪ Come on and let it flow...*

Finally, on the 24th December, like the last advent calendar door revealing the best gift to date, the notification return was finally complete and submitted – time to finally relax, enjoy that had earned Christmas tippie, put on Love Actually, and wrap the heat meters I brought my dearly beloved for Christmas....

Roll on 2019 and as heat suppliers are obliged to submit updated notifications every four years, the deadline of the 31st December is on the horizon once again. If your organisation submitted a notification for a network in 2015, you must re-submit a notification for the network by the end of 2019. Any new heat networks developed since 2015 (for both existing or any new heat suppliers) should have been notified prior to completion so this gives a good opportunity to check that this been completed.

The heat sector network sector has changed considerably since 2015 but there are a number of lessons to share about completing and updating an organisations heat network notifications:

1. **Identify key internal stakeholders** and those that have heat network data and engage them in the process of heat network compliance
2. **Start data gathering as early as possible** and allow plenty of time for review and cross-referencing
3. **Be very specific** about what information you need and when
4. **Get internal support and sponsorship from Directors** with responsibility for heat networks and compliance

There is also a lot more experience and expertise to call on in the sector than there was four years ago. So if you're responsible for heat networks in your organisation but actually want to enjoy the festive season, [get in touch with Chirpy Heat](#) for support in updating and submitting your heat metering and billing return!

Don't let December become a party free month!

¹ Small print: Chirpy Heat accepts no responsibility for any earworms as a result of reading this blog and does not endorse watching Love Actually. Too often.