



Water Industry Registration Accredited Entity Scheme (WIRSAE) – Frequently Asked Questions and How to Prepare for Your WIRSAE Assessment

What is the Water Industry Registration Accredited Entity Scheme?

The Water Industry Registration Accredited Entity Scheme (WIRSAE) has been developed to allow contractors, who fulfil the scheme requirements, to become registered as accredited WIRSAE Providers. WIRSAE Providers are referred to as Accredited Entities in the Wholesale Retail Code.

WIRSAE accreditation (and subsequent registration), allows WIRSAE Providers to tender for and to carry out for Retailers temporary / permanent disconnections and meter installation / replacement works, relevant to their level of accreditation, as an alternative to the Wholesaler, known as the adopting utility, in whose area the work is being done.

Any WIRSAE Provider contracting to carry out accredited work (as defined in the Whole Retail Code and detailed in the generic code of practice supplemented by adopting utilities addendums) can be accredited, and registered, under this scheme. Those Adopting Utilities within England that recognise this scheme and will allow WIRSAE Providers holding the appropriate scopes of WIRSAE accreditation to tender for, and if successful, undertake temporary / permanent disconnections and meter installation / replacement works on behalf of Retailers.

Who is LRQA EMEA?

LRQA EMEA is a world-wide accreditation and inspection body that has been appointed as the Scheme Operator for WIRSAE. The controlling body of WIRS is the WIRSAE Advisory Panel (WIRSAEAP) which is made up of representatives from Adopting Utilities and WIRSAE Providers and has input from MOSL, Ofwat, and LRQA. This group meets approximately every four months and agrees the requirements of the scheme.

Who needs accreditation?

All WIRSAE Providers who wish to undertake any part in the temporary / permanent disconnections and meter installation / replacement works for a Retailer will need the Adopting Utility approval. Adopting Utilities registered to the scheme fully support WIRSAE, which removes the need for them to operate their own individual approval schemes, and via the Retailers will encourage all WIRSAE Providers engaged in the temporary / permanent disconnections and meter installation / replacement works to seek and gain WIRSAE accreditation.



What categories of accreditation are available?

There are three main categories:

Temporary disconnections / reconnections, permanent disconnections and meter installation / replacement works. These are split into the following categories;

1. Temporary Disconnections (over 40mm supply)
2. Temporary Disconnections (up to 40mm supply)
3. Meter Installation / replacement with pipework modifications and / or excavations works all sizes
4. Meter Installation / replacement (over 40mm supply)
5. Meter Installation / replacement (up to 40mm supply)
6. Permanent Disconnections (over 40mm supply)
7. Permanent Disconnections (up to 40mm supply)

How long does the accreditation take?

The assessment process is in two parts:

Partial - the Assessor will verify that the WIRSAE Provider, under assessment, has the appropriate Management Systems, Method Statements and Competencies in place and that their health and safety provision is appropriate for the work being done. This could incorporate an initial 'gap' analysis to help the WIRSAE Provider prepare for assessment. Achievement of partial, in terms of time frame, is dependent upon how responsive the WIRSAE Provider is in dealing with any issues arising from the gap analysis and the extent to which working practices and competencies actually align to documented systems. Should the WIRSAE Provider be well prepared, Partial may typically be achieved within a 6 week time from initial application.

Full - the Assessor will verify that the WIRSAE Provider has work control, contract change control, HR, Procurement and storage systems in place to ensure that a consistency of working process and competency is maintained that applies both at site works and in the office based supporting services.

As a guide, the overall assessment process takes about 3/4 man days but this is generally spread over several days/weeks. If a WIRSAE Provider has all the processes, procedures and competencies in place and appropriate site work is available then it is possible to achieve full accreditation in a relatively short period after Partial registration is secured.



What is the difference between Partial and Full Accreditation?

Partial accreditation was established as a means for contractors, who did not possess a track record in the water industry, to enter the WIRSAE Provider market. If a contractor possesses the competencies and method statements together with safe systems of work relevant to scheme requirements, which indicate that they could safely and competently perform the services for which they are seeking accreditation, then they could be awarded Partial accreditation. This would enable them to bid for contestable work, within the water industry. Once successful then they would be required to advise LRQA who would perform a site assessment on their first contract to enable them to gain full accreditation. Without the partial accreditation and subsequent registration phase it would be difficult for contractors with no water track record to enter the contestable market.

Full accreditation can only be achieved once the WIRSAE Provider has been awarded work and is undertaking the full scope of works for which accreditation was sought. The Assessor will visit one or more of the sites where work is being undertaken to assess the competency and methods of work applied, to ensure consistency with the competency and method statements reviewed under the partial assessment process.

All WIRSAE Provider work may be subject to site supervision by the Retailer and the Adopting Utility who will be adopting the installed network. The extent of the supervision will be determined by the accredited status of the WIRSAE Provider, so if the WIRSAE Provider has partial accreditation they will be exposed to a more stringent supervisory regime than if they have full and the cost of the supervision will be commensurate with the level of supervision assigned

What is the cost of the accreditation?

The costs of accreditation are based on a set of standard charges and an information sheet detailing costs is available on the LRQA WIRS website. The cost will depend on the scopes requested and the size of the WIRSAE Provider.

Quotations are based on the assumption that, when the assessment is done, the WIRSAE Provider will have all the necessary processes and procedures in place. If the Assessor finds that this is not the case and has to make additional visits then the WIRSAE Provider will be invoiced for the additional costs.

How do you apply for accreditation?

If you visit the LRQA website at www.lrqa.com you will find a link to the WIRS website which has a downloadable application form which can be emailed to the Utilities Team on utilities@lrqa.com. For any queries please call the team on 0800 014 9152.

Following receipt of an application a quotation for the assessment will be issued by the Utilities Team along with a LRQA Request for Services form.

Are there any guidance notes available?

Guidance on the detailed scheme requirements is available in the WIRS Requirements Document which is available on the WIRS website accessible from www.lrqa.com



What happens after I have agreed the quotation?

Once you have accepted the quote and returned a signed Request for Services Form, an assessor will be nominated for your company. The assessor will contact you and agree the dates for the assessment. Please note, that no payment is required at this stage unless after a financial check your credit limit is below the quoted amount

Does LRQA EMEA provide any consultation services to assist in compiling the WIRSAE procedures?

No, as LRQA is the Accreditation Body they are unable to offer any consultation. They can, however, carry out gap assessments, or desk top reviews, prior to the main assessment in order to advise on any scheme requirements that are not covered by your systems and procedures.

What will the LRQA Assessor be looking at during the assessment?

The Assessor will send you an agenda prior to the visit. This will cover the headings listed in the tabled breakdown “How to prepare for WIRSAE Assessment” - Appendix 1 of this document

What happens if the LRQA assessor finds things wrong during the assessment?

As the assessment progresses your Assessor will tell you where they think the requirements of WIRSAE are not being met. They will discuss the issues with you and agree actions that need to be taken to address the deficiency. There are 2 types of deficiency:

Major – this is when you do not have a procedure in place that is a requirement of WIRSAE. You will not be able to gain accreditation until you have addressed this type of deficiency

Minor – this is when you have a procedure in place but it doesn't quite meet the WIRSAE requirements or you are not fully adhering to it. Provided that you only have limited number of minor deficiencies you will still be able to gain accreditation. Close out of these deficiencies will be confirmed by your Assessor at subsequent surveillance visits



What happens after I have gained accreditation?

Your company's name and scope of accreditation will be registered onto the WIRS website. This means that any prospective Retailers can use the website to find suitable WIRSAE Providers to carry out metering and disconnection work. You will also receive a WIRSAE Certificate listing your scope of approval. Subject to complying with the rules for its use, once you have gained full accreditation, you will be entitled to use the WIRS logo on your letterheads etc.

How long does accreditation last for?

Accreditation will be for 5 years subject to successful surveillance audits by your LRQA assessor. The number of surveillance visits you will receive is dependent on the number of staff undertaking connection work and your scope of works. Most WIRSAE Providers have 1-2 surveillance visits a year, although a small company just undertaking design may only have one.

Can I use subcontractors to carry out the works?

Yes – however using sub-contractors has restrictions and is dependent on whether you and the sub-contractor hold the appropriate accreditation relevant to the particular scope of work you want them to do. Alternatively sub-contractors can work under the direct control of you, effectively under your duty of care, in a 'labour only' capacity' as long as you are an appropriately accredited WIRSAE Provider for the work being done. For full details and restrictions on the use of subcontractors see section 5 of the Scheme Requirements document

What happens if I fail to comply with scheme terms of registration once accredited?

If, during a surveillance visit, the Assessor notes a deficiency, it will be discussed with you. If it is a major deficiency, i.e. a significant breach of the scheme rules e.g. using a non-accredited subcontractor or working outside your scope then, dependant on the nature of the issue you may be face immediate suspension* or given an appropriate timescale (a month) to take appropriate corrective actions. If you fail to take action within this timescale then your accreditation will be suspended* and you will not be able to carry out any more water mains and service laying under WIRS accreditation until you have successfully closed out the deficiency. Any major deficiency will be notified to the wholesaler whose area you are working, and retailer for which you are working for.

* Note if you are suspended your website listing will be immediately changed to show the situation.

If it is a minor deficiency then you will have until the next surveillance visit to take corrective action and this will be verified by your assessor at that time. If you have not taken any action to close out a minor deficiency, then it will be re-classified as a Major Deficiency.



What recourse to appeal do I have if I do not accept a scheme operators judgement?

If you do not agree with any of the findings that your assessor has highlighted to you then you can appeal against the decision. The full appeals process is shown in the Scheme Requirements Document.

How do I prepare for WIRSAE assessment?

Firstly it is important that you familiarise yourself with the WIRSAE Requirements Document that can be found on the WIRS section of the LRQA website accessible from www.lrqa.com

You may find that the following tabled breakdown of assistance in either producing new systems and procedures or seeing whether existing ones meet the scheme requirements. This breakdown includes the relevant references in the WIRSAE Requirements Document.

WIRSAE Providers may find it of assistance to use the services of a consultant technical advisor to help them develop WIRSAE compliant systems and procedures.



"HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR WIRSAE ASSESSMENT"

These notes in this tabled breakdown are for the guidance of WIRSAE Providers unfamiliar with the WIRSAE assessment process. Whilst they provide summary of what is involved in the process they do not replace the scheme requirements document. They may not cover every aspect that WIRSAE requires but should provide you with general guidance and your assessor will be able to answer any more specific points you have

INTRODUCTION

The accreditation and scopes requested requires that you have systems and procedures that satisfy scheme requirements – where scheme requirements indicate those procedures **shall be documented**.

The **Water Industry Registration Accredited Entity (WIRSAE) Requirements Document** gives details about the scheme and what is required to attain accreditation.

If the WIRSAE Providers being assessed has and can show evidence that they fulfil the specific requirements (including any systems and procedures), and they are found to be satisfactory at the initial (Partial Stage) visit, then Partial Accreditation in the scopes requested may be granted.

Successful demonstration of these systems and procedures in operation, coupled with a successful demonstration of the physical and technical aspects of the work, relevant to the scope(s) requested, should then lead to Full Accreditation

The assessment coverage at the Full Evaluation stage is shown in GREY below

WIRS Provider RESPONSIBILITIES

The evaluation will seek to see if the WIRSAE Provider being assessed understands their responsibilities for working in ways which comply with the requirements of the scheme. Guidance on this requirement is in Section **2.-2.1 of the WIRSAE Requirements Document**

CONSTRUCTION SCOPE REQUIREMENTS-PARTIAL STAGE

Evaluation here will depend on the scope category requested: Reference here should be made to **section 3 of WIRSAE Requirements** relevant to the scope/scope category sought.

Reference should also be made when deciding on scope/scope category to the **General and Role Competency Requirements** as set out in **section 4.2**

In all cases -The WIRSAE Provider being assessed should be able to demonstrate it has the appropriate organisation is in place that details roles and responsibilities, and that interfaces, reporting lines etc and it has appropriate procedures .

- for managing work that assigns responsibilities throughout the construction life cycle and which cover all aspects of the construction work to be undertaken.
- covering project completion and handover to adopting utility.
- that ensure all projects are evaluated by competent personnel to ensure that all adopting utility specifications, requirements etc.... are met.
- that ensure technical audits are carried out as detailed **section 8.1 of the WIRSAE Requirements Document**

Note

Construction scope is specific and requires WIRSAE Providers to have, be able to undertake, and review, when required – Documented Method Statements. A list of requirements related to Method Statements relevant to scope category, who should produce and review them can be found in **section 6.2. of WIRS Requirements** – Also relevant to **Work Issue and Control** below

THE EVALUATION WILL ALSO INCLUDE QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE PARTICULAR SCOPES APPLIED FOR



AT FULL STAGE THE assessor will check the following

Appropriate construction organisation is in place for work being done

- Work instruction, relevant method statement and risk assessments available on site
- Adopting utility requirements have been identified and being acted upon
- Work is being done in accordance with instructions and to adopting utility requirements
- Staff are able to demonstrate that they hold required qualifications relevant certificates and competency records for work being done

GENERAL& ROLE COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS

(Refer to 4.2 General Competency Requirements + the relevant sections of 4.2 Role Specific Competency Requirements in the WIRS Requirements Document)

The WIRSAE Scheme is specific in its requirements relating to the competencies of those who carry out and supervise work. The referenced sections above provide details of these specific competency requirements.

Relevant to the scopes sought the WIRSAE Providers being assessed should

- be able to demonstrate that it has defined the competencies for all the roles identified in the scheme requirements
- that relevant health/hygiene certificate process is robust and keyed in and included in with HR processes
- where applicable appoint a Technical Advisor relevant to the scopes sought and relevant to the requirements as detailed in **4.2.1**
- have a competency assessment procedure in place that ensures the minimum competency requirements are satisfied before work is done. It should demonstrate the technical competency to define and assess role competencies with technical advisor support.
- be able to demonstrate that it has in place a system of recording competencies with that record being readily available

AT FULL STAGE THE assessor will check the following

- Competency assessment of **all** staff done with reference to Competency records
- That health and hygiene process is operational and fully valid
- Training programme and interim arrangements in place to cover any role where competency deficiencies identified
- A Process in place that ensures the refreshing of time limited qualifications
- Annual competency appraisals/reviews arrangements are in place
- Technical advisor with the required level of qualification/competency is in place and is actively supporting the delivery process
- Personnel engaged in the following activities (as relevant) satisfy scope specific competency requirements
 - o Temporary disconnection / re-connection activities
 - o Meter installation / re-connection activities
 - o Permanent disconnections

SUB CONTRACTED WORK-PARTIAL STAGE

(Refer to Section 5 of WIRS Requirements Document)

The WIRS Provider being assessed should be able to demonstrate an understanding of sub-contracting proposals and requirements in relation to the scheme.

- When using other accredited WIRS Providers- **Ref section 5.1. and 5.2 WIRSAE Requirements**
- When using labour only sub-contractors –**Ref section 5.2 WIRSAE Requirements**
- When using specialist sub-contractors I.e. testing disinfection–**Ref 5.3 WIRSAE Requirements**
- Where ground workers are/may be involved - A **documented procedure** shall be in place that caters for the use and control of ground workers to ensure that any work they do adheres to appropriate specifications/codes of practice.



AT FULL STAGE THE assessor will check the following

- Evidence would need to be seen of the actual controls relevant to the areas above –Section 5.1-5.3
- Any ‘labour only’ subcontractors (on all scopes of work) have been assessed in accordance with the Provider competence regime.

METHODS OF WORKING - PARTIAL STAGE

(Refer to Section 6 of WIRS Requirements Document)

The WIRSAE Provider being assessed should be able to demonstrate:-

Processes / procedures, for the scopes of work undertaken by the WIRSAE Provider that they have the following:-

- documented method statements detailing how the work is to be undertaken to the standards of the Adopting Utility
- method statements have been reviewed by a competent person
- where necessary additional instructions and guidance available to supplement method statements
- they have adequate procedures for assessing risk covering all key operations
- they have procedures in place to produce project specific risk assessments

Also refer to “Note” in Construction Scope Requirements Sections 6.2 & 6.3 for Method Statement Requirements

AT FULL STAGE THE assessor will check the following

The items checked at Full stage will be relevant to the scopes undertaken

- Method statements fully detailing the work being done and it is being done to specification and as directed by those method statements
- Method statements are current and have been reviewed by the competent person
- Risk assessments fully detail risks for the work being done
- Generic and /or project specific and site specific risk assessments have been completed and communicated to all staff

WORK ISSUE AND CONTROL- PARTIAL STAGE

(Refer to Section 7 of WIRS Requirements Document)

The WIRSAE Provider being assessed should be able to demonstrate:-

Processes / procedures, for managing work from inception through to adoption such that :-

- they demonstrate that they know how to recognise, access and comply with adopting utility and industry specific requirements (e.g. Wholesale Retail Document, generic code of practice etc..)
- they are relevant and appropriate to the scopes sought
- they include provision for adequate and appropriate site supervision arrangements
- they cater for the issue of **documented** work instructions
- they cater for scheduling work to ensure that sufficient competent personnel are deployed

The WIRSAE Provider shall have **documented procedures** (where scope dictates) that define how the technical elements of planning and construction work are controlled and how variations are managed.

They should also have **procedures** in place:-

- that cover the formal handover of assets to adopting utility
- for assessing risk which covers all relevant operations
- that shows that they have identified equipment requirements including determining how these will be provided and how they will, if necessary be examined and calibrated including keeping them calibrated and inspected with results/records



- that ensures all materials goods and services are procured from approved suppliers to specification of adopting utility and that adequate arrangements made for receiving, handling and storing goods.

AT FULL STAGE THE assessor will check the following

The items checked at Full stage will be relevant to the scopes undertaken

- Work undertaken has been managed in accordance with established work control & management procedures
- Notice and communication arrangements meet the requirements of the adopting utility.
- Work instructions clearly describe full extent of the work to be carried out including layout and necessary, specification.
- Provider has adequate resources for the work being done and schedules the work in accordance with a defined process
- Site supervision arrangements are adequate
- Operatives are clear about what constitutes a variation and any variations have been managed in accordance with stated procedure
- Work completion and adoption of assets is being done in accordance with procedure and to adopting utility requirements
- Sufficient equipment is available for the work being done and is maintained and where required kept in calibration
- Materials goods and services have been procured in accordance with procedures
- Goods receipt processes ensure receive goods comply with purchase requisition and specification

AUDIT-PARTIAL STAGE

(Refer to Section 8 of WIRS Requirements Document)

The WIRSAE Provider being assessed should have an audit procedure in place that ensures checks of activities are made which form a scheme requirement. These include activities performed directly or by others the WIRSAE Provider has delegated work to.

The WIRSAE Provider being assessed should have a documented audit procedure that takes account of and is relevant to the different levels of audit undertaken. Procedure should;

- specify frequency, content and close-out arrangements for technical audits
- require technical audits to be done by the Technical Advisor (where required) or other technically competent person
- ensure that works are constructed within appropriate industry standards
- include a close out facility that ensures deficiencies are closed out within a defined period
- ensure that all work activities are covered by health, safety, quality and environmental audits and specifies the competencies of persons carrying out such audits

AT FULL STAGE THE assessor will check the following

- Technical audits undertaken by a competent person and in accordance with procedure
- Deficiencies identified are closed out within defined period
- Technical and HSQE audits done reviewed and close-out actions adequate
- Identification of risks affecting compliance reviewed and up to date.

CONTRACT DOCUMENT AND RECORD CONTROL-PARTIAL STAGE

(Refer to Section 9 of WIRS Requirements Document)

The WIRSAE Provider being assessed should be able to demonstrate that a **procedure** is in place for:-



<ul style="list-style-type: none">- controlling all documents, data and information- ensuring records are identified, maintained and disposed of
AT FULL STAGE THE assessor will check the following
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Records and documents in use are controlled- Adequate records of the work being done are kept

LEGISLATION, STANDARDS AND GUIDANCE -PARTIAL STAGE (Refer to Section 10 of WIRS Requirements Document)
The WIRSAE Provider being assessed should be able to demonstrate access to appropriate legislation, technical standards and guidance documents + other relevant documents e.g. Wholesale Retail Code Part 3: Operational Terms etc... Reference library minimal list see section 10.1
AT FULL STAGE THE assessor will check the following;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- That appropriate technical standards are available to those responsible for specifying and directing the work and where needed standards have been accessed and used

QUALITY AND SAFETY SYSTEMS (Refer to Section 11 of WIRS Requirements Document)
The WIRSAE Provider being assessed should have:_ <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Quality management system in place that is relevant to the scopes and related activities sought- Health, Safety & Environmental provision in place, regularly reviewed with HSE guidance available- Scheme specific environmental factors adequately covered in working practices.- Procedures in place and/or established for<ul style="list-style-type: none">o complying with CDM regulations (where scopes dictate)o Customer Service and complaintso providing safety briefings to personnelo investigating and reporting accidents and incidentso Hygiene and quality of worko complying with CoSHH regulations.o the identification, provision, control and use of PPE
AT FULL STAGE the assessor will check the following;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Customer complaints have been investigated and followed through- Working methods accord with any quality management and HSQE systems- Work done has complied with CDM requirements- Any customer service complaints have been investigated- Safety briefings have been held with proof record available- Any accidents and incidents have been investigated and reported- COSHH regulations are complied with- PPE and other safety equipment has been provided and is being used



HUMAN RESOURCE SYSTEMS PARTIAL STAGE
(Refer to Section 12 of WIRSAE Requirements Document)

The WIRSAE Provider being assessed should have

- In place Human Resources procedures relevant to scheme requirements
- Job descriptions prepared for all scheme specific roles- **Ref 12.2**

AT FULL STAGE THE assessor will check the following;

- Recruitment has been done in accordance with procedure with records kept of the interview/selection process for new starters
- Job descriptions available and issued to role holders for relevant scheme specific roles
- Any scheme specific role requirements adequately managed through HR procedures.

TRAINING PARTIAL STAGE

(Refer to Section 12 of WIRSAE Requirements Document)

The WIRSAE Provider being assessed should have

- A training policy in place covering **Ref 12.3**
- Who carries it out (should be only formal recognised technical and operational training providers)
- Record of training
- Provision for personal supervision –circumstances, by who and when
- Ensure employees have sufficient training/knowledge to identify and cope with unexpected dangers arising out of work activities.

Induction arrangements in place for new starters and any personnel starting ‘competitive’ work for the first time **Ref 12.4**

AT FULL STAGE THE assessor will check the following;

- Training records held for all staff encountered in the appraisal including record of competency available on site
- Proof of Inductions held for new starters and any personnel starting ‘competitive’ work for the first time

SURVEILLANCE VISITS

Note:

Once full accreditation in a particular scope is achieved - it’s retention at that level over the accreditation period is dependent on the accrediting body conducting surveillance visits on the scope concerned. These visits are a scheme requirement and you will be required to agree to and meet the surveillance schedule. The number of surveillance visits over the 5 year accredited period is dependent on the number of scopes attained at full and the number of staff undertaking connection work in those scopes

Reference Appendix 1 (A1.3) of WIRS Requirements