



REFCOM ELITE REGISTRATION SCHEME  
MEMBER HANDBOOK



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# INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Best Practice in Refrigerant Handling means working to industry Codes of Practice and in compliance with all current legislation to ensure containment of refrigerant of any type. Work activities covered includes installation, commissioning, servicing, maintenance, leak checking and decommissioning on any kind of stationary refrigeration, air conditioning or heat pump equipment.
- 1.2 REFCOM has been running an Elite voluntary best practice company registration scheme since 1994 to promote environmentally responsible refrigerant management. REFCOM recognised early on the need for employers to better control the use of refrigerant and prevent their release to atmosphere.
- 1.3 Our objective through the Elite scheme is to encourage employers to operate entirely to industry best practice; for them to be environmentally aware and to operate entirely in compliance with current legislation; for their operatives to be suitably trained and competent to carry out their work in accordance with Company procedures. We achieve this by administering the REFCOM Elite voluntary scheme, a set of high professional standards recognised by bodies such as The Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Industry Board ACRIB, the RAC Industry and widely across the RAC sector in general.
- 1.4 Registration with the REFCOM Elite voluntary scheme proves to owners/operators that, following independent third party inspection, refrigeration or air conditioning companies:
  - Can competently install, commission or maintain a system containing refrigerant.
  - Are licensed waste carriers.
  - Handle refrigerants safely.
  - Are compliant with all current legal requirements.
  - Operate auditable procedures for the proper control of refrigerants and can account for all refrigerant used and recovered.
  - Use appropriate, purpose-designed refrigerant recovery equipment.
  - Perform refrigerant transactions with minimum emissions and are environmentally aware.
- 1.5 Though designed for contractors, registration is also open to end-users, equipment manufacturers and wholesalers and distributors who wish to demonstrate conformity with our standards.
- 1.6 Where end-users, equipment manufacturers and wholesalers and distributors are registering for the Elite Supplier scheme they are declaring that they will adhere to the sales guidelines outlined in the audit process below for the scheme.
- 1.7 You must renew your registration with REFCOM Elite annually.



## APPLICATION PROCESS (AND REQUIREMENTS FOR REGISTRATION)

### TO OBTAIN REFCOM ELITE REGISTRATION, BUSINESSES MUST DECLARE:

- Information about the business
- Prove that all employed refrigerant handling engineers are competent to carry out their work – i.e. that they have the necessary qualifications
- Waste carrier registration
- Refrigerant recovery equipment and auditable procedures in place which enables proper control of refrigerant movement (where refrigerant handling is involved in the scope of work)
- F Gas Certification (where applicable)
- Successful on-site inspection (set out in the following pages)



## APPLICATION:

- Apply to REFCOM online at [www.refcom.org.uk](http://www.refcom.org.uk)
- Contact REFCOM on 01768 860409



BESA members that have been inspected and assessed by other independent assessment that covers REFCOM's business and technical standards do not require separate audit.

## APPLICATION REVIEW:

REFCOM will undertake a document review of your application and information provided to check that the business meets the scheme requirements to move to certification. Should further information be required a member of the REFCOM team will contact you.

## AUDIT:

When a business is due to be inspected, it will be contacted directly by a REFCOM inspector/auditor who will arrange a time and date for the inspection to take place. In all cases, the inspector will be appropriately qualified and will explain prior to inspection the preaudit work required. This will assist the business in achieving a successful inspection.

Elite Suppliers will need to demonstrate that their sales staff are trained to understand who is entitled to buy refrigerant and/or refrigerant containing "split" type equipment, and that they have a secure and rigid vetting process of their customers.

At the time the appointment is made the business will be asked to arrange access to the relevant site(s).

The duration of the inspection and the number of sites to be visited will depend upon the size of the business and the number of refrigerant engineers employed. However, for most businesses, the time required will be between 2 and 4 hours.

Some aspects of the inspection may be covered by other certification schemes, to which the registered business may already be accredited. Any such accreditation will not grant exemption from the provisions of REFCOM Elite's registration requirements, but the inspector will take such schemes into account when carrying out the inspection.

Any non-conformity found during the inspection will be required to be dealt with effectively and in a timely manner.

Audit review and certification decision:

After the audit review is complete you will receive feedback from REFCOM in the form of an audit report. The audit report provided by REFCOM will state the outcome of the audit and make recommendations.

For example:

- Certification recommended – your company will be recommended for REFCOM Elite registration.
- Certification not recommended - Your company does not fully comply with standards. If the auditor's assessment shows that your company is likely to meet standards after addressing any identified issues, a recommendation will be made to further assess your Company within a given timescale. A re-assessment may be conducted through the submission of requested evidence or an additional on-site audit.

Applicants that are unsuccessful will be notified and be given the reason(s) why the business has not met the criteria. They will also be given details of how they can appeal against the decision, should they wish to do so.

## REGISTRATION GRANTED:

REFCOM will notify successful applicants of their company registration by providing:

- A REFCOM Elite company certificate
- Registration of your details to a public database of REFCOM Elite certificated businesses
- REFCOM Elite registered trademark, which you will be able to display to demonstrate your businesses status as an Elite certificated company
- Van labelling to demonstrate your status as an Elite certificated business
- Discounted insurance through the REFCOM Insurance Scheme

## AFTER REGISTRATION:

Registration must be renewed every year.

You will be notified by the REFCOM team when your company certification is due to expire.

30 days prior to expiry of certification businesses will be contacted by e-mail inviting them to renew and make payment (where appropriate).

Further reminders will be sent 7 days, and on expiry when your certification will be suspended if not previously renewed.

Early renewal does not affect the original renewal date, new certification will activate for one year upon expiry of the current registration.

## OUTCOME OF THE RENEWAL APPLICATION:

Once the renewal application has been validated and assessed, the REFCOM team will consider the application and then determine whether the business still meets the required standard.

REFCOM will notify successful applicants and issue a renewed company Elite certificate and a receipted invoice for the payment made.

Applicants who are unsuccessful will be notified and given the reason(s) why they have not met the certification standards. They will also be given details of how they can re-apply or appeal against the decision.

## ONGOING SURVEILLANCE OF MEMBERS:

Businesses are re-inspected every three years to make sure that they continue to meet the scheme standards. REFCOM also monitors the performance of businesses by recording details of any complaints received.

- The three-yearly inspection is carried out in the same way as the initial inspection. However, the inspector may examine other aspects of the business or he/she may look at the same elements in greater depth.
- Businesses may also be selected for audit following a third-party complaint.

The purpose of the audit regime is to:

- Ensure that the scheme integrity is rightly maintained and registration standards are met.
- Further validate and authenticate the information provided by registered businesses.



## ON-SITE RISK-BASED OR COMPLAINT TRIGGERED INSPECTION

REFCOM will obtain evidence to confirm accuracy of information requested by the desk-top assessment.

REFCOM will then notify the certificated business of the results of the inspection and, if necessary, request a site audit is performed.

## NON-COMPLIANCE:

In the event that REFCOM discovers any non-conformities, either at the time an application is verified, or during a subsequent on-site inspection, the business will be given a period of time to rectify the position so that it can achieve the necessary registration standard.

The time scale and arrangements for this process will vary as there are three categories of non-conformance.

A major non-conformity is where there is evidence of:

- Deliberately misleading or false information being supplied to REFCOM.
- A failure to meet the registration standards.
- A failure to comply with REFCOM's Terms of Registration.

In the event of one or more major non-conformities, the business will be given a maximum period of 4 weeks will be given to take the necessary corrective action. REFCOM or its appointed inspector, as appropriate, will agree and document the points at issue and agree a timescale for the corrective action to be taken. During this period businesses will retain their registered status with REFCOM Elite.

In the case of minor non-conformities, ie where one or more unsatisfactory items have been identified that are not likely to affect the validity of the Registration, then the Business will be given a maximum period of eight weeks to take the necessary corrective action.

In the case of Observation/Comment for Action .i.e. where one or more items have caused the inspector to mention a matter of best industry practice, regardless of who carries out the next audit that action needs to have been completed before the next inspection.

## COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS:

Complaints may be received from any source. These may originate, for example, from members of the public, Trading Standards, insurance companies, other certificated businesses, or similar organisations or persons.

The complaint may be against Refcom or one of its certificated businesses. The Scheme Manager will initially investigate the complaint by obtaining comments from all of the parties involved.

Complaints received by Refcom regarding members will be documented and investigated thoroughly by Refcom and all decisions regarding the outcome of complaints will be reviewed and approved by the Refcom Advisory Committee. All decisions regarding the outcome of any complaint will be advised to the member and/or complainant in writing. Should you not be satisfied with the outcome of the complaint resolution, you have the right to appeal against the complaint. The rules regarding complaints and appeals are outlined in the Terms of Registration which all members must abide by.

For further information on Refcom's complaint and appeals procedures, contact the Refcom team on 01768 860409 or view the procedure at [www.refcom.org.uk/complaints](http://www.refcom.org.uk/complaints)

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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### CONTACT REFCOM AT:

Old Mansion House, Eamont Bridge, Penrith, Cumbria CA10 2BX

Website: ..... [www.refcom.org.uk](http://www.refcom.org.uk)

Telephone: ..... 01768 860409



### USEFUL WEBSITES:

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs..... [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

ACRIB..... [www.acrib.org.uk](http://www.acrib.org.uk)

The Building Engineering Services Association (BESA)..... [www.thebesa.com](http://www.thebesa.com)

City and Guilds..... [www.cityandguilds.com](http://www.cityandguilds.com)

CITB CSkills..... [www.citb.co.uk](http://www.citb.co.uk)

Environment Agency..... [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency)



### STANDARDS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS:

The standards and documentation that underpin the Refcom Elite Registration Scheme is available on Refcom's website at [www.refcom.org.uk](http://www.refcom.org.uk)

- Refcom Terms of Registration
- Refcom Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedures
- Refcom Model Refrigerant Tracking Guidance
- Refcom Guidance for Complaints on Suspected Non-Compliance