



briefing

Voice of the Specialist Engineering Contractor

The members of the
SEC Group are:

Association of
Plumbing and Heating
Contractors

British Constructional
Steelwork Association

Electrical Contractors'
Association

Heating and
Ventilating
Contractors'
Association

Lift and Escalator
Industry Association

SELECT

For further information on all
aspects of SEC Group and its
activities contact:

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PAS 91

**WHAT YOU
NEED TO KNOW**

What is PAS 91?

PAS 91 was published by the British Standards Institution (BSI) in October 2010 with the support of the Government and organisations representing the construction industry throughout the UK. In BSI "speak" PAS 91 is a Publicly Available Specification (PAS) which is a form of British Standard. A PAS can, in time, become a full British Standard (see answer to last question).

The significance of PAS 91 is that, for the first time, we have a specification for information expected from construction firms at the pre-qualification stage.

Won't PAS 91 become just another hurdle to get over when pre-qualifying?

PAS 91 was launched to reduce the massive burden on the industry of the pre-qualification free for all. If purchasers just specified that all contractors would have to supply their pre-qualification information following the format set out in PAS 91 this would do away with the need for repeated form filling and complying with the audit requirements of various schemes.

But don't purchasers prefer to stick to their own procedures and to ask their own questions?

PAS 91 simply reflects those pre-qualification requirements which have been widely adopted over the years and should, therefore, incorporate most (if not all) of the questions purchasers ask. It does not attempt to dilute or "gold-plate" these. By specifying compliance with PAS 91 purchasers will know that their core pre-qualification requirements have



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** The majority of schemes which assess firms' health and safety competence (i.e. their compliance with the core criteria in the 2007 CDM Approved Code of Practice) are members of SSIP. They have agreed to mutually recognise each other's schemes*

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been addressed and administrative costs will be saved by not having to constantly evaluate and interpret responses to questionnaires. It should be made clear that PAS 91 is only concerned with providing evidence of a firm's general capabilities and is not intended to deal with specific capabilities.

So, what is actually included in PAS 91?

PAS 91 contains **core** questions that purchasers ask in most situations. These seek basic information about the firm such as its financial standing, the business and professional standing of its directors and its health and safety policies and procedures. In addition there are specific questions relating to the capability of the firm in a number of areas:

- *additional health and safety questions (applicable where a firm is carrying out design work or acts as a CDM co-ordinator under the 2007 CDM Regulations);*
- *environmental management;*
- *quality management;*
- *equal opportunities and diversity.*

Again, the additional questions reflect those that are commonly asked by purchasers.

With regard to the health and safety questions, does it make any difference that my firm is accredited to OHSAS 18001 or is in a Safety Schemes in Procurement (SSIP) Scheme?*

Yes. It means that you will not have to fill in the core questions on health and safety. You will, of course, have to supply evidence of current OHSAS 18001 accreditation or SSIP Scheme membership.

In addition to membership of a SSIP Scheme my firm has ISO 9001 (quality management) and ISO 14001 (environmental management). Will these be taken into account?

Yes. Other than providing evidence of the relevant accreditation your firm will not need to answer questions on quality management and environmental management. As your firm is in a SIPP Scheme it will only need to respond to the core questions about its set-up, financial and business standing and the additional questions on equal opportunities in order to become PAS 91 compliant.

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So, what steps must my firm take to become PAS 91 compliant?

Purchasers are unlikely to accept firms that have self-certified their PAS 91 compliance. Independent third party verification of such compliance would, therefore, be highly desirable. However, at this stage, SEC Group and its member associations are seeking clarification from government on the most cost-effective way for firms to achieve such compliance.

Once my firm has become PAS 91 compliant won't the effort be wasted if purchasers are not specifying it?

The aim is for all public sector purchasers to specify PAS 91. The Government has already announced that as from the beginning of 2011 all central Government purchasers will use PAS 91. Currently SEC Group and its member associations are lobbying to ensure that:

- *in the public sector PAS 91 will also be specified along the supply chain so that main contractors will be required to use it (and, indeed, sub-contractors vis a vis their sub-sub-contractors).*
- *local authorities will widely adopt PAS 91.*
- *PAS 91 will be taken up by the Scottish Government, Welsh Assembly Government and Northern Ireland Procurement Directorate.*

What happens if public-sector bodies refuse to specify PAS 91?

The Government has asked the SEC Group – in conjunction with its member associations – to put in place a monitoring process to gauge the take-up. Firms in each of the SEC Group associations will be invited to regularly report their experiences and identify those public sector bodies not using PAS 91. As yet there are no sanctions in place but SEC Group may ask Government for these to be considered where a public sector body repeatedly refuses to use PAS 91.

Will PAS 91 become a British Standard?

A PAS is often a precursor to a British Standard although there is no guarantee it will become a full British Standard. Much will depend on the success of PAS 91, especially the extent to which it is used. In the meantime PAS 91 will be reviewed by BSI after two years to ensure that it remains up to date and is accurate.