

RIDING THE WAVE

BEAMA offers the latest information on the current design developments and compliance issues installers might encounter when looking to specify and fit underfloor heating

The UK heating installer is no stranger to having to adapt to new technologies, or embrace increasingly popular industry measures. This might include the sharp rise in flue gas heat recovery technology, primary system filters and renewable heat products. While all require an element of training and design/installation awareness, courses are readily available from manufacturers and training providers, so this is certainly no barrier to extending the range of services and products an installer can offer.

It seems that now is the time for underfloor heating (UFH) design and installation capability to capture the attention of the adaptable heating installer. All indicators suggest that UFH is set for significant growth in the coming years as consumer interest in energy efficiency increases, and the heating method becomes a more popular aspirational feature than conservatories and hot tubs.

Recent research conducted by One Poll indicates that 40% of people searching for a new home would prefer to have UFH as their first choice; a result that backs a 10% year-on-year sales growth trend in the sector, and an increase of 5% on the result of a similar survey in 2014.

More importantly, 70% of 45 to 54 year-olds aspire to have an energy efficient home, with UFH at the heart of this drive. We now know that over one million householders would pay a premium of £5,000 or more for aspirational measures such as UFH, rising to around 7.5 million who would be prepared to pay £1,000.

This is not a throwaway fact when you consider the earlier mentioned sales growth and what a golden opportunity this could represent for installers who want to develop the skills to enable them to offer a desirable and energy efficient solution to their customers.

So, what is stimulating this type of response from homeowners, self-builders and home hunters? Comfort and energy efficiency appear to be the main drivers: UFH can deliver 10% to 15% greater efficiency from a boiler-driven system compared with other heat emitter types, and room-by-room-controlled, evenly distributed temperatures are both attractive to customers. If you couple this with surface space saving, it is not hard to see why UFH is becoming increasingly popular.

Regulations and incentives have helped boost the market, but these have come hand-in-hand with a suite of guidance documents and rules associated with heat system design and specification. These guidance documents all provide useful references when specifying and installing UFH.

HELP IS AT HAND

Specifiers keen to better understand the Building Regulations Compliance options for new and retrofit projects should refer to the Domestic Building Services Compliance Guide (www.dbsp.co.uk), and sister publication 'The Underfloor Heating Design & Installation Guide (2016)' – newly updated by BEAMA members, together with the BEAMA Heating Controls guide for UFH.



There is also a lot of useful reference material wrapped up within the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) framework that leads to a better understanding of UFH principles. All recent editions explain the latest technology developments for UFH, as well as the design requirements when considering hot-water service delivery alongside low temperature emitters. They also contain the basics of simple systems, surveying methodology and the often overlooked importance of commissioning.

On the subject of technology developments, perceptions of UFH being costly or disruptive are changing as a result of a compelling argument on the benefits of energy efficiency and systems that are simpler to install. Advances in new technology have paved the way for UFH in the retrofit market, taking the measure beyond the old perceptions of the new technology being difficult to integrate to existing systems.

Low height and thin, lightweight systems are growing in popularity as they can be simply applied to existing floor surfaces. These systems can be useful where headroom may previously have been an issue, as they can be deployed in almost any room or situation and bring the benefits of UFH with minimum disruption.

The message to installers is clear; if you are not already offering UFH to your customers, now is the time to seek out training from a BEAMA member manufacturer. A mixture of product development, progressive government policy and consumer aspirational demands have all played a part in heating system design, and we would advise installers to keep a close eye on the BEAMA website to download the latest guidance and advice documents, or access our regularly updated FAQs section.

Visit www.beama.org.uk to find the latest resources and become part of a growing professional community.