

New DW144 will galvanise ductwork industry

The latest revision of the industry's standard specification for sheet metal ductwork manufacture and installation will have a major impact on projects in 2014, according to Bob Lane, chairman of the B&ES Ductwork Group.



First published in 1998, DW144 has long been seen as the standard for all ductwork companies to meet so they can ensure quality installations and provide peace of mind to clients. It has been revised several times since, but the version produced in 2013 is the most comprehensive to date and is an essential reference document for installers, specifiers and engineers.

The provisions in the 2013 version have also been tested to meet all relevant European standards for the first time. As a result, it clarifies a number of areas of technical ambiguity and simplifies the task facing building services designers.

Provision is also made for some smaller installations where it can be appropriate to reduce steel gauge thickness to meet cost and sustainability criteria. However, the overriding priority is to ensure that all ductwork installations are robust, fit for purpose; and can be safely installed and maintained.

Digital construction

DW144 also recognises developments in technology and the impact of digital construction techniques, including Building Information Modelling (BIM) and CAD CAM. The advent of BIM is a welcome opportunity to embed a new culture of co-operation across the industry and DW144 will play an increasingly influential role in that process.

To deliver the best possible solutions at the best value for money there needs to be greater use of integrated supply chains with all professions working more closely together. DW144 emphasises the role of the ductwork contractor as key to the design team and shows that by involving their specialist skills at the outset, many of the processes during construction can be simplified and speeded up.

Most ductwork fabricators use the latest automated CAD drawing facilities in their designs and so can feed directly into the design engineer's drawings. This means they can help to guide clients; improve standards; and reduce the amount of problems installation teams encounter on site.

The growing popularity of prefabrication to cut costs and improve predictability suits ductwork firms because they were among the pioneers of prefabrication in the m&e sector. The discipline of drawing, designing and preparing systems before delivery to site comes naturally to the ductwork industry and this is reinforced in the revised DW144.