

Portable gas appliances

Recently the Board had a judge's decision that concerned us. The judge deemed the installation of a gas water heater that is designed to be a portable appliance not to be gasfitting.

Section 5 (2) (c) of the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006 (the Act) excludes work on portable gas appliances to be gasfitting. However, it has consistently been the Board's view that if a portable appliance is installed, it then ceases to be portable, and is therefore gasfitting.

The Board appealed the judge's decision and won the appeal. The appeal judge made the following comment:

"By installing the water heaters in the manner that he did they ceased to be portable gas appliances within the scope of the exception provided in s 5(2)(c), and his installation work amounted to gasfitting as defined by s 5 of the Act."

Therefore, unauthorised people can only work on portable gas appliances so long as they remain a portable appliance. If a portable gas appliance is fixed in place or has its pipework fixed in place, it then ceases to be portable and is gasfitting work that can only be completed by a gasfitter.

Please note, all gasfitting must be completed in accordance with the manufacturer's installation instructions. Therefore, gasfitters must not install a gas appliance that is designed to be portable.

Had the Board not won the appeal, the former judge's decision could have allowed a dangerous precedent. The Board has seen a number of unsafe situations such as portable water heaters being installed in small shower cubicles or bathrooms. Had these situations not been deemed gasfitting, the Board would not be able to take any action on them.

The Board wants to remind people that when a gas appliance that is designed to be portable is installed it becomes gasfitting. Gasfitting can only be carried out by those authorised under the Act (such as a registered and licenced gasfitter).