

SURVEYS NOW MANDATORY



IN THE DARK: The Cyprus Today report four months ago highlighting the need for mechanical surveys

Loop-hole closed

A NEW regulation comes into force today, closing a long-standing loophole that has meant many homes and smaller buildings have been without a mechanical survey.

From April 1, such a survey becomes mandatory for all buildings under 300m², and must check and show the technical details, layout and routing of all hot and cold water systems, waste water drainage, and central heating, cooling and ventilation systems.

The change means all new buildings, including houses, hotels, factory units and commercial premises, must now meet the standards required for a construction "visa" from the Cyprus Turkish Chamber of Mechanical Engineers.

Chamber chairman İzzet Volkan urged all home-buyers and builders to ensure that they complied with the requirement, which could prevent them from having major problems in future and save money in the long term. He said the chamber would give its services free of charge to oversee basic installations.

A mechanical survey of a house is considered essential because it indicates, for example, where waste and clean water is going to run, together with the installation of other systems such as heating and cooling, including all pipes and wiring.

Without a mechanical survey, things can go wrong: solar heating panels may be wrongly placed — facing north, as in the example of this picture — so that they cannot catch the sunlight and a burst water pipe might mean having to break open an entire wall or floor to locate the problem because there is no plan showing where the pipes run.

The chamber has long been pressing for the enforcement of mechanical survey requirements for smaller buildings. Despite many people having been told by their architect or contractor that a mechanical check was not needed — since 2004, around 5,000 new homes have been built, but only

about 200 of them have had a mechanical survey carried out — legislation requiring it dates back as far as 1982 and was finally ratified last July after appeals to the government by the Union of Turkish Cypriot Architects' and Engineers' Chambers.

Emir Taşçıoğlu, a director of the chamber's board, said there was much to be gained in the TRNC from tightening up the regulations, in view of the amount of energy being spent on water and space heating during the winter.

He said: "If mechanical surveys start to be applied in these buildings, alternative heating methods may be used for water and space heating.

"We have 10 months of sun a year in our country, so we can minimise our need for expensive electricity, using it only where it is unavoidable."

The need for mechanical surveys was highlighted by *Cyprus Today* four months ago. Celal Önen, a member of the board of the Chamber of Mechanical Engineers, explained that there were many systems in a house essential for living, but which might not be visible. "These could be a number of things, including the waste water and clean water pipe installations or the electrical and heating systems.

"A mechanical survey of a house is essential if we are to reach a certain standard in the construction sector, to have a strong building, for the efficient use of water and electricity and to save energy.

"Most importantly, if there is a malfunction in any of these systems, we will be able to look into the project and figure out where the problem is without having to knock down the whole house," he said.

Mr Önen said the most common problem was when swimming pools lost water, and heating and cooling systems did not work properly because no survey has been carried out.

A mechanical survey could save people money in the long run because they would not have to carry out costly repairs, he said.

HOMEBUYERS' PRESSURE GROUP MEETING

THE next meeting of the TRNC's Homebuyers' Pressure Group takes place on Tuesday, from 7.30pm at Sammy's Hotel, near the Bellapais road junction in

central Girne. For more information, check the group's website — www.homebuyerspressuregroup.net — or call 0533 876 3780.