

## BESA calls for calm in face of F-gas furore

2 years ago



The [Building Engineering Services Association](#) (BESA) has urged the UK government to keep “a sense of perspective” in the face of a growing row over the European Commission’s decision to speed up the phase down of global warming gases used in refrigeration and air conditioning equipment.

Despite concerted pressure from industry groups, the European Parliament voted to speed up the timetable for eliminating the use of fluorinated gases (f-gases) from use in stationary refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pump systems from the start of 2026.

While applauding the ambition of European administrators to show global leadership on tackling climate change, BESA warned that this could have potentially lethal consequences, particularly in the developing world. It also said that if the UK decided to adopt the new restrictions it could undermine its programme for wider adoption of heat pumps and so compromise its decarbonisation targets.

“The proposed new timetable would require a dramatic acceleration in the adoption of alternative refrigerants,” said the Association’s technical director Graeme Fox. “This will increase the amount of flammable gas in use which would create serious safety concerns.”

He urged the UK government to take a pragmatic approach pointing out that the industry’s workforce is not yet fully trained in the use of flammable refrigerants and that removing the option to service and maintain installed equipment with existing HFC gases would be counterproductive.

### Restrictions

“Many installed systems still have a useful operating life of at least 15 years, and it would be putting the industry and its clients in an extremely difficult and, potentially, impossible position if some of the proposed restrictions on the availability of refrigerants used for servicing these systems were adopted,” said Fox.

“Tearing out energy efficient and perfectly serviceable equipment would make no sense from an embodied carbon perspective and could be financially ruinous for many end users.”

The UK has continued to mirror the F-Gas Regulation despite its departure from the European Union. BESA, which created and manages the UK’s [primary F-Gas Register REFCOM](#) for safe refrigerant handling, said this was an example of when it should make up its own mind about which rules to adopt.

“What happens in Europe is still important to us and the rest of the world,” said Fox. “The rest of the world looks to it for leadership and manufacturers will have to adjust their global strategies to reflect any major changes in one of its largest markets – so this will be significant for worldwide product development.

“There have already been deaths in Africa linked to mishandling of flammable gases and a worldwide programme for safe refrigerant handling developed by the United Nations Environment Programme is only just getting up and running.

“It will take time to get technicians up-skilled, certified and able to work safely with the new generation of refrigerant gases, so it is vital that we do not jump the gun and start flooding the market with alternative systems before the workforce is competent to work with them.”

The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union have still to agree on the final wording of the proposed review of the F-Gas Regulation and industry groups representing manufacturers, contractors, and end users, said they would continue to lobby for “a more realistic phase down timetable”.

“Of course, we should continue leading the way in transitioning the world towards more environmentally benign refrigerants, but just because something is technically feasible does not mean it is morally or professionally applicable in the real world,” said Fox.

“We should not risk more innocent lives before we see the folly of transitioning too quickly.”