

What is a BER?

A Building Energy Rating (BER) is an energy rating for a building and the better the rating, the lower the energy/fuel bills will be. The rating is usually expressed as a scale, like new fridges or Leaving cert exam results, e.g. A1, B2, C3 down to G.

The assessor gathers all the required information and uses a computer program to calculate the numerical value for a house, e.g. 140 kWh/m²/yr. This 140 value would result in a BER of B3. The units used in the value: kiloWatt hours per square meter per year (kWh/m²/yr) is the estimated amount of energy the house will use over a year divided by the size of the house. This means that a big house does not necessarily have a worse rating than a small apartment; it is their ability to use energy efficiently, not their overall size that matters.

A full BER certificate is valid for 10 years, and is only available if the building is fully constructed. If any major changes are made to the building afterwards which may affect the rating, a new cert should be obtained. A Provisional cert is valid for 2 years, this is required for buildings sold 'off plans', or in some locations when applying for planning permission.

The implementation of BERs for Ireland is the joint responsibility of the following:

- Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
- Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources
- Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) The SEI website, www.sei.ie is a valuable source of information on the BER scheme.