

Tracer tapes to plastic water pipes

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Question

Does the requirement to apply a metallic tape to plastic pipes behind wall surfaces, to enable them to be located by a metal detector, include plastic pipes within timber or metal stud partitions?

Considerations

- Plastic pipework containing water for heating and domestic water services when installed behind wall surfaces is at risk of damage from drilling and fixing items to the wall with screws or nails etc.
- NHBC Standards Chapter 8.1.11 states 'Metallic tape should be placed behind plastic pipework, where it is concealed behind wall surfaces, and would otherwise not be located by a metal detector or similar equipment'.
- Standards Extra issue 36 September 2006 contained an article describing suitable methods of identifying plastic pipework by applying a metallic tape either to the plastic pipe or the surface of the wall directly behind the pipe.

Answer

Plastic pipework, containing water and installed behind wall surfaces, such as drylining or embedded in solid plaster, are generally considered to be rigidly located and at risk of damage from drilling and screw/nail fixings into the wall. Therefore, the location of such pipework should be identified by applying a metallic tape to the pipe or surface of the wall directly behind the pipe.

Plastic pipework installed within a stud partition is considered to be less rigidly fixed and therefore able to deflect away from a drill or screw/nail fixings without being damaged. Identification of such pipework in timber framed partitions by the application of metallic tape is considered good practice but is optional.

Fixing the metallic tape on to the plastic pipes with an adhesive should be avoided unless the adhesive is approved by the pipe manufacturer. It is preferable for the tape to be stuck to the masonry wall behind the pipe or crimped on to the pipe without adhesive.