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Compliance Certificates in a Property Transfer: The Complete Gauteng Guide

A missing compliance certificate is one of the most common reasons a property transfer stalls at the worst possible moment. The OTP is signed, the bond is approved, the occupation date is agreed — and then someone discovers the solar installation never got a certificate, or the distribution board was upgraded without one, or the borehole on the property has never been registered. This guide explains every certificate you need in Gauteng, what each one covers, who issues it, and what the newer rules mean for solar, DB boards, and boreholes.

COCs must be originals, not copies, and must be provided to the conveyancer before lodgement. A conveyancer cannot certify compliance on behalf of the parties — the certificates must come from the registered professionals who conducted the inspections.

Why COCs Exist and Who Is Responsible

A Certificate of Compliance is a formal document issued by a registered professional confirming that a specific installation on a property meets the legal and safety standards applicable to it. The purpose is protection in both directions: the seller is protected from future liability claims, and the buyer takes transfer knowing the property is legally compliant.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 and its regulations, as well as various municipal by-laws, the seller bears the cost and obligation of obtaining the required COCs before transfer can be registered. The conveyancer must receive the original certificates before the Deeds Office lodgement can proceed for those certificates required by law. Banks financing the purchase will also require valid certificates as a condition of bond registration.

The Full COC Picture: Gauteng at a Glance

COC Type	Mandatory?	Validity	Who Issues	Gauteng Notes
Electrical (ECOC)	YES	2 years	Registered electrician (DoEL)	Covers DB board, wiring, plugs, earthing. Solar must be included if installed.
Electric Fence	YES – if applicable	Required at change of ownership	DoEL registered electrician	Required if property has any electric fence or if fence was modified.
Gas	YES – if applicable	Required at change of ownership	SAQCC Gas registered practitioner	Required for any fixed gas installation: braai, stove, geyser, fireplace.
Plumbing / Water	NO (Cape Town only)	No fixed expiry	PIRB-registered plumber	Not a Gauteng municipal by-law requirement.
Borehole	YES – if applicable	No fixed expiry	Well specialist (SANS 10299-4)	Gauteng: notification to CoJ required; CoJ consent required before drilling.
Solar / SSEG	YES – if applicable	With ECOC	IE or MIE (DoEL registered)	Grid-tied systems must register with CoJ / Eskom as SSEG. Off-grid exempt.
Beetle / Borer	NO (Coastal provinces only)	3-6 months	SAPCA registered inspector	Not required inland.
Asbestos	NO (Commercial properties only)	N/A	Registered assessor	Required for commercial / workplace use. Residential position still developing.

1. The Electrical Certificate of Compliance (ECOC)

The ECOC is the foundational certificate in any Gauteng property transfer. It is a legal requirement under Regulation 7(5) of the Electrical Installation Regulations made under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. It can only be issued by a registered person, namely a Registered Electrical Tester for Single Phase (ET), an Installation Electrician (IE), or a Master Installation Electrician (MIE) who is registered with the Department of Employment and Labour (DoEL).

The ECOC certifies that the fixed electrical installation on the property, from the point of supply through the distribution board, all wiring, circuit breakers, earth leakage units, plugs, and light switches, is safe and compliant with SANS 10142-1 (the Wiring of Premises standard). It does not certify that everything works. It certifies that nothing is dangerous.

What the ECOC Covers

- The main distribution board (DB board) and all sub-boards
- All fixed wiring from incoming supply to points of use
- Wall plugs, light switches, and fixed appliance connections
- Earthing and bonding of the installation
- Earth leakage and overcurrent protection devices
- Geysers and other fixed high-draw appliances
- Swimming pool pump circuits and fixed irrigation connections
- Solar PV and battery backup systems, if installed on the property

The Distribution Board Question

The DB board is specifically covered under the ECOC, and it is one of the most common reasons an electrical inspection fails. Older DB boards in Gauteng properties, particularly those with ceramic fuse holders rather than modern circuit breakers, routinely fail compliance inspections. The standard for a modern compliant DB board requires correctly rated circuit breakers, a properly installed earth leakage protection unit, clearly labelled circuits, and appropriate fire protection within the enclosure.

If a DB board was upgraded or modified at any point after the most recent ECOC was issued, a new ECOC is required. The certificate records what was inspected at a point in time, and any alteration to the installation invalidates it for that portion of the work.

Sellers: get your electrical inspection done well before you list. An inspector who finds a non-compliant DB board, missing earth leakage protection, or illegal DIY wiring in a geyser connection will not issue the certificate until repairs are made. Finding this out two weeks before occupation is considerably more stressful than finding it three months before you go to market.

The ECOC is valid for two years from date of issue, provided no alterations have been made to the electrical installation. A new certificate is required if alterations have been made, even minor ones, regardless of when the existing certificate was issued. For transfer purposes, if an existing ECOC is more than two years old, a new one must be obtained.



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2. Solar PV Systems: The Biggest New Compliance Issue in Gauteng

The load-shedding boom of 2022 to 2024 drove an enormous number of solar installations in Gauteng. Many of those installations were done by qualified contractors who issued proper certificates. Many were not. As those properties now come to market, solar compliance has become one of the most frequently identified issues in property transfers across Johannesburg and Pretoria.

Solar Is Part of the ECOC, Not a Separate Certificate

A solar PV system or battery backup/inverter system connected to the property's fixed electrical installation does not require its own standalone certificate. It must, however, be specifically included in the property's Electrical Certificate of Compliance. If a solar system was installed after the most recent ECOC was issued, that ECOC is no longer valid for transfer purposes and a new ECOC covering the solar installation in full must be obtained.

The ECOC for a system including solar must be issued by an Installation Electrician (IE) or Master Installation Electrician (MIE). An Electrical Tester for Single Phase (ET) may only issue a solar ECOC if they have completed the required unit standards for inspection, testing, and certification of single-phase solar domestic installations.

Grid-Tied Systems: SSEG Registration Required

Any solar system that is connected to the municipal or Eskom grid, whether or not it exports electricity back to the grid, must be registered as a Small-Scale Embedded Generator (SSEG). In Johannesburg, this means registration with the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) electricity department. Properties served directly by Eskom must register with Eskom.

From 1 October 2025, Eskom simplified the sign-off process: SSEG systems may now be signed off by a DoEL-registered person (excluding single-phase testers), and an ECSA-registered professional engineer is no longer mandatory for residential Eskom-connected systems. The required documentation for SSEG registration is a valid ECOC, an inverter type test certificate (NRS 097-2-1), and an SSEG installation commissioning report.

A grid-tied solar system that has not been registered as an SSEG with the CoJ or Eskom is operating in breach of the applicable requirements. Conveyancers and buyers' attorneys are increasingly flagging unregistered grid-tied systems during due diligence. The seller's obligation is to ensure both a valid ECOC covering the solar installation and SSEG registration before transfer.

Fully off-grid systems, meaning those with no connection whatsoever to the municipal or Eskom supply as a backup, do not require SSEG registration. In practice, most hybrid inverter systems maintain a grid connection and are therefore not truly off-grid.

What Happens If There Is No Solar COC?

If a solar system was installed during the load-shedding peak without a proper ECOC being issued, the seller faces two options: obtain a new ECOC from a qualified electrician covering the full installation, or disclose the non-compliance in the sale agreement and negotiate who will be responsible for obtaining the certificate and at whose cost. The latter is possible but carries risk for the buyer, particularly if the bank financing the purchase requires a valid ECOC as a bond condition.

3. The Gas Certificate of Compliance

If the property has any fixed gas installation, a Gas Certificate of Compliance is required. This is governed by the Pressure Equipment Regulations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The certificate can only be issued by a technician registered with the Liquefied Petroleum Gas Safety Association of Southern Africa (LPGAS).

Fixed gas installations that require certification include built-in gas stoves, gas braais and fireplaces, gas geysers, and any fixed gas supply line. Portable gas appliances, meaning freestanding devices connected to a cylinder via a flexible hose, do not require a Gas COC.

The Gas COC is valid for five years from issue, provided no alterations or additions are made to the installation. A new certificate is required if the installation is modified or if more than 18 months have passed since the property was last sold. Note that gas cylinders above 48 kg stored on the property will prevent the technician from issuing the certificate due to storage limit regulations under SANS10087.

4. The Electric Fence Certificate

If the property has an electric fence system, whether surrounding the perimeter, on top of a wall, or integrated into a gate mechanism, an Electric Fence Certificate is required. This is separate from the ECOC and must be issued by an Electric Fence System Installer registered with the Department of Employment and Labour under the Electric Machinery Regulations.

The certificate covers the energiser unit, earthing, insulation, warning signage placement, gate contacts, voltage output, and the isolation switch. It also applies to individual sectional title units if the complex has an electric fence system on common property. In that case, it is the body corporate's obligation to ensure the certificate is in place for the common electric fence, while the individual owner's ECOC covers the internal installation.

There is no expiry period for an electric fence certificate, but a new certificate must be obtained if the fence system is modified, if a new energiser is installed, or if the property is sold.



5. Boreholes: The Gauteng-Specific Compliance Picture

Boreholes have become increasingly common on Gauteng properties as water security concerns have grown. The compliance position for boreholes is more complex than most sellers realise, and the City of Johannesburg's enforcement posture has tightened significantly following a high-profile incident in which unregistered drilling compromised the Gautrain underground infrastructure.

Consent to Drill

Within the City of Johannesburg jurisdiction, a landowner must obtain formal consent from the CoJ before drilling a borehole. This is not optional. The CoJ requires completion of Application Form 10 (Consent Borehole, 2019) and Form A (Application Information Borehole, 2024), submitted to landuseapplications@joburg.org.za. The registration application fee is R1,185. Formal consent must be received before drilling commences. Following the Gautrain incident, the CoJ has moved to actively enforce this requirement, including impounding rigs and equipment from contractors found drilling without consent.

Notification and Registration

Even if the borehole was drilled before the current enforcement regime, the owner must notify the CoJ of the borehole's existence. The City of Johannesburg requires property owners to provide particulars of any borehole from which water is drawn, proof of water quality, and in some cases an annual health certificate confirming water quality. The Borehole Water Association of Southern Africa (BWA) has been in active engagement with the CoJ to streamline the process, but as of the time of writing, the consent and notification requirements remain as described.

In Ekurhuleni, registration of existing boreholes is required. In Tshwane, owners should verify current requirements with the municipality directly as by-laws vary.

The Borehole COC for Transfer

When selling a property that has a borehole, a borehole compliance certificate should be obtained before transfer. This certificate, issued by a well specialist in accordance with SANS 10299-4:2003, confirms that the installation is properly constructed, that the borehole is adequately sealed and covered, and records the yield in litres per hour. Banks and insurers require this certificate to attribute value to the borehole for bond and insurance purposes.

Estate agents should ensure that any sale agreement for a property with a borehole includes a specific clause addressing which party is responsible for the borehole COC, the cost of obtaining it, and what happens if the borehole yield is lower than expected or the installation is non-compliant. This is not covered by the standard OTP and the silence creates disputes.

7. What Your Conveyancer Needs and When

The conveyancer managing your transfer will require the following from the seller before lodgement at the Deeds Office:

- **Original ECOC** — not a copy — issued within the last two years and covering all current installations including solar where applicable.
- **Electric Fence COC** if an electric fence is present.
- **Gas COC** if any fixed gas installation is present.
- **Borehole COC and proof of CoJ registration/consent** if a borehole is present on the property.
- **SSEG registration confirmation** if the property has a grid-tied solar system, this should accompany the ECOC.

The conveyancer should be made aware of all installations on the property at the outset of the transfer instruction so that the full list of required certificates can be established early. Discovering at lodgement stage that a solar system was installed two years ago without a COC can delay registration by weeks.

How VDM Attorneys Can Help

At Van Deventer Dowlath & Marx Inc., our Conveyancing team guides sellers and buyers through the full compliance certificate process as part of every property transfer we handle. We identify which certificates are required for your specific property, advise on Gauteng-specific requirements including borehole and solar compliance, and ensure nothing delays your transfer at the Deeds Office stage.

If you are preparing to sell and want to know exactly what certificates your property needs before you list, contact VDM Attorneys. Getting this right early is far less stressful than discovering a problem when transfer is already underway.

