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*Preventing deaths  
and injuries in the  
home in Scotland*

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## Who We Are

**Electrical Safety First is the consumer charity dedicated to preventing deaths, injuries and damage caused by electricity. Our aim is to ensure everyone in the UK uses electricity safely.**

- We work with tenants, landlords, homeowners and governments to reduce deaths and accidents in the home.
- We campaign on behalf of consumers and electrical trade professionals to improve safety regulation and ensure safety messages are appropriate, up-to-date and well communicated.
- We provide expert information and advice to help people protect themselves from faulty, damaged, sub-standard and poorly maintained electrical installations and electrical appliances.
- We are recognised by government and industry as the leading campaigning charity and technical authority on electrical safety in the home.

## Preventing Electrical Fires and Keeping People Safe

Electricity can and does kill. Domestic fires in the home are reducing, but house fires caused by electricity are steadily increasing. In 2015-16, an electrical source was the cause of 75 per cent of all accidental house fires - accounting for more than 3,800 incidents.<sup>1</sup>



We see the need for a Scottish Government led strategy to reduce the number of electrical fires in the home. A proactive partnership between Electrical Safety First, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and Scottish Government working together could reduce electrical fires and their devastating consequences.

### We want to see:

- **A commitment to reduce the number of accidental electrical house fires by at least 10 per cent over the next five years.**
- **Improved reporting of accidental house fires caused by electricity.**
- **Support for the SFRS to undertake more proactive activities to raise awareness and prevent house fires caused by electricity.**

# Keeping Housing Safe

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Electricity is the number one cause of all fires in Scottish homes but the law provides varying levels of protection for those living in different housing tenures. Over the last couple of years, the Scottish Government has led the way in protecting private tenants by requiring regular electrical checks, by a registered electrician, in all private rented sector homes. But the legislation does not cover those in social housing, or those living in their own homes, despite these tenures accounting for 80% of the total housing mix.<sup>2</sup>

Electrical Safety First believes there is a clear inconsistency between electrical safety standards in private and social housing – and even more so in relation to owner-occupied homes. While owner occupiers can choose to determine acceptable risk levels in their home, this can be an issue when they live in tenements and flats, where fire can easily spread and impact on other residents.

At the moment, we really do have ‘inequality streets’, where one resident might be much better protected from electrical risk than their next door neighbour.

## We want to see:

- **Five-yearly electrical safety checks in the social rented sectors and visual safety inspections carried out when a tenancy changes hands.**
- **Mandatory electrical safety checks in owner-occupied properties – or, as a first step, in owner-occupied flats.**
- **A Residual Current Device (RCD) should be fitted in all rented homes, whether private or in the social sectors.**

# Ageing Population and Electrical Safety

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Official figures show that people over 65 in Scotland are at a greater risk from fires in the home than any other age group.

Electrical accidents in the home can pose a more significant risk to older or vulnerable people. This is often due to old or poor quality housing that contains faulty electrics and appliances. With 78% of older people’s homes in disrepair (and 58% requiring a critical repair), Scotland’s ageing population is at an increasing risk of electrical dangers.<sup>3</sup>

Our new study, Age Safe Scotland: Electrical Safety in an Ageing Society, was established to better understand the impact of poor electrical safety on an ageing society in Scotland and offers recommendations that will help older people to stay safely in their own homes for longer.



## We want to see:

- **The option of a free five-yearly electrical safety check for all households with one person of pensionable age.**
- **Proactive action targeting the over 65s with safety prevention measures to prevent electrical fires.**
- **Statutory five-yearly electrical checks in all care homes.**

# Product Safety and Counterfeit Electrical Goods

## Product Safety

The product recall system for faulty electrical goods is failing consumers. Faulty recalled appliances are responsible for significant numbers of domestic fires and a number of tragic fatalities. The success rate for electrical recall notices is rarely more than 10-20 per cent.<sup>4</sup>

There is currently a serious gap between faults that manufacturers and suppliers of electrical goods know about, and what consumers are aware of. The UK's complex and self-regulated product recall system has left many unsafe products in people's homes, threatening lives and property. Manufacturers are not currently incentivised to take swift, appropriate action to counter potential danger.

## Counterfeits

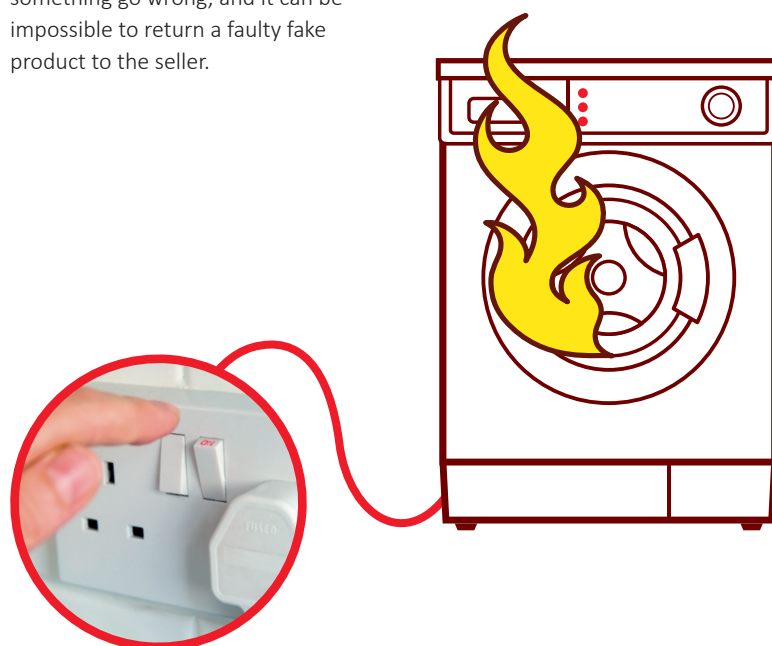
Adding to this problem is the huge increase in the number of counterfeit and sub-standard electrical goods entering the country. Fakes follow the trends in must-have items; they will often be priced fractionally lower than the genuine product so not to arouse suspicion. Seizures of fake mobile phones have risen by more than fifty per cent, along with other common electrical fakes including mobile phone chargers and health and beauty products, such as hair straighteners.

Our research has shown that 64 per cent of all counterfeit electrical goods are now being sold online with sales via social media growing by 15 per cent.<sup>5</sup> Over the last three years, social media has become the place to advertise and trade in counterfeit goods, with thousands of items being made available on a daily basis. Many items are also sold through trusted online marketplaces leading consumers to believe they are genuine. Seeing such open trading may lead people to think that the products must be safe to buy, but these apparent bargains are usually too good to be true.

Fake goods often contain faulty parts or do not contain the vital safety components that prevent them from overheating and catching fire. If people buy a counterfeit product there is no system in place should something go wrong, and it can be impossible to return a faulty fake product to the seller.

## We want to see:

- **Better traceability of electrical products from point-of-sale to consumer.**
- **UK Government to collect, review and publish product recall information, so that consumers have a trusted authority to consult.**
- **Better co-ordination of Trading Standards to combat increasing numbers of counterfeit electrical goods being imported.**
- **Enforcement agencies prioritise action on fake electrical goods and new enforcement operations set up to target the sale of counterfeit electrical items.**



# Building Standards and Electrical Safety

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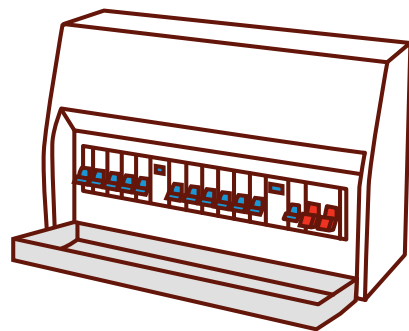
Under the Building Standards system in Scotland, some electrical work requires permission in the form of a building warrant (the legal permission you need from the local authority to start building work). In these circumstances, this work can be ratified by an approved certifier or be verified by the local authority.

Electrical Safety First always recommends that you use an electrician registered with one of the government-approved schemes to do any electrical installation work in your home. In Scotland, this will usually mean that they are a member firm of the Electrical Contractors' Association of Scotland (SELECT) or registered with NICEIC.

We fully recognise that sub-standard electrical work and failings in workmanship can and do result in death, injury and loss of property through fire. SELECT members and NICEIC registered electricians work to the UK national safety standard (BS 7671) and will provide a safety certificate to confirm that their work has been designed, inspected and tested in line with that standard.

## We want to see:

- **Wider awareness of the dangers of undertaking electrical work in the home and the need to always consult a registered electrician.**



# Exit from the European Union

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Much of the current legislation in place in the UK in relation to product safety and consumer protection is dependent upon minimum standards set out in EU legislation. The UK also currently works closely with the other twenty seven member states of the EU to monitor products that are placed on the market to ensure that they meet the necessary minimum safety requirements so as not to cause a danger to consumers.

The UK also works with trading standards authorities and customs officials across the European Union to ensure that unsafe and counterfeit products are stopped at the point of entry.

## We want to see:

- **No deregulation of product safety standards implemented by EU laws once the UK has left the European Union.**
- **That the protections afforded to consumers through our membership of the EU are maintained and strengthened upon our exit.**
- **Continued close working with European partners to ensure that products entering the UK market are safe and meet the minimum standards set and that dangerous products are intercepted and reported.**





- 1 Electrical Safety First analysis of data provided by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service from 31 March 2016 - 1 April 2016
- 2 Scottish House Condition Survey 2015: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SHCS/Downloads>
- 3 Ibid
- 4 Electrical Safety First, Consumer Voice on Product Recall Report (2014)
- 5 [www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/news-and-campaigns/press-releases/2016/06/british-consumers-now-twice-as-likely-to-buy-a-counterfeit-electrical-product/](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/news-and-campaigns/press-releases/2016/06/british-consumers-now-twice-as-likely-to-buy-a-counterfeit-electrical-product/)

**Electrical Safety First**

The Walled Garden, Bush Estate, Midlothian, EH26 0SD

Helpline: 0131 445 4690

Email: [enquiries@electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk) Web: [www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk)

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**Electrical**   
**Safety First**  
The UK's electrical safety experts