

BUILDING REGULATIONS AND ELECTRICAL SAFETY

THE ISSUE:

The building regulation in England which covers domestic electrical work is known as 'Part P'. Part P is essential in protecting the public from substandard, dangerous domestic electrical work. Electrical Safety First strongly supports both maintaining and strengthening this protection and promotes the use of Part P registered professional electricians.

We are committed to promoting the use of registered electricians and working to prevent further deregulation of Part P. We are also committed to increasing public awareness of this important consumer protection.

**NO
DEREGULATION
OF PART P**



WE WANT TO SEE:

- ✓ No further deregulation of Part P.
- ✓ The Government demonstrates a clear commitment to strengthen Part P.
- ✓ Local Authorities must be incentivised and accept the enforcement of Part P regulations as a priority in protecting the public.
- ✓ That people are aware of the dangers of doing their own electrical work in the home and will always consult a registered electrician.

WHO ARE WE

Electrical Safety First is the UK consumer charity dedicated to preventing deaths, injuries and fires caused by electricity. Our aim is to ensure everyone can use electricity safely in their homes. We are recognised by government and industry as the leading campaigning charity and technical authority on electrical safety in the home. To achieve this we:

- Lobby and advise the UK and devolved governments on improving policy on electrical safety.
- 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.
- Work with tenants, landlords and homeowners to reduce deaths and accidents in the home.
- Provide expert information and advice to help people protect themselves from unsafe, recalled, counterfeit and substandard electrical goods, particularly those sold online.



Electrical Safety First
Registered Office
45 Great Guildford Street
London SE1 0ES
Telephone: **+44(0)203 463 5100**
Email: enquiries@electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk

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

ELECTRICAL SAFETY FIRST:
OUR VISION TO REDUCE
FIRES, INJURIES AND DEATHS
CAUSED BY ELECTRICITY
ACROSS THE UK





PREVENTING FIRES CAUSED BY ELECTRICITY

THE ISSUE:

In 2017/18 the number of fires caused by an electrical source of ignition was 15,124, which is 54.9% of all accidental domestic fires. This percentage has remained at similar levels over the last five years whilst the overall number of domestic fires has slowly fallenⁱ.

Electrical Safety First continues to press for a long-term UK Government strategy on fires caused by electricity to understand the reasons behind the causes of electrical source fires in the home and the cost of these to the public purse. We believe the UK Government should undertake a review into the reasons for fires caused by electricity and act on any recommendations.

Furthermore, the way in which data has been recorded through reporting systems, such as the Incident Recording System (IRS), is now obsolete. Whilst still capturing chip pan and trouser press fires, it does not take account of increasing causes of fire in the home such as mobile phone, e-cigarette and electric vehicle chargers. There is also inconsistency in the way that fires are recorded between the national services, although there has been some improvement in recent years.

54.9%
OF HOUSE FIRES
ARE CAUSED BY AN
ELECTRICAL SOURCE
OF IGNITION

Older housing is more at risk of fires than modern housing. We know that housing built before 1919 has a greater risk of fire.

There is also limited funding going towards fire prevention in the UK and no specific electrical safety grants are available in order to help mitigate risks in the oldest housing stock, especially when an owner-occupier cannot afford to make home improvements.

WE WANT TO SEE:

- ✓ A commitment to reducing the number of accidental electrical house fires with targeted consumer campaigns supported by the Government.
- ✓ A more up-to-date reporting system that allows for better capturing of fires caused by modern technology products.
- ✓ Support for Fire and Rescue Services to undertake more proactive initiatives to raise awareness and prevent house fires caused by electricity.
- ✓ A review of the causes of fires by electrical sources and the cost to public services.
- ✓ An electrical fire safety grant to update the oldest properties to make them safe.

KEEPING HOMES SAFE

THE ISSUE:

Electrical Safety First believes that no one, regardless of age, income or housing tenure should be put at risk of accident or injury from electrical faults in their homes. In 2017-18, 19% of all households were privately rented, equating to 4.5 million households, and the demographics of the tenure are constantly changing. The most recent English Housing Survey found that the proportion of 35-44 year olds in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) has increased from 13% in 2007-08 to 28% in 2017-18, and in the same time period the number of households in the sector with dependent children increased by approximately 795,000ⁱⁱ. This may indicate that the PRS is becoming a more permanent tenure for those who would previously have been owner-occupiers.

With the increase in the number of people living in the PRS, we welcome the UK Government's announcement to introduce mandatory electrical safety checks for tenants in the private rented sector, which will result in them being issued an electrical installation condition report or EICR.

IN 2017-18
19%
OF ALL HOUSEHOLDS
WERE PRIVATELY
RENTED
EQUATING TO
4.5 MILLION
HOUSEHOLDS

The Government needs to ensure that all landlords and letting agents are included in clear communication around their responsibilities under the new requirements. There is a risk that landlords and letting agents will be able to rent properties without an up to date EICR. There are also concerns that the Government has chosen local authorities to undertake enforcement when there are very limited resources and housing officers to undertake this work. **Electrical Safety First is committed to assisting the UK Government to ensure these new regulations are workable for landlords, letting agents and tenants.**

WE WANT TO SEE:

- ✓ Mandatory electrical safety checks must be implemented into private and social rented sectors in England, Wales and Northern Irelandⁱⁱⁱ.
- ✓ Landlords and letting agents must provide a valid EICR before properties are able to be rented.
- ✓ Enforcement must be a key priority to ensure people are safe in their rented home, failure to provide an EICR should be an offence.
- ✓ Properties that do not have an updated EICR or require urgent electrical work should be kept on a database by the local authority.

PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE

THE ISSUE:

In 2017-18 over 40% of accidental fire fatalities in England were aged 65 or over^{iv}, despite this age demographic only accounting for around 18% of the population^v. The UK's population is ageing, and with that comes a number of issues which must be addressed to ensure the safety of elderly people living in their own homes, in particular those with dementia or similar degenerative syndromes which can dramatically affect people's ability to live independently.

40%
OF ACCIDENTAL
FIRE FATALITIES IN
ENGLAND
WERE AGED 65
OR OVER

Older or vulnerable people can be at greater risk because they often live in old or poor quality housing that contains faulty electrics and older appliances and they may not be able to afford repairs.

WE WANT TO SEE:

- ✓ The option of a free five-yearly electrical safety check for all owner-occupied households with one person aged over 75.
- ✓ Proactive action targeting the over 65s with safety checks to prevent electrical fires.
- ✓ Home safety visits undertaken by the Fire and Rescue Services must prioritise electrical safety and problems identified signposted and actioned.
- ✓ Financial support given to Care & Repair Agencies to enable them to prioritise electrical work in properties with a person eligible for support.

IMPROVING CONSUMER SAFETY ONLINE

THE ISSUE:

With the growth in online shopping, there are more opportunities for unsafe counterfeit, second-hand and substandard electrical products to enter our homes without proper regulation. Online platforms have become the place to advertise and trade in unsafe electrical products, with thousands of items being sold online on a daily basis.

Second hand electrical goods are openly sold online, but they can be subject to a recall but sold without any information provided to consumers, especially since private sales of electrical goods are not subject to the same regulations.

The UK Government needs to help tackle these problems through the Office for Product Safety and Standards as no unsafe products should be permitted to be sold, but we need to ensure that there is proper enforcement of imported electrical goods at ports and airports. According to National Trading Standards, they suggest that enforcement activities result in £34 in

THE ESTIMATED COST
OF A HOUSE FIRE
IS AT LEAST
£44,500

savings for every £1 spent^{vi}. These savings are derived through preventing unsafe items from entering the UK market and for particularly hazardous products which pose a risk of fire, savings are likely to be more. The estimated cost of a house fire is at least £44,500^{vii}.

WE WANT TO SEE:

- ✓ Regulation of online sales of electrical goods to prevent recalled, counterfeit and substandard electrical products from being sold.
- ✓ Regulation of private sales so they are included in Consumer Rights legislation.
- ✓ Online platforms must take pro-active responsibility by policing their sites for illegal sales of electrical goods, i.e. preventing recalled products and unsafe products from being uploaded.
- ✓ Properly funded enforcement at ports and airports to target and prevent unsafe electrical goods from being sold.

FAILING PRODUCT RECALLS OF ELECTRICAL GOODS

THE ISSUE:

The recall of electrical products is generally very poor with a response rate of only around 10 to 20 per cent^{viii}. Faulty recalled appliances are responsible for significant numbers of domestic fires and a number of tragic fatalities.

THE RESPONSE RATE
TO AN ELECTRICAL
PRODUCT RECALL
IS JUST
10-20%

We support the Office for Product Safety and Standards in their work to improve electrical product safety in the UK, but believe that more needs to be done to protect the consumer, often the last to know if there are failings with the products they have bought. 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.

WE WANT TO SEE:

- ✓ No recalled electrical products should be allowed to be sold or re-sold on online retail platforms.
- ✓ Government collect, review and publish product recall information, so that consumers have a one-place trusted authority to consult.
- ✓ Mandatory registration of electrical goods at the point of sale.

ⁱ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/774820/2017-18_EHS_Headline_Report.pdf
ⁱⁱ These are already in place in Scotland.
ⁱⁱⁱ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/754703/fire-related-fatalities-dataset-nov18 ods
^{iv} <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/articles/overviewoftheukpopulationjuly2017>

^{vi} https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/sites/default/files/wwwfileroot/business/trading-standards/nts_optimty_report_2018.pdf
^{vii} <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121105004836/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/corporate/pdf/1838338.pdf>
^{viii} <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/media/1259/product-recall-report-2014.pdf>