Electrical Safety First



SAFETY GUIDANCE

LANDLORDS' GUIDE TO ELECTRICAL SAFETY

Scotland

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Electrical Safety First is indebted to the following organisation for their contribution and/or support to the development of this Guide:

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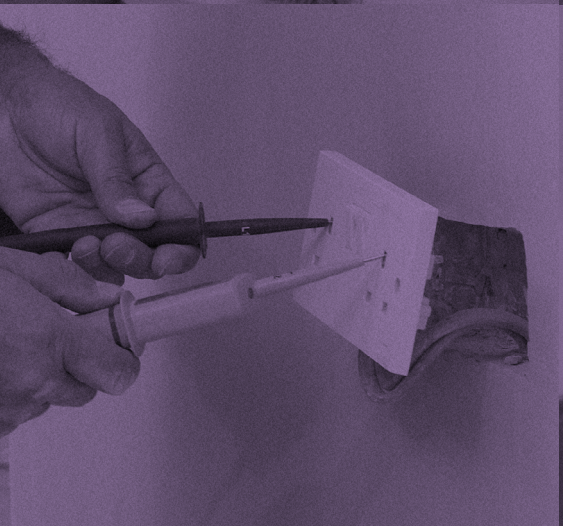
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

WHY YOU NEED THIS GUIDE AND HOW IT CAN HELP YOU

Electrical Safety First has produced this guide to help landlords understand their responsibilities for electrical safety in their rental properties – and to provide practical advice on what is required to ensure the safety of tenants.

GREAT BRITAIN HAS A RELATIVELY GOOD RECORD OF ELECTRICAL SAFETY BUT THE MOST RECENT FIGURES AVAILABLE SHOW THAT IN 2022 & 2023:

- Many deaths and injuries in homes are caused by faulty electrics and electrical equipment. Almost half of all domestic fires are caused by electricity.
- There were 16,628 accidental electrical dwelling fires in 2022-2023.[1]

The three major hazards from electricity in the home are electric shock, fire and burns.

These can occur through:

- The electrical installation and appliances deteriorating over time.
- Damage to switches, sockets and appliances.
- Misuse of the installation and appliances.
- Poor or lack of maintenance of the installation.
- Vandalism.

[1] Data obtained from the Home Office's 'Fire statistics incident level datasets' (2022-2023)

2.0 THE LAW
AND WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Landlords have a legal duty to ensure that their rental property, and any electrical equipment provided, is safe before a tenancy begins and throughout its duration.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 legislation covers a landlord's duty to repair and maintain the property they let to tenants: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2006/1/part/1/chapter/4

A house or flat meets the repairing standard if:

- The installations in the house for the supply of water, gas and electricity and for space heating and heating water, are in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order,
- Any fixtures, fittings and appliances provided by the landlord under the tenancy are in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order,
- The house meets the tolerable standard: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1987/26/contents

In order to comply with the Tolerable Standard - which is set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, the electrical supply must be adequate and safe to use. In addition, the house must have an interlinked system of fire and smoke alarms and adequate carbon monoxide alarms.

The landlord must ensure that the house or flat meets the repairing standard. This places a duty on landlords to keep the property in repair and in proper working order at the start and at all times during the tenancy.

The Repairing Standard Statutory Guidance is intended to assist private landlords in their duty to comply with the Repairing Standard at the start of a tenancy and at all times during a tenancy. This guidance applies from the 1 March 2024: https://www.gov.scot/publications/repairing-standard-statutory-guidance-private-landlords/

This guidance sets out that:

- There must be one or more 30 mA Residual Current Devices (RCD) fitted in the main or pincipal consumer unit, and,
- The landlord must ensure that regular electrical safety inspections are carried out by a competent person.

The electrical safety inspection has two separate elements:

- A periodic inspection of the electrical installations, fixtures and fittings, and
- Inspection and test of any electrical equipment provided by the landlord (formely reffered to as PAT).



The periodic inspection and testing must be carried out by a skilled person (electrically) who is competent in such work i.e. a suitably competent electrician. In Scotland, this will usually mean that they are a member of the Electrical Contractors' Association of Scotland (SELECT) or are registered with NICEIC or NAPIT.

Visit www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/findanelectrician to find out more.

In-service Inspection and Testing of Electrical Equipment (fixed, handheld and mobile equipment, formerly known as PAT), must be carried out by a suitably competent person, such as a skilled person electrically, or a person (including the landlord) who has completed appropriate assessed training.

For certain types of electrical installation work, you may need to obtain a building warrant – the legal authority to start the work. More information can be found on the Scottish Government website

The Scottish Government has introduced new legislation as of October 2006, known as the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005. It replaces most of Scotland's previous fire safety legislation and specifies who has responsibility for fire safety in non-domestic premises.

Note: *Communal areas (such as stairwells, corridors and plant or boiler rooms) in tenements, flats and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) are not classed as private dwellings under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act, so are subject to the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005. Sections 53 and 54 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 require persons in control of communal areas to carry out fire risk assessments. The Fire (Safety) Scotland Regulations 2006 provide instructions on how to do this.*



You should also remember that it is a legal requirement to review fire risk assessments regularly.

Landlords who let private dwellings also have a responsibility to carry out fire risk assessments. Details of fire safety risk assessments for sleeping accommodation are available on the Scottish Government website: www.firelawscotland.org

SMOKE AND HEAT ALARMS

In the Revised Tolerable Standard, it requires that a house has 'satisfactory equipment installed for detecting, and for giving warning of, fire or suspected fire' as follows:

- One functioning smoke alarm in the room which is frequently used by the occupants for general daytime living purposes,
- One smoke alarm in every circulation space on each storey, such as hallways and landings,
- One heat alarm in every kitchen,
- All smoke and heat alarms to be ceiling mounted, and
- All alarms to be interlinked.

The number and position of the alarms will depend on the size and layout of the house. There should be at least one alarm on each floor. A copy of the revised statutory guidance is available by visiting: https://www.gov.scot/publications/tolerable-standard-guidance-satisfactory-fire-carbon-monoxide-detection/



3.0 ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS

An electrical installation comprises all the fixed electrical equipment that is supplied through the electricity meter. It includes the cables that are usually hidden in the walls and ceilings, accessories (such as socket-outlets, light switches and fittings), and the consumer unit that contains the circuit protective devices e.g. fuses, circuit-breakers and residual current devices (RCDs - see Section 4).

THERE ARE MANY FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO A 'GOOD' ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION, SUCH AS ENSURING:

- There are enough socket-outlets for electrical appliances, to minimise the use of multiway socket-outlet adapters and trailing leads.
- Basic protection is provided by insulation and provision of covers to prevent fingers coming into direct contact with live parts (broken or damaged light switches and socket-outlets etc should be replaced without delay).
- A residual current device (RCD) is installed to provide additional protection against electric shock (see also Section 4 of this guide).
- Satisfactory earthing arrangements are in place to ensure that a fuse or circuit breaker operates quickly to disconnect the electricity supplying the circuit before an electric fault causes an electric shock or fire (remedial work maybe be necessary to repair a fault that has caused a protective device to operate).
- Satisfactory protective bonding conductors are in place where required (so that the risk of any electric shock risk is minimised until a fault is cleared). Sufficient circuits are provided and arranged to avoid danger and minimise inconvenience in the event of a fault.
- Cables are correctly selected and installed in relation to the fuse or circuit-breaker protecting the circuit.

Over time, and with the wear and tear of regular use, the installation will start to deteriorate. Connections can work loose (a potential fire hazard), equipment can be damaged, and building and maintenance work can have an impact on the wiring.

ONE SIMPLE THING YOU CAN DO TO SEE IF YOUR ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION IS SAFE, IS TO CARRY OUT A REGULAR VISUAL CHECK. THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR INCLUDE:

- Broken accessories (such as socket-outlets and light switches).
- Signs of scorching around socket-outlets due to overloading.
- Overheating of electrical equipment (such as lamp holders fitted with the wrong lamps) - usually detected by a strong, often fishlike smell.
- Damaged cables to handheld equipment and mobile electrical equipment or trailing cables/flexes.
- Lack of additional protection by a 30 mA RCD for final circuits, particularly those supplying socket-outlets and for any equipment located in the bath/shower room or garden.

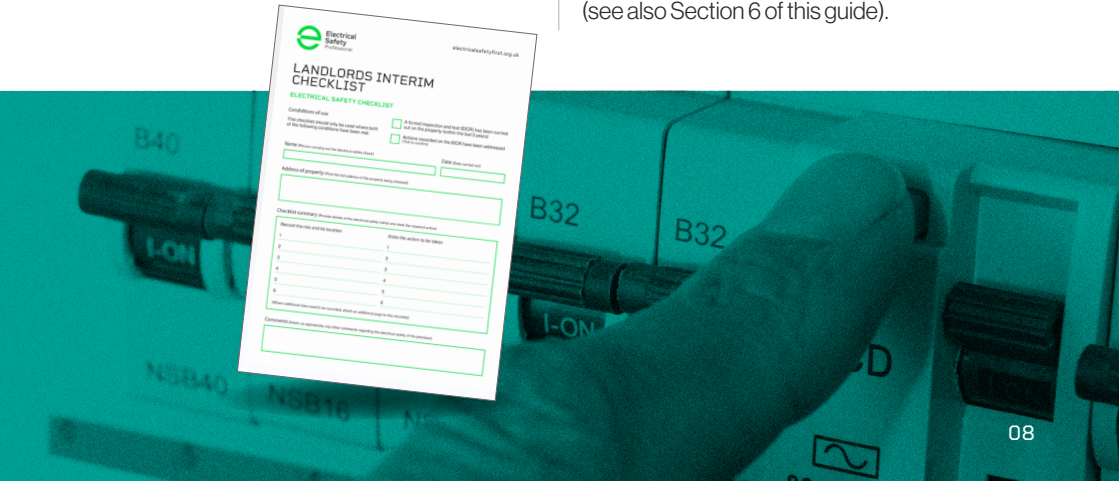
Where such hazards are identified, landlords have a duty of care to put the situation right as soon as practicable.

Regular visual safety checks do not replace the need for periodic inspection to be carried out every five years (see Section 6 of this guide).

Electrical Safety First has produced a Landlords Interim checklist to assist those carrying out such checks. This may be downloaded from: https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/media/ul5lyihr/landlords-interim-checklist-v4.pdf

As well as regular visual checks, Electrical Safety First recommends regular periodic inspection and testing. This should be carried out by a skilled person electrically who is competent in such work, such as a registered electrician.

After a periodic inspection and test, you should always be provided with an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) containing details of the inspection and testing undertaken, the outcomes of the inspection and testing with observations and recommendations as to what remedial action (if any) is required, and a declaration of whether or not the installation is satisfactory or unsatisfactory for continued use (see also Section 6 of this guide).



4.0 RESIDUAL CURRENT DEVICES (RCD)

An RCD, or residual current device, is a life-saving device which is designed to prevent you from getting a fatal electric shock if you touch something live, such as a bare wire. It can also provide some protection against electrical fires. RCDs offer a level of personal protection that ordinary fuses and circuit-breakers cannot provide.



WHAT DOES AN RCD DO?

An RCD is a sensitive safety device that switches off electricity automatically if there is a fault.

An RCD is designed to protect against the risks of electrocution and fire caused by earth faults. For example, if you cut through the cable when mowing the lawn and accidentally touched the exposed live wires or a faulty appliance overheats causing electric current to flow to earth.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

An RCD constantly monitors the electric current flowing through one or more circuits it is used to protect. If it detects electricity flowing down an unintended path, such as through a person who has touched a live part, the RCD will switch the circuit off very quickly, significantly reducing the risk of death or serious injury.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN TYPES OF RCD?

30 mA RCDs can help protect you from electric shock in potentially dangerous areas like bathrooms and gardens, and there are various types of RCDs which provide additional protection that can be used to make sure you are always as safe as possible.

- **FIXED RCDS:**
  These are installed in the consumer unit (fusebox) and can provide protection to individual or groups of circuits. A fixed RCD provides the highest level of protection as it protects all the wiring and the sockets on a circuit, and any connected appliances.
- **SOCKET-OUTLET RCDS:**
  These are special socket-outlets with an RCD built into them which can be used in place of a standard socket-outlet. This type of RCD provides protection only to the person in contact with equipment, including its lead, plugged into the special socket-outlet.
- **PORTABLE RCDS:**
  These plug into any standard socket-outlet. An appliance can then be plugged into the RCD. They are useful when neither fixed nor socket-outlet RCDs are available but, as with socket-outlet RCDs, they provide protection only to the person in contact with the equipment, including its lead, plugged into the portable RCD.

5.0 CERTIFICATION OF ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION WORK

You should ensure that you receive and keep the paperwork for all completed electrical installation work including periodic inspection and testing. A copy should be provided to your tenants. All certificates and reports should include schedules of inspections, circuit details and test results.

The type of certification or report you receive depends on the extent and type of electrical installation work, or inspection and testing, you have had carried out.

ELECTRICAL CERTIFICATION FOR NEW INSTALLATIONS, ALTERATIONS OR ADDITIONS

Electrical Installation Certificates (EICs) and Minor Electrical Installation Works Certificates (MEIWCs) provide you, as the person responsible for the safety of an electrical installation, with a declaration that the new installation, alteration or addition, complies with the industry standard BS 7671, is safe to use and functions properly at the time it was put into service.

These certificates, if retained, also provide a basis for any future inspection and testing, as they can help save on costly exploratory work which might otherwise be needed. Additionally, in the event of a claim that injury or fire was caused by an electrical installation, certificates are documentary evidence which help show that the installation had been installed to a satisfactory standard of safety.

The EIC will indicate whether the electrical work that has been carried out is 'new', an 'addition' or an 'alteration'. The term 'new' applies where the installation has been installed as new, if a complete rewire has been carried out, or where a consumer unit has been replaced.

The term 'addition' applies if an existing installation has been modified by adding one or more new circuits.

The term 'alteration' applies where one or more existing circuits have been modified or extended (for example to add a socket-outlet), or items such as a consumer unit and switching equipment have been replaced.

An EIC must be issued for all new electrical installations. It may also be required for an alteration or addition to the installation – depending upon whether or not a new circuit has been installed. Where an alteration or addition is carried out but does not include a new circuit, a MEIWC or an EIC may be used.

We strongly recommend that you use a registered electrician to carry out any electrical installation work. Information on how to find a registered electrician can be found on Electrical Safety First's website at www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/findanelectrician



6.0 PERIODIC INSPECTION,

TESTING AND ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION CONDITION REPORTING

Every electrical installation deteriorates with use and age. You must ensure that your tenant(s) – or anyone entering or using your property – are not put at risk, by ensuring that the electrical installation remains in a safe and serviceable condition.

A periodic inspection and test checks the condition of an existing electrical installation against BS 7671, the UK Standard for the safety of electrical installations.

A PERIODIC INSPECTION AND TEST SHOULD:

- Discover if electrical circuits or equipment are overloaded.
- Identify potential electric shock risks and fire hazards.
- Find any defective electrical work.
- Highlight any lack of satisfactory earthing or bonding. Further information explaining the importance of earthing and bonding can be found at www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guides-and-advice/around-the-home/earthing-and-bonding

Tests are also carried out on the installation to check that it is safe.



ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION CONDITION REPORT Report No. .....

SECTION A. DETAILS OF THE PERSON ORDERING THE REPORT

Name .....
Address .....

SECTION B. REASON FOR PRODUCING THIS REPORT

Date(s) on which inspection and testing was carried out .....

SECTION C. DETAILS OF THE INSTALLATION WHICH IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS REPORT

Occupier .....
Address .....

Description of premises:
Residential ☐ Commercial ☐ Industrial ☐ Other (include brief description) ☐ .....
Estimated age of wiring system ..... years
Evidence of additions / alterations? Yes ☐ No ☐ Not apparent ☐ If yes, estimate age ..... years
Installation records available? (Regulation 651.1) Yes ☐ No ☐ Date of last inspection ..... (date)

SECTION D. EXTENT AND LIMITATIONS OF INSPECTION AND TESTING

Extent of the electrical installation covered by this report .....

Agreed limitations including the reasons (see Regulation 653.2) .....

Agreed with: .....
Operational limitations including the reasons (see page no .....) .....

The inspection and testing detailed in this report and accompanying schedules have been carried out in accordance with BS 7671:2018 as amended to .....

It should be noted that cables concealed within trunking and conduits, under floors, in roof spaces, and generally within the fabric of the building or underground, have not been inspected unless specifically agreed between the client and inspector prior to the inspection. An inspection should be made within an accessible roof space housing other electrical equipment.

SECTION E. SUMMARY OF THE CONDITION OF THE INSTALLATION

General condition of the installation (in terms of electrical safety) .....

Overall assessment of the installation in terms of its suitability for continued use SATISFACTORY / UNSATISFACTORY* (Delete as appropriate)
*An unsatisfactory assessment indicates that dangerous (code C1) and/or potentially dangerous (code C2) conditions have been identified.

SECTION F. RECOMMENDATIONS

Where the overall assessment of the suitability of the installation for continued use above is stated as UNSATISFACTORY, I / we recommend that any observations classified as 'Danger present' (code C1) or 'Potentially dangerous' (code C2) are acted upon as a matter of urgency. Investigation without delay is recommended for observations identified as 'Further investigation required' (code FI). Observations classified as 'Improvement recommended' (code C3) should be given due consideration.

Subject to the necessary remedial action being taken, I / We recommend that the installation is further inspected and tested by ..... (date) for the following reasons .....

SECTION G. DECLARATION

I/We, being the person(s) responsible for the inspection and testing of the electrical installation (as indicated by my/our signatures below), particulars of which are described above, having exercised reasonable skill and care when carrying out the inspection and testing, hereby declare that the information in this report, including the observations and the attached schedules, provides an accurate assessment of the

Typical example of an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR).



A schedule of circuit details and test results should always be provided as part of the Electrical Installation Condition Report. A copy of this schedule should be kept next to the consumer unit for information purposes.

FREQUENCY OF PERIODIC INSPECTIONS

For rented accommodation in Scotland, the maximum permitted period between the initial inspection (when the installation was first put into service) and the first periodic inspection is five years.

Subsequently, the installation should be inspected and tested at intervals of no more than five years from the date of the first inspection. However, the person compiling the Electrical Installation Condition Report may recommend a shorter interval before the next inspection based upon the findings of the inspection and testing that has been carried out.

When a change of tenancy occurs, the landlord or their representative should always carry out a visual check to confirm that a property is safe to re-let. This check should include confirming that there are no broken or missing switches or socket-outlets, no accessible live parts, no signs of burning on electrical equipment and that any installed RCDs operate when the integral test button is pressed.

HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMOS)

The *Licensing of houses in multiple occupation: Statutory guidance for Scottish local authorities* requires that every electrical installation in an HMO is inspected and tested at least every three years by a suitably qualified person, who should provide a certificate giving the results of the inspection. Electrical Safety First recommends that you use a registered electrician. More information on electrical installation condition reporting is available on our website:

www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk



7.0 ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

Most deaths from electric shock and fires in UK homes are caused by misuse of, or faulty, plugs, leads and equipment/appliances. But many of these fatalities can be avoided by taking simple steps.

The safety of electrical equipment and appliances relies, to some extent, on the condition of the home's fixed wiring – but misusing electrical equipment/appliances will increase the risk of electric shock and fire. For example, after using an iron, winding the flexible cable around it may create a twist or kink in the cable. Repeating this process over time can damage the cable and increase the risk of electric shock or fire. To keep risks to a minimum, you and/or your tenant must ensure that electrical equipment/appliances are safely used, stored and regularly checked.

PROVIDING ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

If you provide electrical appliances/equipment (such as a kettle, iron or washing machine) for your tenant(s) you should check that the item carries, at least, a CE Mark or UKCA mark – the manufacturer's claim that it meets the minimum requirements of EU/UK legislation. Electrical

Safety First recommends the purchasing of appliances that carry additional safety marks, such as the British Standard Kitemark or the 'BEAB Approved' mark, as these can provide greater assurance of electrical safety.

You need to make sure that any appliances/equipment you supply is suitable for its location and its intended use. To help ensure your tenants use appliances correctly, you should make copies of the manufacturers' instructions available for them to refer to.

CHECKING ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

To ensure electrical appliances remain safe to use, regular basic safety checks should be carried out.

YOU AND/OR YOUR TENANT SHOULD CHECK THAT:

01 There are no cuts or abrasions in the cable covering (sheath).

02 The outer covering of the cable is gripped by the cord grip in the plug top, so that no coloured cable cores are visible from outside of the plug.

03 The plug casing is not cracked and the pins are not bent.

04 There are no signs of overheating or burning, particularly at the plug and socket-outlet.

05 There are no loose parts or screws.

06 No part of the appliance/equipment is damaged or missing.

Most dangerous defects in electrical appliances/equipment can be identified by carrying out such simple checks. For more information on testing electrical appliances/equipment, go to: www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq-portable-appliance-testing.htm

USING ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES OUTDOORS

Any socket-outlet supplying electrical equipment used outdoors should be protected by a 30 mA RCD.

Electrical Safety First recommends that all socket-outlets supplying electrical equipment for outdoor use are protected by a fixed RCD (where the RCD is fitted in the consumer unit or alternatively incorporated into a socket-outlet).

Fixed RCDs should be **tested at least every six months** by pressing the test button marked 'T' or 'Test' – see the instructions that should be on, or next to, the consumer unit.

If there is no RCD in the consumer unit, contact your landlord immediately and do not use the socket-outlet.





8.0 FIRE DETECTION AND FIRE ALARMS

Electrical accidents are the primary cause of accidental domestic fires in the UK.

Loose connections in electrical equipment and parts of the electrical installation (such as socket-outlets) can result in fire. Incorrectly selected fuses or circuit-breakers can also lead to overheated cables.

Many fires in the home start in the kitchen and are usually caused by cooking appliances. Other causes of fire include cigarettes and candles, and clothes being hung over heaters to dry.

To safeguard your tenants from the risk of fire, you will need to ensure that there is a suitable fire detection and fire alarm system, which should be regularly tested and maintained.

A properly installed and maintained fire detection and fire alarm system will alert occupants to a fire in its early stages, allowing them to get to a place of safety before escape routes become blocked by smoke or fire. The system should be designed to wake people who are sleeping and to alert them to fire in any hidden areas – such as boiler rooms, storerooms, cellars or lofts (if they contain equipment such as battery storage systems, solar PV inverters or central heating boilers) – before the fire affects the escape route.

SELECTING AN APPROPRIATE FIRE DETECTION AND FIRE ALARM SYSTEM

If you do not currently have a fire detection and fire alarm system then your property does not meet the tolerable standard or repairing standard.

The type of fire detection and fire alarm system you need to provide depends on the type of property you are letting, based on the level of risk.

A small, single-family house will only require a number of interconnected smoke and heat alarms, while large HMOs need a more sophisticated system – where fire detectors are



linked to a control panel and alarm sounders.

All residential premises where people are sleeping should have some form of automatic fire detection and warning system.

TESTING FIRE DETECTION AND FIRE ALARM SYSTEMS

All fire detection and fire alarm systems need to be regularly tested to ensure they are working properly.

Basic, routine tests do not demand specialist knowledge and can normally be carried out by you or your tenant(s). Such tests are generally required weekly, where one or more detectors or call points are tested. For more complex systems, the results are required to be recorded in a log book.





9.0 EMERGENCY LIGHTING

In the event of fire, your tenants need to be able to find their way out of the property to a place of safety. This requires a planned escape route which is kept free from clutter and has sufficient lighting to allow for a fast (and safe) escape.

SOME BUILDINGS, SUCH AS THOSE LISTED BELOW, WILL ALSO NEED EMERGENCY LIGHTING COVERING THE ESCAPE ROUTE. THEY INCLUDE:

- Large buildings with lengthy exit routes.
- Buildings with a complex layout.
- Buildings with no natural or borrowed lighting along the escape route.
- Buildings accommodating vulnerable people or those at particular risk, such as individuals who are confined to a wheelchair.

When a fire starts, people move rapidly in distress and panic. At night, when they have been awoken abruptly, they may also be disorientated. So it is important that staircases and escape routes are adequately lit.

Emergency lighting is not covered in this guide, please see BS 5266 documentation for further information.



10.0 FINDING AN ELECTRICIAN

The following organisations register suitably qualified and experienced electricians who can carry out electrical installation work.

NICEIC
Telephone: 0870 013 0382
Website: niceic.com

SELECT
Telephone: 0131 445 5577
Website: www.select.org.uk

NAPIT
Telephone: 0345 543 0330
Website: napit.org.uk

To find a registered electrician or to check out the credentials of a recommended tradesman, visit:

www.certificationregister.co.uk



FIND OUT MORE

Electrical
For more information about electrical safety in rented properties visit:
electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk

Gas
For information about gas safety in rented properties, visit:
gassaferegister.co.uk

Fire Safety
For information about fire safety in rented properties visit:
www.firescotland.gov.uk

A wealth of free electrical safety advice is available at electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk or via the above QR code.

Electrical Safety First

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Registered Charity (Scotland) No. SC039990.
Registered Charity (England and Wales) No. 257376

Electrical Safety First is the UK charity dedicated to reducing deaths and injuries caused by electrical accidents. Our aim is to ensure everyone in the UK can use electricity safely.

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