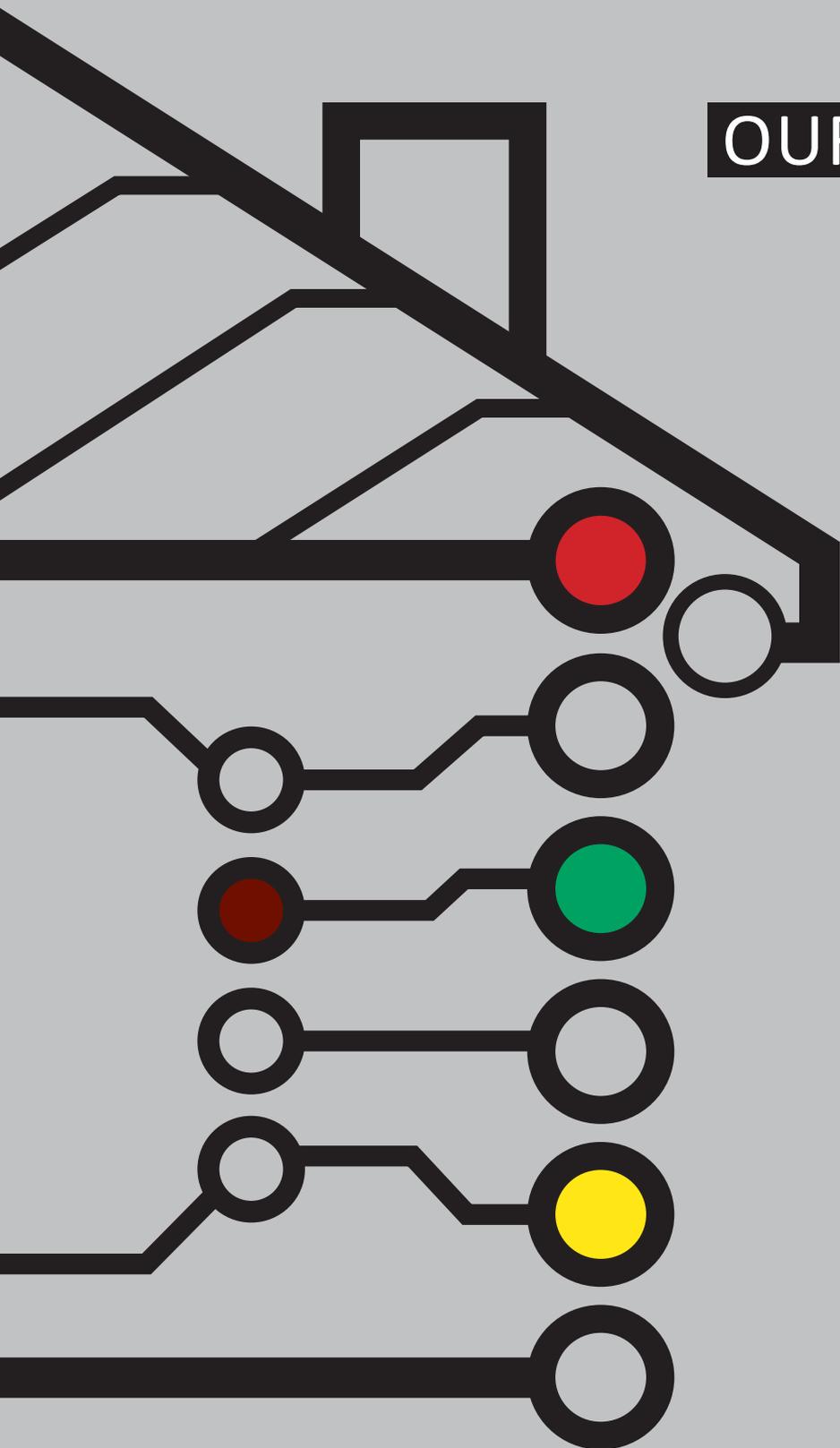


OUR **KEY POLICIES**
IN SCOTLAND



WHO WE ARE

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 home electrical safety. 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 counterfeit and sub-standard electrical goods, particularly those sold online.

PREVENTING FIRES CAUSED BY ELECTRICITY AND PROTECTING THE MOST VULNERABLE

During 2017-18, there were nearly ten fires a day caused by an electrical source - 3,426 in total, accounting for 75% of all house fires. This percentage has remained at similar levels over the last five years whilst the overall number of domestic fires has slowly fallen.¹

Given the sustained level and significance of electrical house fires, we need a long-term government strategy to plan and target the most effective prevention measures. We currently rely on fire analysis from the Incident Recording System (IRS) which fails to identify current or emerging risks from products such as mobile phone, e-cigarette and electric vehicle chargers.

Older or vulnerable people can be most at risk of fire because they often live in old or poor quality housing which contains faulty electrics, own older appliances or are unable to afford essential electrical repairs. The risk of dying in a fire for older people is over twice as high as the average for all ages.²

Set against a backdrop of an ageing population, with dementia and other degenerative syndromes heightening electrical risk, those in later life may find themselves asset rich but cash poor with limited electrical safety grant funding available to mitigate dangers in the oldest housing stock.



75%
OF HOUSE FIRES
ARE CAUSED BY
AN ELECTRICAL
SOURCE

We want to see:

- ✓ A commitment to reducing the number of accidental electrical house fires with targeted consumer campaigns supported by the Scottish Government.
- ✓ A more up-to-date reporting system that allows for better capturing of incidents caused by modern technology.
- ✓ Support for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Services to extend their proactive and preventative work 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.
- ✓ The option of a free five-yearly electrical safety check for all owner-occupied households with one person of pensionable age.
- ✓ Proactive action targeting the over 65s with safety checks to prevent electrical fires.
- ✓ Financial support given to Care & Repair Agencies to enable them to prioritise electrical work in properties and wider grants available to upgrade old home electrical installations.

1

All fire data has been derived by Electrical Safety First following an FOI to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in March 2019.

2

'Age Safe Scotland' by Electrical Safety First: <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/what-we-do/age-safe-scotland/>

ONLY HALF
52%
OF COUNCIL HOUSING
PROVIDERS CONDUCT
ELECTRICAL SAFETY
CHECKS EVERY
FIVE YEARS

SAFER HOUSING

Almost three quarters of house fires are of electrical origin – the number one cause in Scotland. But the law offers different protection for different tenures. We believe everybody should be protected by the same electrical safety laws, regardless of tenure, age and income.

Since December 2015, private landlords in Scotland are required to ensure that an electrical safety inspection of their property is carried out by a registered electrician at least every five years, and also to complete portable appliance testing of any electrical appliances supplied with a let.

Social landlords are not legally required to carry out these same measures as the Scottish Housing Quality Standard does not prescribe a frequency to conduct electrical safety checks. There is also a clear and unfair disparity with gas safety regulations which require both social and private landlords to carry out annual gas safety checks.

Current electrical safety practice amongst social landlords is inconsistent at best. Only half (52%) of Council housing providers conduct electrical safety checks every five years, with the rest completing inspections every 10 years, during major home improvements or on change of tenancy, which is low in the sector.³ This picture doesn't include registered social landlords as they are not currently subject to freedom of information laws. Protection for electrical safety is a postcode lottery. For example, Council tenants in Orkney are

better protected from electrical risks than those renting from Perth and Kinross Council.

The owner-occupied sector is even more vulnerable to electrical threats - it's the largest housing tenure in Scotland and the majority of older people, who are most at risk, live in homes they own. And this risk is heightened for those living in flats for obvious reasons - electricity accounted for 76% of all accidental fires in flats in 2017⁴ – which underlines the need for owners of flats to meet higher standards where there is a potential impact on their neighbour's safety. Reducing the risk of electrical injury or death needs to be a key driver for decisions of future housing standards.

We want to see:

- ✓ Mandatory five-yearly electrical safety checks in all social housing carried out by a registered electrician - to bring requirements in line with the Private Rented Sector.
- ✓ Consideration for electrical safety checks in owner-occupied homes, or as a first step, mandatory inspections in owner-occupied flats.
- ✓ RCDs (Residual Current Devices) fitted in all rented homes.
- ✓ A requirement for landlords to register any new electrical appliances they provide with lets to ensure they are not subject to any current product recalls or safety alerts.

IMPROVING CONSUMER SAFETY ONLINE

With the growth in online shopping, our research has indicated a particular issue with the sale of counterfeits and sub-standard electrical items bought online, with one in five Scottish residents (one million people) having purchased a fake electrical product that was advertised as genuine.⁵ This is a real concern, as counterfeit electrical items can often be sub-standard and – unlike a fake designer dress or handbag – can not only cause fires but also maim and kill.

Second-hand electrical goods are also openly sold online and these may be subject to a recall and sold with no information provided to consumers, especially worrying since private sales of electrical goods are not subject to the same regulations as businesses.

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. We need to ensure that there is proper enforcement of imported electrical goods at ports and airports. National Trading

Standards suggests that enforcement activities result in £34 in savings for every £1 spent.⁶ These savings are derived through preventing unsafe items from entering the UK market. 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 £44,500.⁷

While many aspects of consumer protection are still reserved, there will be opportunities to improve electrical safety in Scotland through the creation of the new Consumer Scotland body. While many of Scotland's issues are shared with the rest of the UK, there are country-specific issues, such as a higher proportion of people living in rural areas, which might well increase the number of people in Scotland shopping online.

As Consumer Scotland will be an investigatory body as much as an advocacy one, we would like to see it prioritise investigations into key product safety issues – particularly around white goods and online counterfeits.

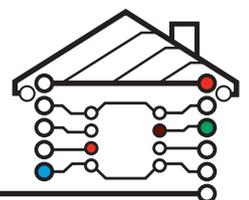
We want to see:

- ✓ Regulation of online sales of electrical goods to prevent recalled, counterfeit and sub-standard electrical products from being sold.
- ✓ Regulation of private sales so they are included in Consumer Rights legislation.
- ✓ Online platforms taking more responsibility by policing their sites for inappropriate sales of electrical goods.
- ✓ Properly funded enforcement at ports and airports to target and prevent unsafe electrical goods from being sold.
- ✓ Effective consumer protection and representation to protect people from the dangers posed by unsafe electrical products.

£44,500

IS THE ESTIMATED
COST OF A HOUSE
FIRE

5 Survey undertaken from 18 to 21 May 2018 by Censuswide with a sample of 2,000 general consumers. The figures are representative of all Scottish adults.
6 https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/sites/default/files/wwwfileroot/business/trading-standards/nts_optimty_report_2018.pdf
7 <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121105004836/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/corporate/pdf/1838338.pdf>



FAILING PRODUCT RECALLS OF ELECTRICAL GOODS

With a response rate to electrical product recalls of just 10-20%, there is clearly a lack of awareness around the risks associated with recalled products.

We support the Office for Product Safety and Standards in its 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:

- ✓ A centrally-managed product recall database so consumers have a single place to go to check for recalls.
- ✓ Mandatory registration of electrical goods at point of sale.
- ✓ No recalled electrical products being sold or re-sold on online retail platforms.

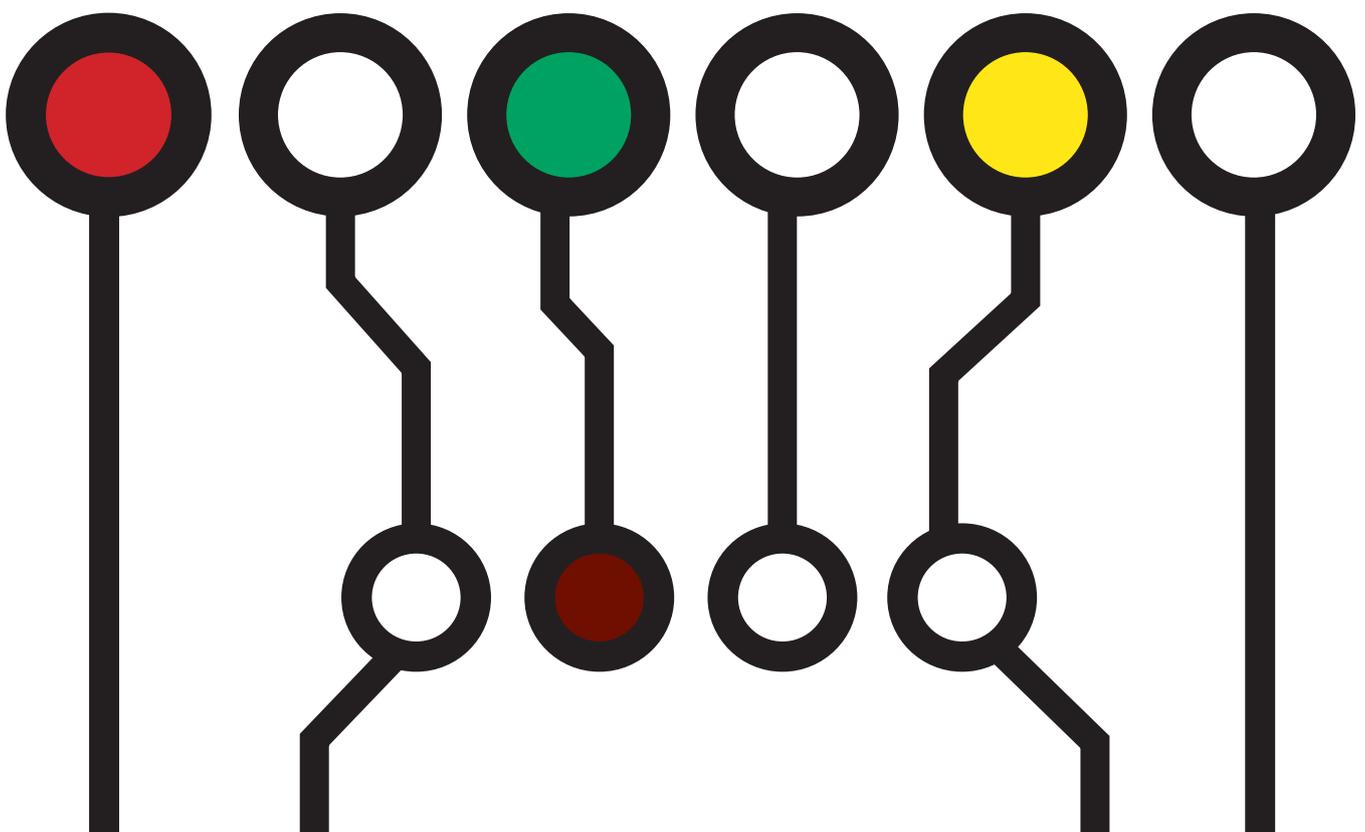
REGISTERED ELECTRICIANS

Electrical Safety First strongly recommends that, wherever you live, you use an electrician registered with one of the government-approved schemes for 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. SELECT members and NICEIC registered electricians work to the UK national safety standard (BS 7671).

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. We would welcome measures which make identifying a registered, competent electrician easier for consumers, and which will be to the benefit of the whole of the electrical industry in Scotland.

We want to see:

- ✓ A single register to make it easier for consumers to identify qualified and competent electrical professionals, reflecting the different routes into the industry and factoring in recognition for regular assessment to maintain consumer confidence.
- ✓ An on-going government-backed education campaign should be established to help change consumer attitudes towards the importance of electrical safety in the home.



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