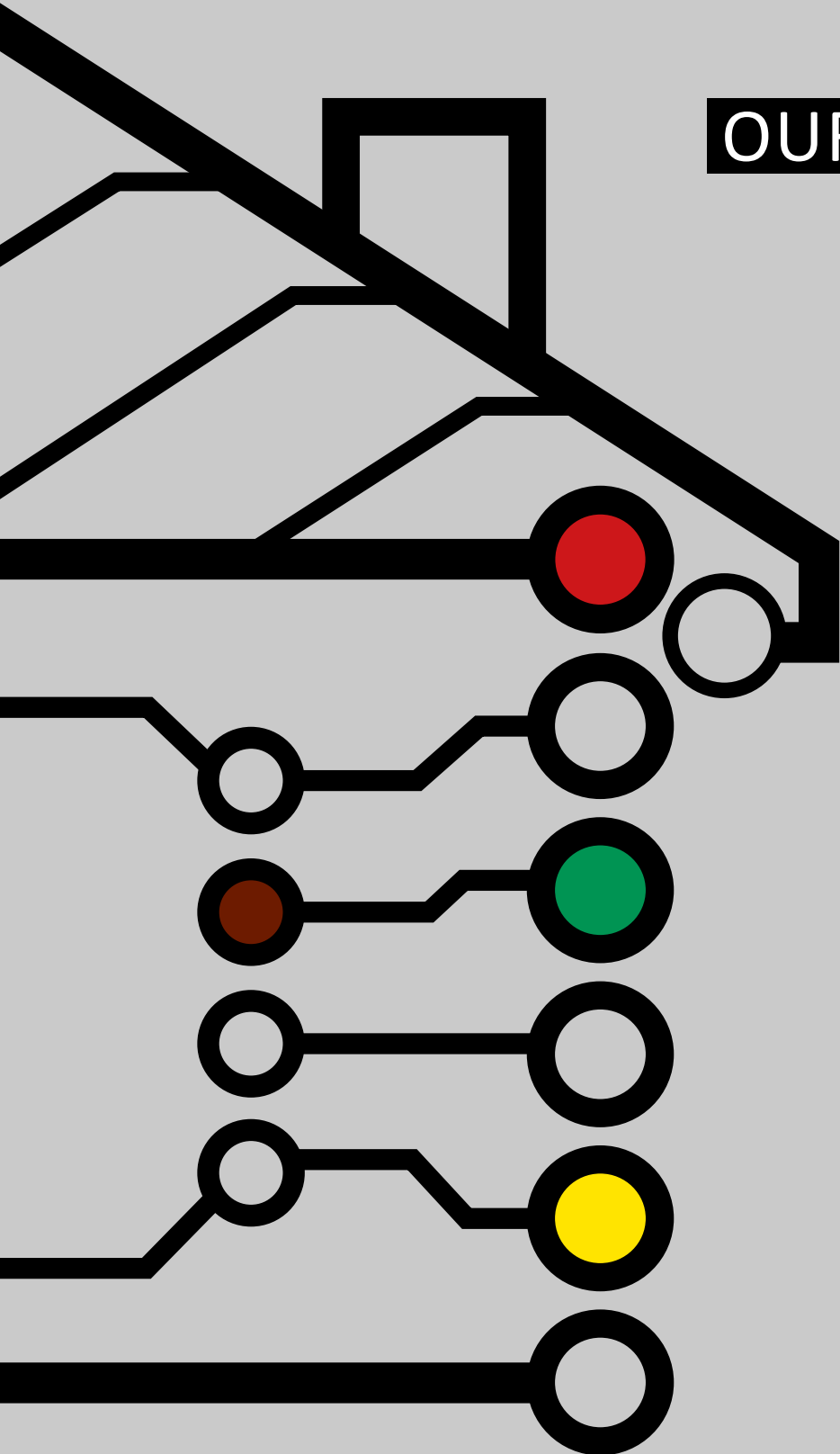


OUR **KEY POLICIES**
IN SCOTLAND



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.
- ✓ Extra 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 standards, regardless of tenure.

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 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 have only recently become 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 on future housing policy.

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.

PROTECTING CONSUMERS FROM UNSAFE PRODUCTS

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. The UK's complex and self-regulated product recall system has left many unsafe products in people's homes, threatening lives and property.

Online platforms have become the place to advertise and trade in unsafe electrical products. 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. Our research has indicated a particular issue with the sale of counterfeits and sub-standard electrical items online, with one in five Scottish residents (one million people) having purchased a fake electrical product that was advertised as genuine.

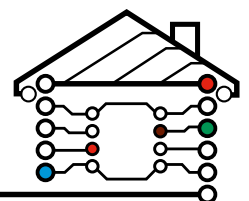
Many aspects of consumer protection are reserved to the UK Parliament, but we believe there will be opportunities to protect consumers through the new public body, Consumer Scotland. As Consumer Scotland will be an investigatory body as much as an advocacy one, we would like to see it prioritise investigations into key product safety issues – particularly around white goods and online sales.

We want to see:

- ✓ A duty for Consumer Scotland to disseminate advice and information about major product recalls to Scottish consumers, and prioritise investigations into key electrical safety issues.
- ✓ Improved consumer campaigns in Scotland to raise awareness of potential risks associated with electrical goods being purchased online.
- ✓ Additional resources given to Trading Standards in Scotland to enforce action against sales of unsafe electrical goods.
- ✓ Support from the Scottish Government and elected representatives in Scotland for our policy proposals on areas which remain the responsibility of the UK Parliament alone:
 - a centrally managed product recall database so consumers have a single place to go to check for recalls in the UK.
 - mandatory registration of electrical goods at point of sale.
 - legislation to prevent the sales of unsafe, sub-standard and counterfeit electrical goods.

1 in 5

SCOTS HAVE UNKNOWINGLY BOUGHT A FAKE ELECTRICAL PRODUCT ONLINE.



The UK's complex and self-regulated product recall system has left many unsafe products in people's homes, threatening lives and property. While many aspects of consumer protection are reserved to the UK Government, there will be opportunities to address some of our key concerns through the Scottish Government's new body, Consumer Scotland.

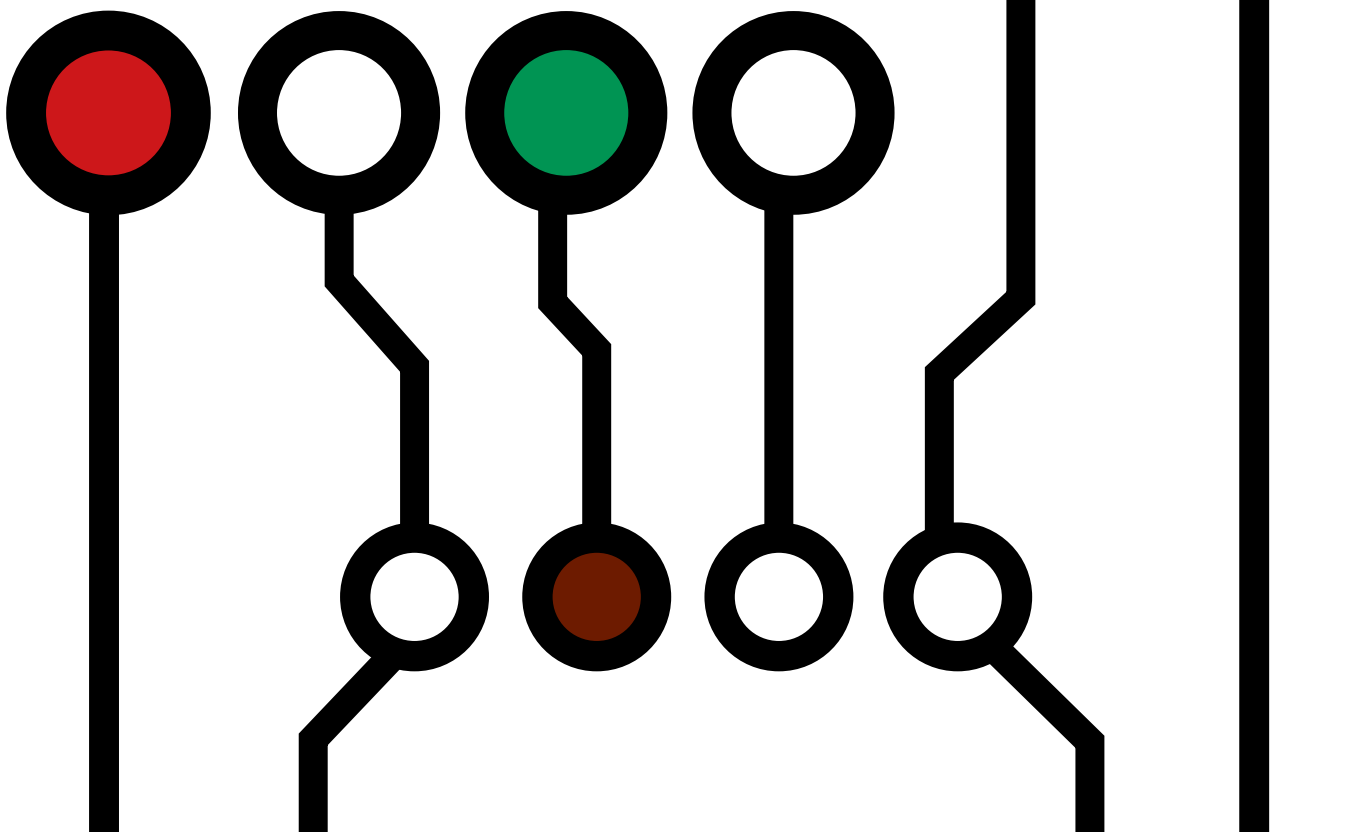
REGISTERED ELECTRICIANS

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.
- ✓ An on-going government-backed education campaign to help change consumer attitudes towards the importance of electrical safety in the home.



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