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# Reducing deaths and injuries in the home

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## Who we are

**Electrical Safety First is the UK's 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.

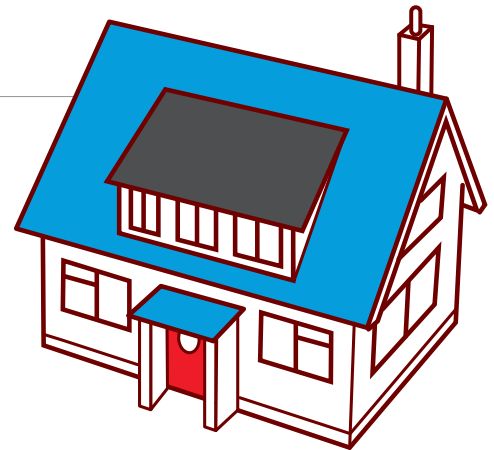
We provide expert information and advice to help people protect themselves from faulty, damaged, substandard and poorly maintained electrical installations and electrical appliances

We are recognised by government and industry as the leading campaigning charity and technical authority in the home.

## Keeping people safe

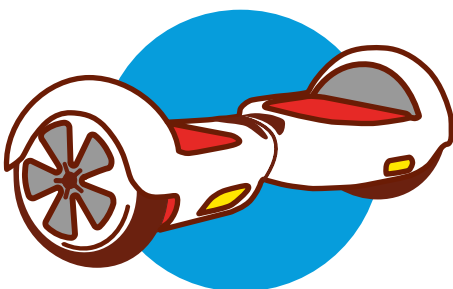
Every year a number of deaths and injuries in UK homes are caused by faulty electrics and electrical equipment.

Electricity also causes more than 20,000 house fires a year – **that's almost half of all accidental house fires.**



## Preventing Electrical Fires

Domestic fires in the home are reducing, but domestic fires caused by electricity are steadily increasing. In 2014-15, an electrical source was the cause of 65 per cent of all accidental domestic fires.<sup>1</sup>



We believe in the need for a UK Government strategy to reduce the number of electrical fires in the home. We are a firm supporter of the Government's Fire Kills campaign, which aims to raise awareness about the dangers and risk of electrical fires, however we believe a more strategic approach needs to be achieved. A pro-active partnership with Electrical Safety First, fire services and 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 fire services to undertake more pro-active activities to raise awareness and prevent house fires caused by electricity.**

# Keeping housing safe

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## The issue:

Electrical Safety First believes that no one, regardless of age, income or where they live, should be put at risk of electrical faults in their homes.

The private rented sector has undergone rapid growth over the past 10 years, and in 2012-13 overtook the social rented sector as the second largest tenure provision. Since then, the sector has continued to grow.

In 2014-15, 19 per cent of all households were privately rented. This equates to 4.3 million households. We believe that people living in the private and social rented sectors should be protected with regular electrical safety checks.<sup>2</sup>

**There are on average 56 deaths** per year caused by electrical fires, with 18 deaths caused by an electrical distribution fault in the home. Within this subset the biggest single cause of death is **faulty cabling**.<sup>3</sup> Electrical safety in private and social rented sectors is being left behind other important safety issues, such as gas, carbon monoxide and smoke alarms. **We believe that there should be greater parity between each of these, particularly given that electricity causes more than a half of all accidental fires in domestic properties.**

## We believe:

- **There should be five yearly electrical safety checks in the private and social rented sectors and a visual inspection by the landlord, council, housing association or letting agent when the respective tenancy changes hands.**
- **Inspections and testing of supplied appliances should be carried out.**
- **Residual current devices should be fitted in all rented homes.**

# Ageing population and electrical safety

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## The issue:

Although accidental fire deaths in the home in 2013/14 were at an historic low, over half of fatalities were aged 65 or over.<sup>4</sup> 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 in their own home, in particular those with dementia or similar degenerative syndromes which can dramatically affect people's ability to stay safe in their own homes.

Our ageing population will result in a significant increase in the numbers of people living with dementia. Certain symptoms of dementia can increase the risk of injuries or fatalities from electricity.

Alongside this, the number of over 65s living in the private rented sector is predicted to rise from 350,000 in 2009 to over 700,000 by 2035.<sup>5</sup> Older or vulnerable people can be at more risk because they often live in old or poor quality housing that contains faulty electrics and old appliances. Electrical Safety First is committed to raising awareness of both the issues and potential solutions.

## Our asks:

- **The option of a free five-yearly electrical safety check for all households with one person aged over 75, regardless whether they live in the private or social sectors or own their own home.**
- **Pro-active action targeting the over 65s with safety checks to prevent electrical fires.**
- **Statutory five yearly electrical checks in all care homes.**



# Product safety and counterfeit goods

## The issue:

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>6</sup>. There have been 228 electrical items recalled in the last four years, this means that there are potentially millions of recalled electrical items in homes across the country posing a risk of electrical shock or fire to which the owner is unaware.

There is currently a serious gap between faults that manufacturers and suppliers of electrical goods know about, and what consumers are aware of. Our 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.

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 equipment, such as hair straighteners.

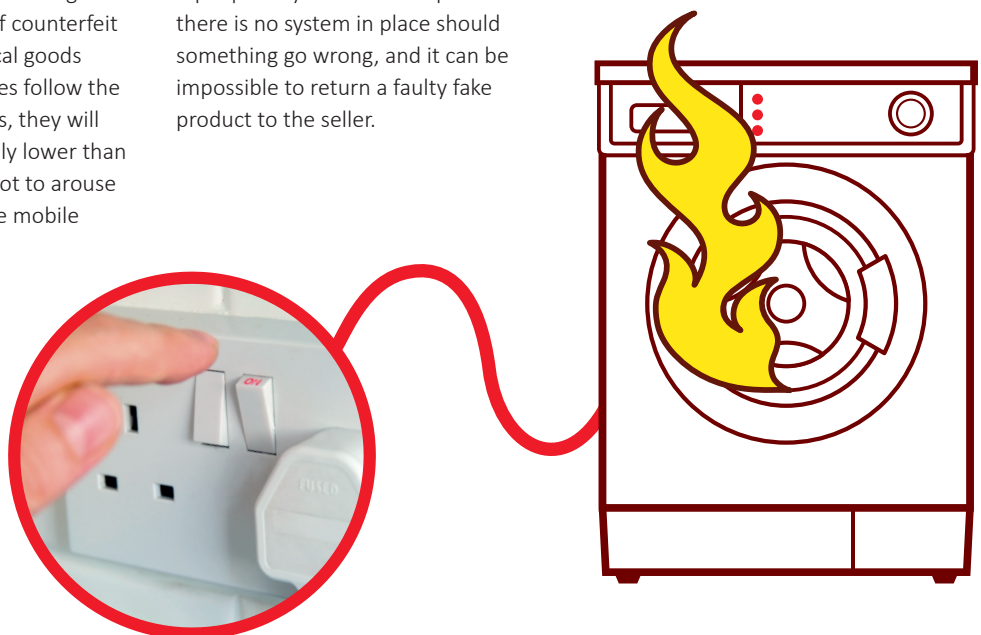
Our research has shown that 64 per cent of all counterfeit electrical goods are now being sold online with sales via social media growing by 15 per cent.<sup>7</sup> Over the last three years, social media has become the place to advertise and trade in counterfeit goods, with thousands of items being made available on a daily basis. Many items are also sold through trusted sales portals which lead 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.

## Our asks:

- **Better traceability of electrical products from point of sale to consumer.**
- **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 to prioritise action on fake electrical goods and new enforcement operations set up to target the sale of counterfeit electrical items.**



# Building regulations and electrical safety

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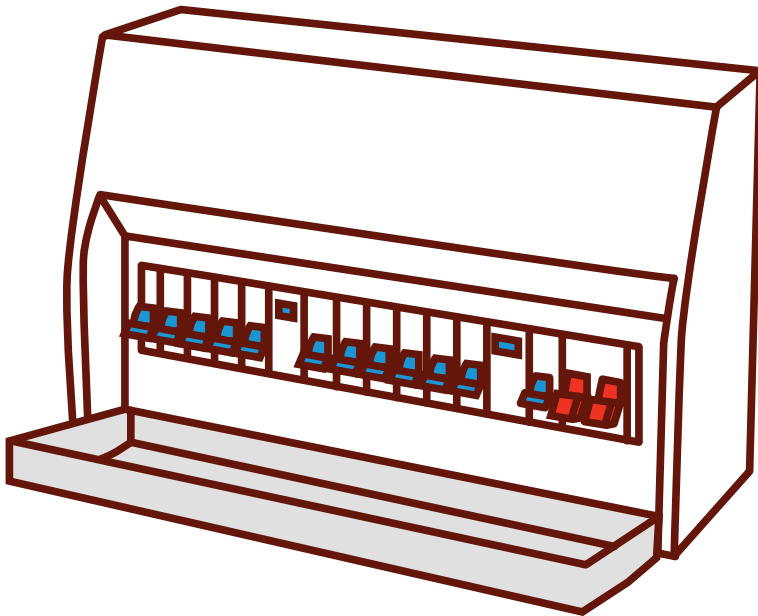
## The issue:

The building regulations which cover domestic electrical work are 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.

## Our asks:

- **We oppose any further deregulation of Part P.**
- **We want the Government to show a clear commitment to Part P to protect people.**
- **Local Authorities must see the enforcement of Part P regulations as a priority in protecting the public.**
- **We want people to be aware of the dangers of doing their own electrical work in the home and always consult a registered electrician first.**



- 1 Electrical Safety First analysis of Home Office 2014-15 Fire statistics
- 2 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2014-to-2015-private-rented-sector-report>
- 3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fire-statistics-great-britain-2013-to-2014#history>
- 5 House Of Commons Library, Population ageing: Statistics (2012)
- 6 Electrical Safety First, Consumer Voice on Product Recall Report (2014)
- 7 <http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/news-and-campaigns/press-releases/2016/06/british-consumers-now-twice-as-likely-to-buy-a-counterfeit-electrical-product/>



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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

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