



HOME



new rules for electrical safety

If you are planning to extend or alter the electrical installation in your home, such as providing extra sockets in the kitchen, or adding new ceiling lights, don't attempt it yourself. Ensure you employ a competent electrician.

The Government introduced a new law in January, which demands that most electrical work in UK households is only carried out by a 'competent' person. Up to now, the electrical industry has maintained relatively high safety standards, aided by voluntary controls such as those practiced by NICEIC Approved Contractors. But with an increasing use and variety of electrical equipment and appliances in our homes, it is not surprising that we are exposed to an increased risk of electric shock and fires caused by faulty electrical installations.

In fact, according to Government statistics, every year 5 deaths and over 500 injuries are caused by faulty electrical installations in the home. Added to this, 12,500 fires caused by electrical faults, resulting in 25 deaths and 590 injuries every year, so it is not difficult to see why an electrical safety law needs to be enforced.

"The changes to the law are welcomed by NICEIC", says Director General, Jim Speirs. "Safe electrics in the home can be the difference between life and death for you and your family, but they are often overlooked in the long to-do list when buying, renovating or converting a house."

The NICEIC carries out regular assessments of its registered electrical contractors to ensure that they are and continue to be 'competent' to carry out electrical installations. By looking at this website, you have already made a conscious effort to use a 'competent' electrician. But what you now need to do is gain a better understanding of how the new law affects you, your friends and family.

What is the electrical safety law?

Electrical safety requirements have been included in a new Part P of the Building Regulations. The Building Regulations deal with the health and safety of people in and around buildings by providing functional requirements for building design and construction.

The law states that anyone carrying out fixed electrical installations in households in England and Wales must ensure that electrical installations are:

- Designed and installed to afford appropriate protection against mechanical and thermal damage, and so that they do not present electric shock and fire hazards to people
- Suitably inspected and tested to verify that they meet the relevant equipment and installation standards

What is a fixed electrical installation?

Many improvements carried out in the home include some form of fixed electrical installation. For example, a new kitchen may require your electrician to install additional sockets, extra lighting and

appliances. A fixed installation is the wiring and appliances that are fixed to the building, such as sockets, switches, consumer units (fuse boxes) and ceiling fittings.

Who is responsible for ensuring that the electrical work carried out in my home meets safety requirements?

You are. It will be a legal requirement for homeowners and landlords to be able to prove that all fixed electrical installations and alteration work have been carried out and certified by a competent person. That is, by an electrician registered with a Government approved body such as the NICEIC.

How will I benefit from the electrical safety law?

You can expect to have safer, better quality electrical installation work because all electrical contractors will be working to BS 7671, the national safety standard. You will also be further protected against unsafe work as all electrical contractors are now required to offer their customers the option of additional protection through an insurance-backed warranty. Furthermore, if you use an NICEIC electrical contractor, you will benefit from the Complaints Resolution scheme.

For more information, download the ODPM's consumer leaflet: www.odpm.gov.uk/electricalsafety

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