



PRESS RELEASE

ELECTRICAL INSPECTIONS: WHY?

Middlesex, 10 December 2008 – Electricity is an essential part of modern day living and enhances living standards dramatically. It does however have the potential to be lethal, cause injury or damage property.

A landlord must have a clear understanding of his responsibilities in relation to electrical supply and the duties and responsibilities placed on a landlord by regulations, specifically:

Legislation

- Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994 (SI no.3260)
- Plugs and Sockets, etc. (Safety) Regulations 1994 (SI no.1768)
- The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006
- Building Regulations Part P: Guidance Booklet
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 – Electrical installation in the property must be safe
- The Consumer Protection Act 1987 – Electrical equipment supplied by the landlord should be checked before the property is offered for rent
- Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982 – Goods should be of satisfactory quality, fit for purpose and free of defects

Landlord's duties and responsibilities – fixed installation

A landlord must ensure that the fixed electrical installation is 'safe' with no unacceptable risk of injury or death, or damage to property. The fixed installation includes the consumer unit, fixed wires, wall sockets, light fittings and switches, etc.

The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 requires the landlord to ensure the electrical installation is safe when the tenancy begins and that it is maintained in a safe condition throughout that tenancy.

Existing installations

Inspections of the fixed installation, a periodic inspection report, by a competent person (generally a qualified electrician) to ensure safety and that the electrical system complies with current electrical regulations is required under management regulations for HMOs (whether licensable or not), at intervals of no more than five years.

It is regarded as good practice for landlords to adopt a similar approach to other, non-HMO lettings. In order that the inspection and associated expense has genuine safety value, it is wise to have a term in the tenancy agreement forbidding any alteration or modification to the fixed installation by the tenant.

During the regular visits, and in particular at change of tenancy, the landlord should check for signs of change, such as dimmer switches replacing standard light switches, new light fittings, etc.

New work to the fixed installation

The design, installation, inspection and testing of electrical installations is controlled under Part P of the Building Regulations which applies to houses and flats and includes gardens and outbuildings such as sheds, garages and greenhouses. Generally small jobs such as the provision of a socket outlet or a light switch on an existing circuit will not need to be notified to the local authority Building Control. High-risk areas such as bathrooms and kitchens are exceptions.

All work that involves adding a new circuit or in bathrooms and kitchens will need to be either notified to Building Control with a Building Regulations application, or carried out by a competent person who is registered with a Part P Self-Certification Scheme.

Landlord's duties and responsibilities – portable electrical appliances

A landlord must ensure that any portable electrical appliance supplied is 'safe' with no unacceptable risk of injury or death, or damage to property.

Portable appliances are those that would normally have a plug fitted, and include all mains voltage equipment such as kettles, toasters, washing machines and fridges.

The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 requires the landlord to ensure that any appliance he has provided, is safe when the tenancy begins and that it is maintained in a safe condition throughout that tenancy. The only real way for the landlord to ensure that electrical equipment is safe is to have it professionally inspected and tested by an engineer who has the correct level of expertise and equipment to perform this service.

Government have announced today that a new element of the Home Information Pack (HIP) will be introduced from the 6th of April 2009 and will ask for confirmation of the last time the property was electrically tested.

In the consultation that led to the latest changes each competent person scheme, plus the Electrical Safety Council, all formally proposed that PIRs should be included in the Home Condition Report (HCR), which should be a mandatory part of HIPs.

What government has done is keep a reference to PIR in the voluntary HCR (text below) and have introduced a new mandatory component called a Property Information Questionnaire (PIQ) which includes the requirement to indicate the date for "the last time the wiring in the property was checked". This PIQ must be included from the 6th of April 2009.

The voluntary HCR has the wording as follows for electrical services:

"Periodic inspection and testing of electrical installations is important to protect your home from damage and to ensure the safety of the occupants. Guidance published by the Institute of Electrical Engineers recommends that inspections and testing are undertaken at least every 10 years and on change of occupancy. All electrical installation work undertaken after the 1st of January 2005 should be identified by an Electrical Installation Certificate."

ENDS/...

Editor's Notes

Founded in 1996, **gas-elec** carries out impartial safety inspections and light remedial works. Its unique inspection service provides the residential lettings market with multiple inspections of the gas and electrics in just one visit. **gas-elec** has over 126 franchisees operating from 18 regional offices, who this year will carry out more than 120,000 safety inspections in domestic properties throughout the UK. For more information visit www.gas-elec.co.uk.

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