

Press release: New tougher electrical safety standards to protect private tenants

Recommended new safety measures to better protect private tenants by reducing the risk of electric shocks or fires caused by electrical faults were published for [consultation](#) today (17 February 2018) by Housing Minister Heather Wheeler.

Five yearly mandatory electrical installation safety checks for all private rented properties and safety certificates for tenants, to prove checks and repair work have been completed, are part of a package of independent recommendations to improve safety.

The government is also consulting on how best to enforce the strengthened safety regime along with whether landlords who do not comply should face tough penalties of up to £30,000.

As well as making homes safer for tenants, electrical installation improvements benefit the landlord as a material improvement to their properties, helping prevent fires which could cause costly and significant damage.

According to the most recent data tenants in the private rented sector face a higher risk of electrical shock and fires caused by electrical faults in their homes compared to social housing tenants.

To address this the government introduced new powers in the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to set and enforce tougher electrical safety standards in the private rented sector and established a working group of independent experts from industry and a range of other sectors to develop recommendations.

This builds on other measures already introduced or planned to improve the quality of private rented properties including fines of up to £30,000 for rogue landlords and agents and banning orders for the worst offenders.

The government is also supporting a Private Member's Bill which will require all landlords to ensure their properties are safe and give tenants the right to take legal action.

Housing Minister Heather Wheeler said:

Everyone deserves a safe place to live. While measures are already in place to crack down on the minority of landlords who rent out unsafe properties we need to do more to protect tenants.

That's why we introduced powers to enable stronger electrical

safety standards to be brought in along with tough penalties for those who don't comply.

We want to ensure we strike the right balance between protecting tenants while being fair for landlords. So I want to hear from as many people as possible whether these independent recommendations are the right approach.

Independent recommendations published for consultation today, include:

- 5 yearly mandatory electrical installation safety checks for all private rented properties.
- Mandatory safety certificates confirming installation checks have been completed along with any necessary repair work provided to both landlord and tenants at the beginning of the tenancy and made available to the local authority on request.
- A private rented sector electrical testing competent person's scheme should be established to ensure properly trained experts undertake this work. This would be separate from existing building regulations competent person.
- Landlord supplied electrical appliance testing and visual checks of electrical appliances by landlords at a change of tenancy should be promoted as good practice and set out in guidance.

Today's consultation seeks views on each of the safety recommendations as well as how best to approach enforcement – including what the penalty for non-compliance should be.

Final proposals will follow the conclusion of Dame Judith Hackitt's [Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety](#). Dame Judith is due to submit her final report to ministers in spring this year.

Legislative powers only cover the private rented sector. We will publish a social housing green paper in spring which will cover a wide range of issues including the safety and quality of social housing.

The government has also provided UK consumers with the highest ever levels of protection, investing an extra £12 million each year in the product safety system through the new [Office for Product Safety and Standards](#).

See the consultation: [Electrical safety in the private rented sector](#). The consultation runs until Monday 16 April 2018.

Latest data from the English Housing Survey (2015-16) shows 60% of homes in the private rented sector had all 5 recommended electrical safety features

installed compared to 74% of local authority homes and 76% of housing association homes. These 5 features are modern PVC wiring, modern earthing, modern consumer units, miniature circuit breakers and Residual Current Devices.

As part of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 the government introduced powers to set requirements for electrical safety standards in the private rented sector along with their enforcement through secondary legislation. A working group of independent experts was established to provide recommendations to ministers.

Representatives from the following organisations were part of the working group: Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, British Gas, Electrical Safety First, Chief Fire Officers Association, Association of Residential Letting Agents, Shelter, Residential Landlords Association, National Approved Lettings Scheme, British Property Federation, National Landlords Association, Local Government Association, Chartered Institution of Environmental Health, Institution of Engineering and Technology, NAPIT and Electrical Safety Round Table and the Health and Safety Executive.

There are existing regulatory requirements to help protect tenants:

- mandatory 5 yearly electrical installation checks for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)
- the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 requires landlords to keep installations in the property, including the supply of electricity, in good repair and proper working order
- building regulations since 2010 have required all circuits in new or rewired homes to comply with the wiring rules in BS 7671 and include the installation of a Residual Current Device (RCD) covering any new circuits in the consumer unit since July 2008
- local authorities have powers, through the Housing Act 2004, to take action where there are electrical hazards in a property

Government has announced tough new powers to crack down on bad practices, stamp out overcrowding and improve standards for those renting in the private sector: Current and proposed powers include:

- introduction of civil penalties of up to £30,000 as an alternative to prosecution
- extension of Rent Repayment Orders to cover illegal eviction, breach of a banning order or failure to comply with a statutory notice
- database of rogue landlords/letting agents convicted of certain offences from April 2018
- banning orders for the most serious and prolific offenders from April

2018

- introduced protection for tenants against retaliatory eviction where they have a legitimate complaint and stopped landlords from serving an open-ended eviction notice at the start of a tenancy
- required landlords to install smoke alarms on every floor of their property, and test them at the start of every tenancy, and to install carbon monoxide alarms in high risk rooms
- councils can make a direction to remove permitted development rights to convert properties where there are local concerns about the change of use
- government supports the further measures in [Karen Buck MP's Private Member's Bill](#) to protect tenants in both the social and private rented sectors, which passed at the second reading on Friday 19 January