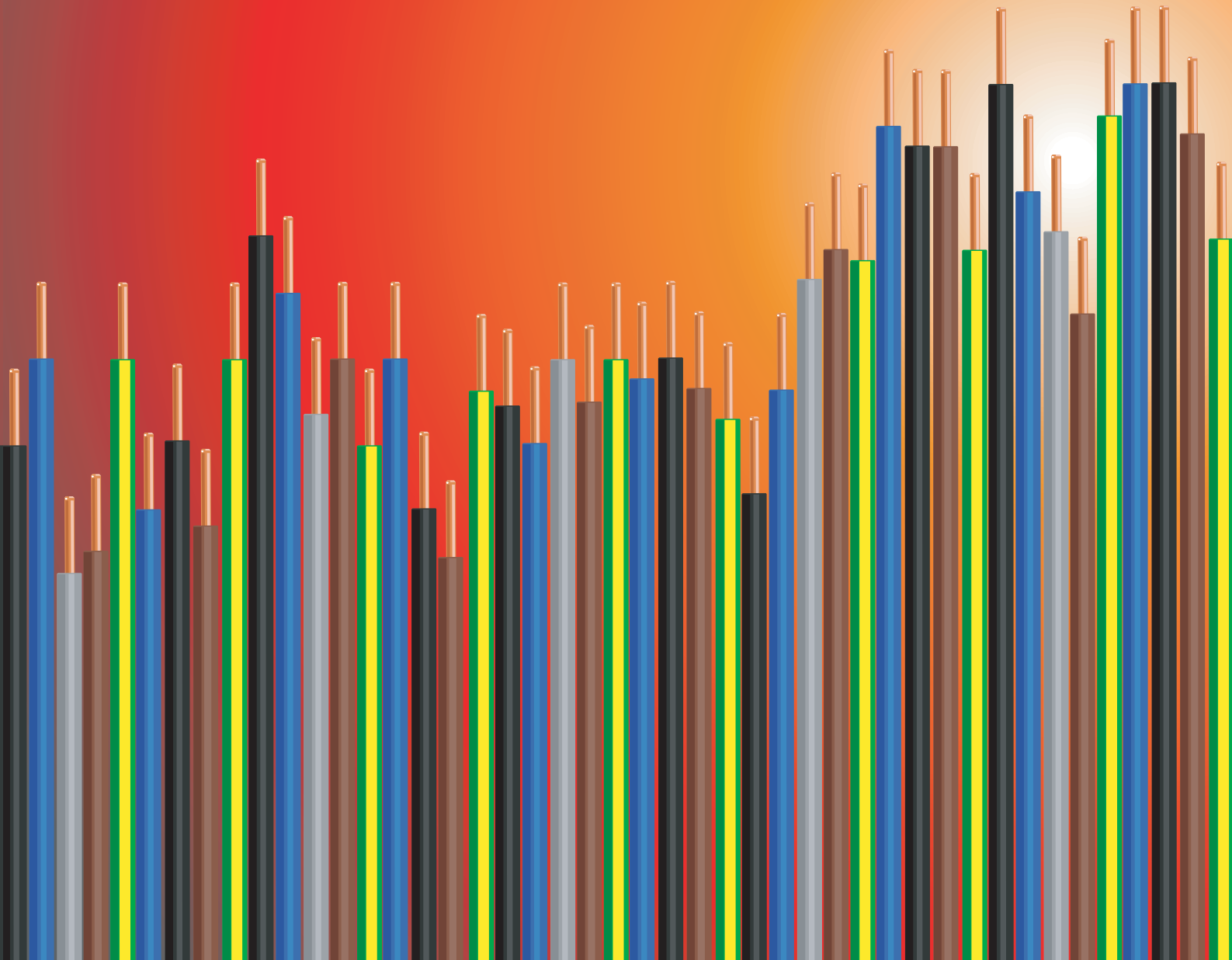


The Electrical Safety Council takes shape

Also in this issue:

Raising public awareness of
electrical hazards in the home



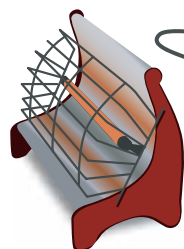


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THE ELECTRICAL SAFETY COUNCIL TAKES SHAPE

Welcome to the first issue of Switched On, the Electrical Safety Council's quarterly magazine. It's aim is to keep electrical contractors, registration bodies, local authorities, housing associations and others having an interest in electrical safety, up to date with the Council's work.

Launch

The Council was officially launched to stakeholders, the media and consumer groups at an event at the House of Commons in April. It has a staff of about 15.

Mission

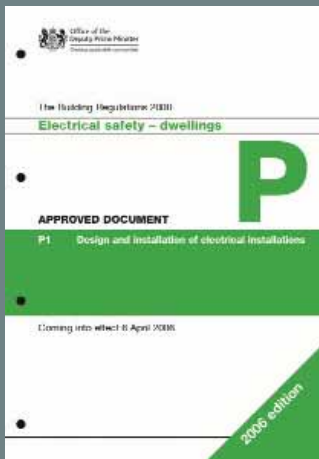
The Council's mission is "to be the most influential and respected UK driving force for consumers in the field of electrical safety".

It aims to achieve this by:

- operating a watching brief for consumers
- campaigning in specific areas of electrical safety
- monitoring the electrical industry for safety issues that affect consumers



THE COUNCIL WILL RUN A SERIES OF CONSUMER CAMPAIGNS IN PARTICULAR AREAS OF ELECTRICAL SAFETY.



Watching brief

The Council will monitor events to help ensure that previous gains in consumer safety are not eroded, and that consumers' needs are recognised and issues of safety given priority in all matters electrical.

This includes:

- helping consumers to recognize their electrical safety needs through consumer awareness campaigns
- participating in standards development, both in the UK and internationally
- publishing impartial technical information and guidance for the general benefit of the electrical industry, users and others
- responding to consultation papers in predefined areas
- being a key player in shaping future technical standards that impact on electrical safety in the UK
- monitoring electrical safety trends
- monitoring forthcoming legislation and government policy initiatives to help ensure protection for the consumer
- monitoring consumer services in the field of electrical safety and promoting initiatives via an awards process.

Safety campaigns

The Council will run a series of consumer campaigns in particular areas of electrical safety. The initial campaigns will include:

- Researching into the in-service reliability of RCDs used for supplementary protection against electric shock, and making appropriate recommendations
- Reducing the number of fires in domestic premises having an electrical origin
- Raising consumer awareness of the legal requirements relating to electrical safety.

Progress with these campaigns is reported on elsewhere in this magazine.

The Council will also regularly undertake detailed surveys of householders' knowledge and awareness of electrical safety issues. The findings of the first such survey are reported on page 8.

Monitoring industry

In addition to focusing directly on the electrical safety needs of consumers, the Council will monitor the electrical industry to help ensure that issues there do not have a negative impact on users.



Areas of concern will be worked on in partnership with other bodies such as trade associations to help ensure that all users' needs are recognised.

This will involve:

- Researching areas of concern for consumers
- Sponsoring research scholarships
- Providing authoritative technical information and guidance for the electrical installation industry and others
- Working in partnership with the electrical and building services industries, accident prevention groups and government, to develop strategies to help those using electrical products and installation services understand the associated risks.

Technical information and guidance

On behalf of users of electricity, the Council will be an impartial centre of technical excellence on all matters relating to the safety of electrical installations and electrical equipment, and will identify and promote best practice in the industry by various means, including the publication of authoritative technical publications.

Committees

The Council will represent the electrical safety interests of consumers and other users of electricity on British Standards and other committees, including those responsible for BS 7671 (Wiring Regulations), BS 5839 (Fire detection and alarm systems) and BS 5266 (Emergency lighting systems).

The Council will also represent the electrical safety interests of UK consumers on appropriate European and International technical committees, where the bases for most British Standards are developed.

New website

As part of the consumer awareness campaign, the Council has set up a new website: www.electricalsafetycouncil.org.uk which is full of useful information and guidance for householders. (See page 5).

Public events

In support of its campaign to raise consumer awareness of electrical safety issues, the Council will be participating in major public exhibitions such as the BBC Good Homes show and the BBC Gardeners World show.



The Council occupies one floor of the building.

CONTACT DETAILS

The Council has a small Head Office in central London.

The office will deal directly with enquiries from consumers and electrical industry bodies, or route them to the most appropriate member of the team. It will also provide the Council's management team with a central London location for meetings with external bodies in pursuance of its consumer safety objectives, as well as a venue for its Board and committee meetings.

We can be contacted by:

- writing to:
18 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB
- telephoning:
0870 040 0561
- faxing:
0870 040 0560, or
- emailing:
enquiries@electricalsafetycouncil.org.uk



OFFICIAL LAUNCH AT THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Above: Andrew Selous MP, Emma McCarthy (Director of the Charity) and Jim Speirs (Director General) welcome guests to the launch event.

The Electrical Safety Council was officially launched at the House of Commons on 26 April. Attended by over 50 representatives from the electrical industry, professional bodies, media and consumer groups, the launch was a great success.

Andrew Selous MP began by welcoming the guests, and confirming his support for the Charity's aim of preventing deaths and injuries arising from consumers' lack of awareness of electrical hazards in the home.

Jim Speirs, Director General of the Electrical Safety Council, followed on, saying it was a proud day for the organization, and an important change for the electrical industry and consumers alike.

Finally, Emma McCarthy, Director of the Charity, spoke of the Council's mission to be the most influential and respected driving force for consumers in the field of electrical safety.

Many of the organizations attending the launch expressed their support for the work of the Council, which bodes well for the Charity's future.

THE COUNCIL'S
MISSION IS TO BE
THE MOST INFLUENTIAL
AND RESPECTED
DRIVING FORCE
FOR CONSUMERS
IN THE FIELD OF
ELECTRICAL SAFETY

ELECTRICAL SAFETY COUNCIL WEBSITE

The Council's new website, www.electricalsafetycouncil.org.uk, went live in April. Feedback received indicates that users are finding the site to be informative and easy to use.

For those who have not yet visited the site, the features include:

- advice to consumers on 'hazards in the home'
- the 'Home Information Pack', and
- the launch of the Electrical Safety Council at the House of Commons.

Over the coming months, the site will give more information and updates on the current consumer safety campaigns, as well as results of any consumer product tests carried out. There will also be information provided by organisations that are working with the Council to promote awareness of electrical safety to consumers.

Although the main focus of the website is on raising consumer awareness of electrical safety issues in the home, it will also provide interesting articles and features on lifestyle issues such as energy efficiency, electrical installations and equipment in holiday homes, and how consumers can select a competent installer to carry out their electrical work.

Your comments on the design and content of the new website will be welcome, using the feedback facility provided on the site.





RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF ELECTRICAL HAZARDS IN THE HOME

To help improve public awareness of common electrical hazards in the home, the Council has produced a safety leaflet which is available to all Part P Competent Person Scheme operators for distribution to householders with the Building Regulations Compliance Certificates already being provided to their scheme members' customers.

The safety leaflet covers such topics as:

- getting to know your home electrics, such as the consumer unit, RCDs etc
- how old is your wiring – does it need replacing?
- visible electrical hazards around the home (condition of plugs, sockets, flexes, adaptors etc)



- particular electrical hazards in the kitchen, bathroom and garden

- how to find a competent electrical contractor to undertake further electrical work.

The Council expects to reach over a million householders in England and Wales each year using this distribution method, as part of a much wider public awareness campaign.

Copies of this and other safety leaflets can be downloaded from the Council's website www.electricalsafetycouncil.org.uk. Alternatively, single printed copies are available on request by emailing enquiries@electricalsafetycouncil.org.uk

RESEARCH INTO THE IN-SERVICE RELIABILITY OF RCDs

Although it is generally accepted that residual current devices (RCDs) reduce the risk of death or injury in particular circumstances, there are lingering doubts in some quarters as to their long term in-service reliability.

The Council is therefore investigating this issue in conjunction with its campaign to encourage the use of residual current devices (RCDs) in the home.

Following a selection process, ERA Technology Ltd has been chosen to undertake some research, the main objectives of which are to:

- ascertain the mechanism(s) by which RCDs could fail to operate correctly after a lengthy period of inactivity
- provide objective information on the in-service reliability of RCDs in domestic environments
- verify whether or not regular testing of RCDs by the user is necessary to ensure reliable operation.

The research is limited to RCDs used for supplementary protection against electric shock, which have rated operating (tripping) currents of up to 30 mA.

The research will be carried out in two phases. The first phase is intended to provide a good understanding of the possible failure mechanisms that could cause RCDs to malfunction, without which it would not be possible to detail a suitable test programme to assess the reliability of different RCDs in domestic environments.

The second phase will be the actual testing of RCDs, and will include checks to determine whether an increase in temperature, rates of corrosion and /or contaminants have a detrimental effect on their reliability. Exactly how and where this testing will be carried out is to be decided when the results of the first phase of the research are known.

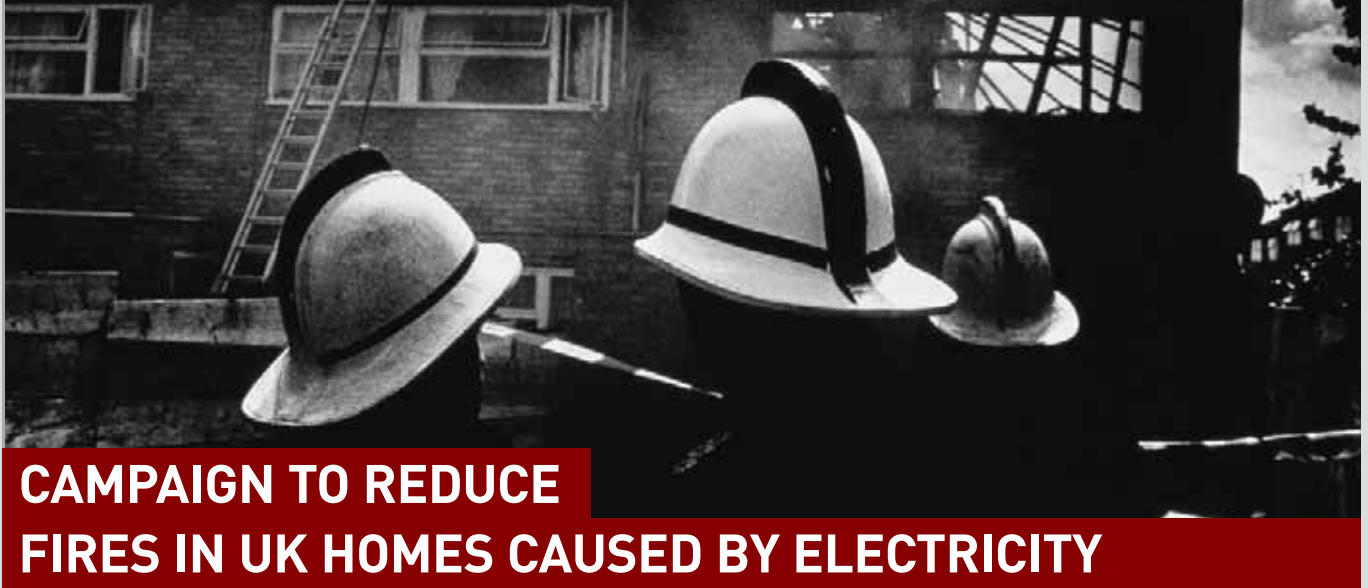
Work on the first phase has commenced and a summary of the findings will be published in the next edition of this magazine.

We would like to thank all the installers who have provided feedback to date. We would still like to hear from installers who have experienced problems with the in-service reliability of RCDs.

Please email the information to rcds@electricalsafetycouncil.org.uk

or, alternatively write to:
RCD Project
Electrical Safety Council
18 Buckingham Gate
London, SW1E 6LB





CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE FIRES IN UK HOMES CAUSED BY ELECTRICITY

One of the safety campaigns initiated by the Council is the reduction of the number of fires caused by electricity in UK homes.

Approaches have been made to a number of organisations including government agencies and consumer groups, to explore the possibility of collaborating to support each other's causes and to work together to progress electrical safety initiatives. Further contact with these and other organisations will continue over the coming months.

Contact has already been made with the National Community Fire Safety Centre of the Department

for Communities and Local Government (formerly the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister), which is responsible for running national campaigns such as the 'Fire Kills' initiative. It also has responsibility for the publication of a number of fire safety leaflets, which it provides to local fire brigades in England and Wales to distribute throughout their local communities.

In addition, contact has been made with the Government Fire Statistics and Research Department in order to establish the facts as to the number of fire-related deaths and injuries occurring in UK homes due to electrical hazards, and to try to better identify the causes of those

fires. Details of the statistics assembled so far are can be viewed on the Council's website.

As an offshoot of the campaign, research has been conducted into the availability and reliability of data associated with deaths and accidents which occur in the home due to 'exposure to electric current'.

The research has revealed that there is a need to strengthen this data and, with a view to achieving this, initial discussions have taken place with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), which is currently responsible for maintaining the national database for these statistics.

CONSUMER LEAFLETS



The Council is developing a range of leaflets to explain its consumer safety role and to raise awareness of electrical safety issues that affect householders.

The first leaflets to be produced include:

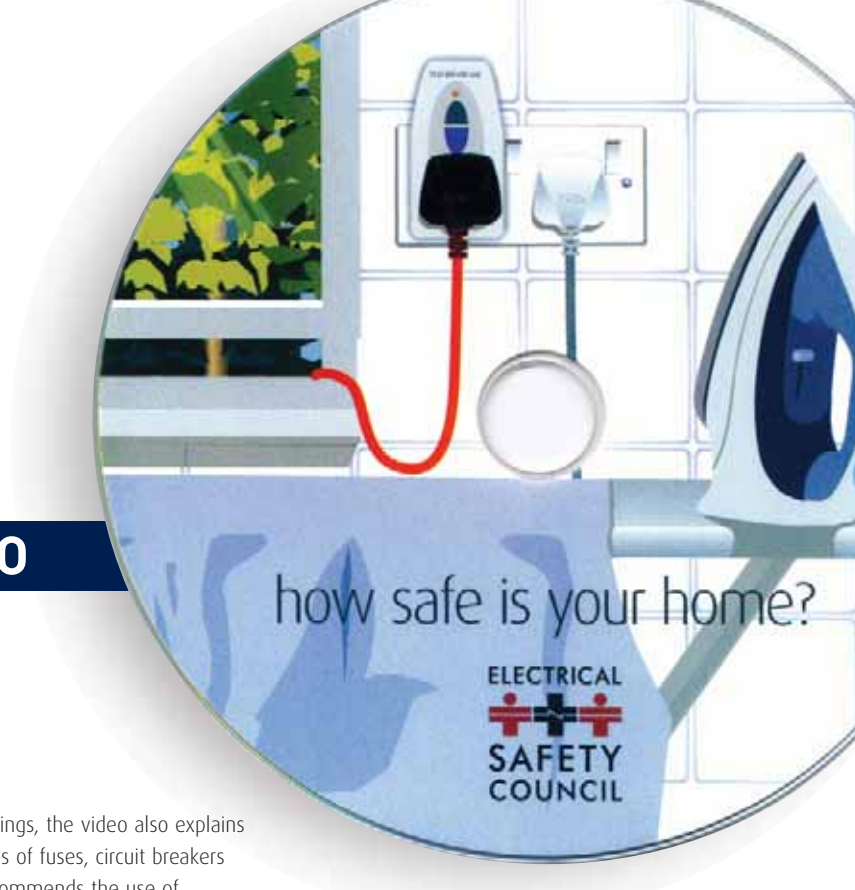
- Home safe home?
- Using electrical equipment outdoors
- Part P and how it affects you
- The Home Information Pack.

The leaflets are intended to raise the profile of the Council amongst householders and others, and to explain the benefits of using installers registered with government-approved schemes.

Copies of these and other safety leaflets can be downloaded from the Council's website

www.electricalsafetycouncil.org.uk.

Alternatively, single printed copies are available on request by emailing leaflets@electricalsafetycouncil.org.uk



CONSUMER SAFETY VIDEO

To help increase consumer awareness of electrical safety issues in and around the home, the Council had produced a 15 minute video entitled 'How safe is your home?'

The video draws attention to the electrical safety hazards that can be found in a typical family home, ranging from fire, electric shock and overloading of circuits, to the use of electrical equipment in bathrooms and outdoors, and explains how to avoid becoming a victim of those hazards.

Amongst other things, the video also explains what the functions of fuses, circuit breakers and RCDs are, recommends the use of competent electricians rather than 'doing it yourself', and draws attention to the need for electrical installations to be inspected and maintained periodically.

Single copies of the video (in DVD format) are available on request to: enquiries@electricalsafetycouncil.org.uk
The video can also be viewed on the Council's website.

NATIONAL CONSUMER SURVEY

A national consumer survey, commissioned by the Electrical Safety Council in March this year, points to a lack of awareness of electrical safety issues amongst the public.

A total of 1000 people throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were interviewed by telephone to gauge their attitudes to electrical safety and to determine their level of awareness of the issues. The survey was also designed to find out about DIY practices in the home.

Even though 78% of those surveyed recognised that electrical work is potentially the most dangerous type of DIY, the results indicated that a high percentage lack awareness of the danger electricity poses in their homes, and have no knowledge of basic electrical safety precautions.

The results indicate that of those surveyed:

- 42% either could not remember having, or have never had, their electrical installation checked by a competent person
- 35% said their electrical installation was over 15 years old, with a further 21% saying they had no idea how old it was
- 48% were not aware that their electrical installation should be checked at least every 10 years

- a worrying 84% said that they would rather spend their money on a restaurant meal, new clothes or equipment than on an electrical safety check which could help protect themselves and their families
- 32% of those who did DIY had experienced one or more electric shocks while carrying out DIY and, of those, 18% said they had had two or more shocks
- 45% would not use a registered installer to carry out their electrical work, saying they would rather have a go themselves or ask a friend or neighbour to do the work
- 83% of those surveyed in England and Wales did not know what Part P of the Building Regulations is, and
- 58% did not know what a residual current device (RCD) is, nor the benefits of using one.

To address some of the issues raised in the survey, the Council has launched a number of initiatives to raise consumers' awareness of the dangers of electricity and to provide them with guidance on electrical safety, so that they will be better able to keep themselves and their families safe from electrical hazards in the home.

Visit our website for more detail.

78% OF THOSE SURVEYED RECOGNISE THAT ELECTRICAL WORK IS POTENTIALLY THE MOST DANGEROUS TYPE OF DIY

58% DID NOT KNOW WHAT AN RCD IS

HOME INFORMATION PACK

The Home Information Pack (HIP) is a government initiative to improve the home buying and selling process in England and Wales. The Government believes the HIP, which is being introduced under the Housing Act 2004, will make the buying and selling process clearer, easier and speedier.

Under the Act, home owners (or their selling agents) will have to produce a HIP when marketing a home for sale. The HIP will have to contain a Home Condition Report which for the first time will provide sellers and buyers with a clear picture of the condition of the property before negotiations begin. The HIP will also contain a number of documents, such as replies to standard searches.

In March, DCLG, the Department for Communities and Local Government, issued a timetable showing key events and milestones for the introduction of the HIP leading up to the 'Go-Live' date of 1 June 2007, when it becomes a mandatory requirement.

According to the DCLG, the timetable has been developed with input from key stakeholders, and will be updated on an ongoing basis to include

THE KEY MILESTONES INCLUDE:

APRIL 2006	Launch of stakeholder publicity campaign and details of the phased 'dry-run' product launch published
JUNE 2006	Draft regulations made
JUNE 2006	Phase one of the product launch, focusing on ensuring that the existing components of the HIP can be brought together and can be used
SEPTEMBER 2006	First Certification Schemes approved and Home Condition Report Register and Portal contract agreed
NOVEMBER 2006 - JUNE 2007	Product testing continues into implementation
MARCH 2007	Final assurance checks completed
APRIL 2007	Publicity campaign launched to consumers
JUNE 2007	HIPs become mandatory ('Go Live' - 1 June 2007)

further milestones. Full details of all the activities in the timetable can be found on the DCLG website:

www.dclg.gov.uk/pub/367/HomeInformationPackProgrammeTimeline_id1164367.pdf

There has been significant press coverage of the HIP over the past few months with both positive and negative views expressed on the benefits of its introduction.

Although the Council is supportive of this government initiative in principle, there are some improvements we would like to see incorporated to give more emphasis on electrical safety and the importance of the inspection, testing and certification of electrical installations.

CONSUMER EVENTS



As part of its consumer awareness campaign, the Council is participating in a number of major consumer events during the year, including:

THE BBC GOOD HOMES SHOW

The theme of our stand at the four day event in May at the NEC Birmingham was 'How safe is your home?', with the main consumer safety messages being to:

- Use an RCD when using portable electrical equipment outdoors

- Choose a registered electrician when you need work done, and
- Have your electrics checked regularly by a competent person.

As well as distributing thousands of information leaflets and about a 1000 copies of the new consumer safety video, over 700 portable RCDs were given away to visitors to the stand who said they did not have RCD protection.



THE BBC GARDENERS WORLD SHOW

Our main safety messages at the five day event at the NEC in June was to use an RCD whenever working with portable electrical equipment outdoors, and to ensure that such protection is provided for any fixed wiring in the garden supplying pond pumps and lighting.

Again we distributed a large number of safety leaflets, consumer safety videos and portable RCDs to visitors to our stand.

THE NATIONAL HOME IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL AWARDS



Every year, more and more organisations across the spectrum of UK housing are taking part in the National Home Improvement Council's prestigious Annual Awards scheme, now in its 32nd year.

Taking part in the awards is straightforward. It costs nothing to enter, but ultimately the kudos can be priceless.

Each year, the award categories are reviewed to make sure they keep pace with the changing face of housing, and are truly representative of the very broadest activities of local authorities, housing associations, private developers, house builders, smaller building companies, contractors, representative bodies, architectural practices, kitchen specialists, designers and specifiers.

The winners and runners up in each category will be announced at a special NHIC Awards Luncheon in London in November.

There are 10 award categories this year, of which the Electrical Safety Council is sponsoring the 'Electrical Safety' category. This is aimed at housing associations, local authorities and other landlords providing the most effective electrical installation, maintenance and safety awareness programme.

For full details and an entry form, visit the National Home Improvement Council's website: www.nhic.org.uk. The closing date for completed entry forms and submissions is **Friday 25 August**.

THE CLOSING DATE FOR SUBMISSIONS IS 25 AUGUST

FISUEL: THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR THE SAFETY OF ELECTRICITY USERS

To help further its consumer safety objectives, the Council has become a member of FISUEL, the International Federation for the Safety of Electricity Users.

FISUEL has four main objectives:

- To promote electrical safety by helping to ensure the conformity of installations with standards
- To help those countries which do not have any system of inspection to put one in place, and to help those that do have a system in place to improve it,
- To progress the setting up in various countries systems for the periodic inspection of older installations, and
- Promotion and information.

These days, the British Standard relating to the safety of electrical installations is largely based on the standard produced by the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC). But by the time the IEC was formed in 1906, the electrical installation industry had been in existence for at least 30 years.

The first rules for electrical installations were produced in the UK in 1882, followed by Germany in 1896 and the United States in 1897. France was close behind in 1911.

The question of wiring rules was discussed at the IEC Council meeting in 1908, which decided that "this is not a subject which can as yet be usefully discussed on account of the numerous matters which have to be previously considered by the Commission."

This was a pity because, with hindsight, it can be seen that equipment standards and characteristics need to reflect the requirements for safety when incorporated in an installation, rather than being developed in a vacuum.

A further cause for dismay at a missed opportunity is that, by 1906, country's installation practices were already beginning to diverge, and wiring rules in those days (as the USA National Electric Code still is) were 'how to do it documents' and reflected these national practices. By the time the IEC got round to setting up a committee (TC64) in 1968, national materials, practices and prejudices were firmly entrenched.

CENELCOM, the then European Electrical Standardisation Commission, had commenced preparing rules in 1958. Initially it was thought that a few meetings would resolve the differences between the rules of the six members or the European Common Market, but it was found that the only way to make progress was to prepare rules

based on principles, enabling countries to carry on with their preferred, albeit slightly modified practices. Inspection and enforcement methods reflected, and had their own, national practices.

It was into this morass that FISUEL valiantly waded in 2000 and set out to identify commonalities and differences between practices and regimes. Commonalities give hope for agreement; differences identify the areas to be worked on.

But, by encouraging countries which do not have inspection or enforcement schemes, or possibly even wiring rules, to adopt an existing system which most easily fits into their practices, FISUEL is succeeding in preventing further fragmentation.

There is a long way to go before a reduction in differences between existing systems and practices can be achieved, but the longest journey begins with the first step.



For further information about FISUEL, visit www.fisuel.com

