Electrical Safety First

Investigation into the British Retail Consortium’s Voluntary Agreement Regarding the Sale of Electrical Products

Conducted for the Communities and Local Government Select Committee

January 2015
Research into The British Retail Consortium’s Voluntary Retailer Agreement

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1. Introduction and Background

About Electrical Safety First

Electrical Safety First is the UK charity dedicated to reducing deaths, injuries and fires caused by electrical accidents in the home.

About the British Retail Consortium’s Voluntary Agreement

The British Retail Consortium has brought together many of its major members and asked them to sign up to a number of voluntary measures to help educate and inform their customers about the law around the installation of electrical equipment in homes and the need to consult professional electricians.

These measures range from stickers on the packaging of relevant products, to websites and in store posters and leaflets. Retailers that have signed up to the agreement range from large DIY retailers to department stores.

The agreements signed up to vary significantly, which reflects the very different nature of the retailers involved. For example, John Lewis applies the agreement only to lighting products, whereas B&Q applies the agreement to cover all electrical products intended to be installed into domestic installations.

Retailers who have signed up to the voluntary agreement include:

Wilko
Argos
Wickes / Travis Perkins Group – Including Toolstation
Homebase
Habitat
John Lewis
B&Q
Sainsburys

The agreed wording to be used in guidance is below:

“For your safety, this product must be installed in accordance with Local Building Regulations. If in any doubt, or where required by the law, consult a competent person who is registered with an electrical self-certification scheme. Further information is available online or from your Local Authority.

The purpose of this investigation is to assess the effectiveness and application to date of the voluntary agreement and the measures in place in the wider retail environment, and to determine whether those retailers who have signed up to the agreement are following the agreement to the extent they had specified.
2. Executive Summary

The research conducted resulted in the following observations.

1. Whilst adherence to the agreement by retailers is generally in line with the stated commitments, there are inconsistencies in implementation which would not require major effort to cover.

   It is still entirely possible to purchase a product either online or in store without the customer being made aware of the advice unless specifically looking for it.

2. Universally, the attempt to inform customers of their legal obligations and the need to seek professional advice when conducting potentially dangerous DIY electrical installation work is better than before the agreement, but still broadly inadequate. Online, guidance was not signposted and in the vast majority of cases if the user was not actively looking for the advice in question it is highly unlikely that they would find it.

3. Shop staff, in most cases, were found to be unaware of the advice to be provided to customers, even when asked specifically about it. In some notable cases shop staff gave incorrect and potentially dangerous advice, including advising the mystery shopper to refer to on-line videos for guidance on how to correctly install products.

4. Consumers have low awareness of any guidance provided in stores. The forms of guidance most often observed are notices on the packaging or within the provided installation instructions.

5. Registered electricians expressed strong opinions that certain electrical items should be available only to those suitably competent to safely install the products. Previous opinion polling of registered electricians resulted in a third of those consulted stating that they spend around a quarter of their working time putting right botched DIY. The high support for controls and enhanced guidance may be seen as a reflection of their personal experiences.

6. Further, those consulted in the survey of registered electricians also had a very low awareness of any measures to inform the customer of their legal obligations and the need for the use of professional advice. This is particularly concerning as, being informed consumers, they could be expected to be more product aware than the casual customer.

Whilst the voluntary agreement cannot be deemed to provide effective protection for customers, it should be seen as a step in the right direction. It has the potential to become considerably more effective in educating consumers if straightforward improvements are made, such as standardising the measures the agreement covers, which are currently selected by the retailer, and ensuring effective staff training. Retailers should consider conducting their own research into the effectiveness of the measures they use.

This research has also indicated concern amongst professional electricians at the current retail environment, and suggests that further investigation into the potential of controlling the sale of certain electrical items such as consumer units (fuse boxes) may be worthwhile.
3. Methodology

Research Structure

The research was conducted in five stages.

1. Desktop research

   This section involved investigating what guidance is offered by retailers; compiling and further investigating the commitments made in the voluntary agreement; and seeking out examples of what may be considered best practice in this area.

   Any commentary made on the current retail environment with regards to the sale of specialist electrical equipment was also assessed.

   Retailers that have signed up to the voluntary agreement with on-line storefronts and offering appropriate products were identified, and where possible, the on-line transaction process for those products was conducted up to the point of sale.

   Full details of transactions were recorded, supplemented with screenshots of the website where necessary to illustrate the measures taken.

   In addition to those retailers who have signed the voluntary agreement, a further selection of trade-specific and general DIY stores’ on-line store fronts were visited, both for a “control measure” and also to assess the general retail environment. These included national chains and independents.

2. Mystery shop – in person

   Following on from the on-line mystery shop, selected retail branches of those who have signed the voluntary agreement were visited and relevant products inspected and, where appropriate, taken to point of sale.

   The entire process was documented, and was conducted across different locations in different regions.

   Further, as a control, comparable nationwide retailers who have not signed the agreement were visited to determine what measures, if any, they have taken to inform and educate customers.

3. Survey of consumers

   This consisted of a survey, conducted by the polling organisation YouGov, of a panel of 5,029 British residents. The questions addressed overall awareness of the current law regarding electrical installations, what the most effective method of messaging was and their opinions on the provision of guidance and the sale of certain electrical items.

4. Survey – registered electricians

   As Electrical Safety First has access to a means of directly contacting registered electricians, this route was utilised to establish their views and experiences on this subject.

   This survey was conducted through an “E-Shot” – an email bulletin - to a list of
registered electricians who had expressed an interest in receiving information and questionnaires. This survey took the form of a short introductory article with a link to a “Survey Monkey” online survey account.

To ensure maximum participation and completion of the survey, it was limited to a maximum of four simple questions.

As this is a topic which is known to be of interest to many social-media active electricians, the ability to add comments to supplement the answers was included, giving a good perspective on the issue from the trade.

The questions and introductory text are included in appendix 1 for reference.
4. Results

4.1. Desktop Research

A full breakdown of desktop research conducted is included in Appendix 4.

Desktop research involved investigating selected retailer’s on-line presence, visiting and examining websites for evidence of appropriate safety advice and conducting test purchases.

At each stage of the visit the webpages were checked for any reference to the agreed wording, general safety advice or “how-to” guides which may include safe practice.

Analysis

If products are to be retailed online without restriction, the standard should be the display of the agreed wording, or a statement to that effect, on the product listing itself. This would ensure that the customer has the best possible opportunity to read the advice, as it is likely that apart from looking at reviews (if provided), the customer will not search through the site for the advice sections.

Of the retailers investigated, the only two who fulfilled this criterion were Argos and Wilko/Wilkinson.

Electricfix, being a subsidiary part of Screwfix (Itself a part of the Kingfisher Group, which includes B&Q), was notable in restricting the sale of electrical products to professional electricians – see the image in appendix 4 for further details. It should be noted, however, that the same products were available without restriction through the normal Screwfix catalogue. It should be noted, however, that whilst part of the same trade group as B&Q, Screwfix/Electricfix are not signed up to the voluntary agreement.

With the exception of Argos, Electricfix and Wilko, it was entirely possible to go from the search engine page, to the website entry portal, and all the way through to the purchase screen without being either exposed directly to the agreed wording or general safety advice or directed to a page where the advice was viewable.

Whilst some retailers did host safety advice, unless the website visitor was making a deliberate attempt to look for this advice it is unlikely it would be seen. Further, where advice was available after being searched for, it was often found to be inconsistent and out-of-date, with one on-line guide referencing the pre-2013 amended version of Part P.
4.2. Mystery Shop

The mystery shopping exercise was intended to test, in the “real world”, whether those retailers who had signed up to the voluntary agreement were abiding by and implementing it, and also to see what the situation was present in the wider marketplace.

Stores were visited in different regions, including the greater London area, Hampshire and Hertfordshire, by people posing as unaware consumers. These mystery shoppers had a brief to enter the stores, view whatever appropriate products were available and note what messaging, if any was visible around or on the product. If at all possible, the packaging was to be opened and the instructions, if any, examined.

If possible, staff members were to be approached with a query around the product, to attempt to get advice regarding Part P and the need to use competent electricians to do complex electrical work.

Overall, it was found that most electrical products came with manufacturer warnings. These ranged from the agreed wording, or words to that effect, displayed in the instructions or on the packaging, or both. Two notable exceptions were found. Firstly, a light fitting which contained full instructions on how to install the fitting, but no safety advice at all, and secondly, a single circuit consumer unit, intended for supplying showers, which came with no instructions and no warning on the packaging. This was purchased without any advice being visible, and when a staff member was questioned at the point of sale they were unable to advise.

Staff knowledge of Part P and general advice regarding electrical safety was found to be poor, although many did err on the side of caution and advise the mystery shopper to consult an electrician if unsure, as stated on much of the packaging.

In two cases staff advice was incorrect and potentially dangerous. One mystery shopper was advised to watch on-line videos for information on how to correctly install electrical products, and in a separate store was shown an in-store lighting display, where all the light fittings were powered from extension leads, as an example of how to supply power to light fittings.
4.3. Consumer Survey

Survey questions reproduced in Appendix 2.

This survey was performed by the polling organisation YouGov, involving 5029 participants, and was conducted on the 8th and 9th of December 2014, and is a nationally representative survey of GB adults.

Key points from the survey:

Of those surveyed, 72% stated that they either could not recall, didn’t know (19%) or had never seen guidance (53%) regarding the need to inform Local Authority Building Control or use a registered electrician when performing certain aspect of domestic electrical installation work.

This contrasts with what those surveyed thought should be the case, with 82% of those surveyed believing that guidance should be provided with at least some electrical supplies. Only 3% thought that no guidance at all should come with electrical supplies.

When asked if products which require skill and experience to install should only be available for purchase by professional electricians, 45% agreed or strongly agreed, with 23% undecided and 32% against.

When asked about what form they felt guidance should take, from a multiple choice selection, the clear preferences were for notices to be provided on the product packaging, with 63%, followed by notices within the product instructions, with 61%. The next most popular choice, with 35%, was for advice or guidance to be made available online. Only 1% of those asked felt that no guidance was necessary.

Analysis:

The survey results indicate that although there is currently low consumer awareness of electrical safety guidance in retail outlets, consumers have a desire for such guidance to be provided by retailers, particularly on the product packaging or within the product instructions.

This suggests that retailers in general need to take further action to inform, and in doing so protect their customers, both from the physical consequences of unskilled electrical work, such as electric shock or fire, and the legal and financial consequences of failing to follow the building regulations.

That over a quarter (1432 of 5029, approximately 28.5%) of those polled were able to positively state that they had been made aware of guidance in some form suggests that some measures that retailers are taking may be having a positive effect – although if this is the case it would be difficult to separate it from the effect of other measures promoting Part P and the need to use competent electricians.

Amongst those who stated that their hobbies included DIY (879), 360 stated that they had been made aware of guidance regarding Part P – approximately 41%, showing a heightened awareness amongst DIY’ers.
4.4. Registered Electrician Survey

This survey was conducted through an email to registered electricians. This questionnaire (See Appendix 1 for full text) resulted in 136 responses over the time period 28/11/2014 to 05/12/2014.

Results reproduced below:

1. When purchasing electrical equipment and supplies, have you ever been aware of any guidance in the store regarding the law or the need to use a professional registered electrician?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can’t recall</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. If you have noticed in-store advice, what form did this take?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sticker on the product</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In store notice</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaflet</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice from staff</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot recall</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Is in store advice something which you feel should be standard practice or mandatory?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>82.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Do you believe there should be controls on the sale of certain items (for example, consumer units)?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis:

Whilst it must be borne in mind that the survey was of a small sample, the low awareness of measures reported by the registered electricians surveyed suggests that in many cases measures may not exist, or are being poorly implemented. The vast majority of those surveyed stated that either they had never been made aware of advice or being unsure if they had. This supports the evidence from the consumer survey, which also suggests that provision and/or visibility of guidance is poor in general.

Support was expressed for mandatory provision of advice and at least some limitation on the sale of certain electrical products, as a way to reduce the risk to the public from poor quality DIY electrical work in homes. The model generally adopted by the gas industry in attempting to limit the retail of some “installation-critical” equipment and supplies to those who hold a professional qualification is well known to electricians. This is viewed as a protection both for the trade and as a protection for the public, by helping to reduce the occurrence of poorly implemented DIY on gas installations.

Of the form of advice recalled, a sticker or notice on the product was the most commonly noticed, where the form could be positively recalled. This supports other parts of this research which suggest that this is the most effective form of relaying guidance.

The comments left by those completing the survey also expressed a degree of frustration at the current situation, with anecdotes regarding observing customers in major retailers being poorly advised by staff, in some instances where the customer observed was clearly (In the opinion of the respondents) lacking the competence to perform the work safely.

Many respondents mentioned B&Q as a retailer which provided advice. However, this was not all positive feedback with many criticising the retailer for providing guidance on the law whilst also providing literature on how to perform complex electrical tasks, and selling items such as consumer units to the general public.

Of particular concern was the retail of downlighters without visible guidance on the fire risks and installation requirements to mitigate those risks.
Selected quotes:

“This is a constant source of frustration when I visit wholesalers and see totally unqualified and unskilled customers purchasing materials that you know are going to be installed very unprofessionally by them, either in their own homes or worse still in other people’s homes. They are bringing this industry down as they have the edge over professional workers as they don’t pay registration fees, have no public liability, no calibrated instruments, never test or even know how to test let alone issue certificates and so can undercut the price to win the job. Most people don’t know that what they are doing is illegal because it is allowed to go on unpolic ed and unpunished under the noses of police across the country. The time has come to align this industry with the much stricter approach adopted within the gas installation sector.”

“I also think that the sale of electrical accessories and cable by electrical wholesalers should be tightly controlled. They will sell direct to anyone whether they have the necessary knowledge to be able to correctly install the equipment or not. I believe they should have a duty of care to ensure that they sell only to qualified persons.”

“[DIY Retailer] gave me advice although I didn’t need it and the advice they gave me was wrong. They told me a Part P electrician like myself is not allowed to connect an electric oven. Only [Power Supply Company] are allowed to do that. I asked them where they heard that from and they told me their Uncle told them.”

“Wholesalers make a mockery out of what the Part P is all about. They will sell anything just to get sales. They don’t know or realise the implications of selling good that 100% need a skilled person to fit. Joe blogs just fits the equipment with no testing and hey presto there is a fire or someone get an electric shock and dies as a result. There needs to be tighter legislation on the sale of good at wholesalers and other DIY stores.”

“I often encounter unsafe situations: 3 common examples are 1) Class 1 switches and luminaires on properties with no CPC on lighting 2) Light fittings in bathrooms without the proper IP rating. 3) Non fire rated downlighters in inappropriate situations (often sold in ‘boxed sets’ in DIY stores at low prices). All three situations can give rise to awkward discussions with customers who often have the attitude of ‘It’s been like that for years and I haven’t died yet’ or ‘You’re just trying to get me to spend more money’. A greater awareness at the DIY outlet may get the consumer to see the wisdom in doing it properly.”
5. Conclusion

The voluntary agreement may be having a beneficial effect, although this is hard to measure without further and considerably more in depth investigations of the individual stores. In the current retail environment, encompassing signatories as well as those not signed up to the agreement, the provision of guidance is best described as piecemeal and inconsistent.

Whilst there has demonstrably been action taken by those included in the voluntary agreement, this has not yet produced the desired effect. Ideally the customer should be presented with the guidance in such a way that it is immediately noticeable.

Of all the retailers investigated, Wilko / Wilkinson exhibited the most comprehensive approach, with all electrical products in store having two visible warnings on them. Wilko is able to achieve this as all electrical products in store are own-branded. Other retailers stock a wide variety of manufacturers’ products, making it harder to control what appears on the packaging.

A notable shortfall in all stores was staff knowledge of the guidance. In some stores, for example supermarkets, this may be expected due to the very broad range of products, but in DIY stores staff should be better informed, especially those having staff assigned to specific product areas within the store. In several cases this situation was made worse by staff, when questioned, giving incorrect advice rather than admitting they do not know or referring to a colleague. In one case the mystery shopper was directed to seek advice from on-line video tutorials, which is a serious concern as many contain technical errors and are unable to effectively convey to the viewer the experience and knowledge required to perform tasks safely and to the required standards. Additionally, there is no guarantee that the persons producing these videos are competent or performing the work to UK standards.

Whilst staff engagement and dispensation of advice does not explicitly form part of the voluntary agreement, its absence significantly undermines all of the other measures.

Some retailers have failed to fulfill their commitments. In particular, according to the British Retail Consortium’s letter to the Clerk [Appendix 6, letter dated 24th April 2014], Argos had agreed that the guidance would be present at every point of contact with the customer. This was found not to be the case, with the only guidance present being inside the packaging, within the instructions, once the product was purchased. The survey of registered electricians indicates that even those professionally involved in the trade are not regularly seeing guidance when purchasing products.

Overall, this research suggests that retailers need to improve in their attempts to communicate the guidance to consumers. The results of the survey of registered electricians and that of consumers suggests that the most effective way to do so would be through notices on the product packaging.

The mystery shopping exercise also strongly indicates that staff must be given more training on guidance regarding electrical installation products. Even if this is simply to instruct staff to refer the enquiry to a more knowledgeable staff member, direct the customer to the guidance on the packaging or supply the customer with a leaflet, this would be a great improvement on what is currently supplied. At the most basic, a simple direction to consult a qualified, preferably registered electrician would be of great benefit.
Recommendations

1. **Guidance should be provided on packaging.** Both consumers and registered electricians indicated that on-package guidance was the most effective method of messaging. Without such messaging, a potential purchaser may not be made aware of their obligations until after the product has been bought and taken home, at which stage this may act as a perverse incentive to attempt to conduct the work themselves.

2. **Staff training must be improved.** Staff approached sometimes gave incorrect, potentially dangerous advice to mystery shoppers. Staff providing advice to customers must be appropriately trained. Other staff should be trained to refer to a more experienced member of staff, or to advise the customer to consult a registered electrician if asked a question around electrical installations.

3. **The voluntary agreement should be standardised.** Presently retailers are able to choose what level of guidance they provide. This means that similar or identical products in different stores come with differing levels of guidance. Altering the agreement to ensure that all retailers sign up to the same level of practice would eliminate confusion and ensure that customers are given the best possible chance of being made aware of the guidance,

4. **Controls on the sale of products should be investigated.** Registered professional electricians were found to be highly in favour of such a measure. Whilst this would involve a level of expense to implement and maintain, it would serve to eliminate the majority of unauthorised and potentially unsafe DIY installations. Further investigation into restricting the sale of certain specific products, such as consumer units, should be investigated and properly costed.

5. **Being best placed to do so, retailers should consider investigating their own customers to determine the effectiveness of the measures, and share the results.** Major retailers already extensively survey and research their customer base, and so should use this ability to investigate further what messaging works with their specific customer demographic. This would enable them to develop more effective messaging, which could then be shared as best practice with other retailers, helping to increase awareness throughout the retail environment.
6. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Questions for registered electricians

Electrical Safety First is interested in whether retailers are behaving responsibly when selling electrical equipment and supplies. In order to be safe in use, many items of electrical equipment must be installed by someone with the necessary skill and experience, to the required standards – a registered professional electrician.

A number of retailers have committed to increasing awareness of the skills needed to safely install the products they sell, and we are interested to see if this commitment is being reflected in the real life experience of skilled tradespeople in obtaining their supplies.

It would be very much appreciated if you could share your experiences and your opinions by completing this short questionnaire.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/73C3XRV

Thank you for your time.

1) When purchasing electrical equipment and supplies, have you ever been aware of any guidance in the store regarding the law or the need to use a professional or registered electrician?

(a) Never
(b) Yes – optional, if so, could you identify the retailer in the comments?
(c) Cannot recall

Comments:

2) If so, what form did this take?

(a) Sticker on the product
(b) In store notice
(c) Leaflet
(d) Advice from staff
(e) Cannot recall
(f) Other – please comment

Comments:

3) Is this something which you feel should be standard practice / mandatory?

(a) Yes – appropriate products should come with a cautionary notice
(b) No – the current situation is fine
(c) Unsure

Comments:

4) Do you believe there should be controls on the sale of certain items (for example, consumer units)?

(a) Yes - the purchaser has the necessary skill and experience to install such items safely
(b) No – There should be no controls on the sale of electrical supplies
(c) Unsure

Comments:
Appendix 2 – Consumer Survey

Communities and Local Government Select Committee Research
Questions for Proposed Consumer Survey

Questions

1) There are certain electrical jobs in the home that you are required, by law, to alert your local authority to in order to be inspected or tested, or that you must use a registered electrician for.

Thinking about times you have bought electrical supplies for the home, e.g. wires, fuse boxes, plug sockets, were you aware of any guidance about this legal obligation when carrying out electrical work in the home?
[Select one]
- Yes, I often see / hear guidance about this law when buying electrical supplies from a retailer
- Yes, I have seen / heard guidance about this law when buying electrical supplies from a retailer in the past
- No, I have not seen / heard guidance about this law when buying electrical supplies from a retailer
- Don’t know / unsure
- Not applicable, I have never bought electrical supplies for the home

[to all respondents who selected ‘yes’ at Q1]

2) You said that you have seen or heard guidance about your legal obligation to use a registered electrician, or inform your local authority about certain electrical tasks in the home, when buying electrical supplies from a retailer before.

In what form did this guidance appear?
[Select all that apply]
- In store – posters or notices
- In store – leaflets
- A notice on the product packaging
- A notice within the product instructions
- Advice or guidance online
- Notices in catalogue
- Advice from staff member
- Other
- Never seen/been made aware of

3) To what extent do you agree with the following statements about making guidance available to customers when shopping for certain electrical supplies that could be used to carry out complex work?
[Strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree]
• I think guidance on legal obligations should be given with all electrical supplies
• I think guidance on legal obligations should be given only with electrical supplies that could be used to carry out complex work that I should use a registered electrician for or contact my local authority to be checked
• I don’t think any electrical supplies should come with guidance on legal obligations
• Products which require skill and experience to install should only be available to professional electricians

4) In which of the following formats do you think guidance should take?  
[Select all that apply]

• In store – posters or notices
• In store – leaflets
• A notice on the product packaging
• A notice within the product instructions
• Advice or guidance online
• Notices in catalogue
• Advice from staff member
• Other
• Not applicable, no guidance is necessary [fixed]
### Procedure for Mystery Shop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Store / Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### 1. Observe product in situ

Any notices in vicinity? If so, describe, and, if possible take a photograph.

If any leaflets are on display nearby, indicate below and attach a sample to this form.

#### 2. Examine the product's packaging

Any notices on product packaging? Comment below, and if possible take a photograph.

#### 3. If possible, open product packaging to examine product

Any safety notes in instructions / within packaging? If so, describe:
4. Staff interaction
Approach staff with the product and enquire whether there are any issues with installing the product yourself. Staff response:

5. Shop in general
Any leaflets/displays in store?
If leaflets are available, take a sample and attach, and take a photograph of the display if possible.

7. Purchasing
Is purchase necessary to fully evaluate the retailer, for example, to get advice at point of sale, or to properly inspect the product and instructions?
Details:

6. Agreed Wording
Has the agreed wording below appeared anywhere in store, on the product, in the instructions or have words to that effect been spoken during any staff interaction?

   Yes  No

Agreed wording:
“For your safety, this product must be installed in accordance with Local Building Regulations. If in any doubt, or where required by the law, consult a competent person who is registered with an electrical self-certification scheme. Further information is available online or from your Local Authority.”
Appendix 4 – Desktop research results

Argos

On-line product listings include the below information:

B&Q

B&Q’s website includes a number of guides to performing certain electrical tasks, such as installing or replacing wall sockets. This advice includes the agreed wording, see below screenshot:

This level of advice is not given in individual product listings.

Consumer units and similar accessories have a “Help and Advice” tab on their listings, which brings up the below information:
Homebase

No guidance found on lighting or electrical DIY products.

However Homebase does produce “How-to” guides on basic electrical tasks, such as replacing light fittings. These include appropriate guidance, and excerpts are included in the appendices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A brief guide - skill rating: advanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This guide is only relevant if you're using the existing light switch and wiring. If you're adding new ceiling lights, the guide also assumes you have access to the ceiling void from above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the UK, all work should be carried out to BS7671 and Approved Document P of the Building Regulations. It's illegal to do electrical installations in a kitchen, bathroom or garden without the work being inspected and approved by a Part P registered electrician or a local building control officer being informed beforehand. The replacement of accessories is considered acceptable if done competently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 1 equipment (metal fittings that rely on earthing as their protective measure) can only be fitted where there's a reliable earth at the point of installation. In some older installations (approximately pre-1966) you get lighting circuits wired without an earthing facility. On no account should Class 1 equipment be connected to these installations. Contact a qualified electrician.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember to follow manufacturer's instructions. If you're unsure, get help from a qualified electrician. We recommend you use an NICEIC-registered electrician.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

John Lewis

General wiring information is available online, but does not appear on individual product listings, meaning that it is possible to completely by-pass the information if entering the site.
through an internet search engine or through the site's own internal search function.

The information is accessed through an FAQ-style function on the lighting portal page – the Lighting Buying Guide under “Inspiration and advice”:

Inspiration and advice

Lighting buying Guide
If you find LED lights confusing or you’re unsure whether your bathroom lights have a suitable IP rating, check our guide for help in choosing the right lighting for different rooms.

In this section, the advice is in an expandable section, at the bottom of the page:

General wiring information

All light fittings must be fitted in accordance with the current IEE wiring regulations and building regulations. We recommend you employ a qualified NICEIC-registered electrician, and that the product’s fitting instructions are always followed.

We also offer an installation service if you buy lighting in our shops and need it fitted in an existing source. All our installers are NICEIC-trained (National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting) and are fully able to carry out the work required.

Toolstation

No visible guidance on appropriate product listings, or general advice available elsewhere.

Wilkinson / Wilko

Product listings include agreed wording:

Wilko 2 Gang Socket Switch 13amp

![Image of Wilko 2 Gang Socket Switch 13amp](image-url)
Wickes

No visible guidance on consumer units or plug sockets.

**Wider product environment**

Screwfix online

Some online product listings contain a link to manufacturer’s (MK in the example below) instructions in .pdf, which contain safety wording, as below. However, products from other manufacturers sometimes do not have links to instructions.

---

**Electricfix (Screwfix)**

Restricts sale to professional electricians – no advice viewable:
Maplin

No advice on website visible for appropriate products. Products for sale on website also differ from those in store.
Appendix 5 – Mystery shopping results

Farnborough, Hampshire (South-East Region)

B&Q

Products investigated: Surveyed entire electrical section of the store. Products included consumer units, plug sockets, switches and light fittings.

Product purchased: One-gang plug socket (Crabtree brand)

Staff interaction: Staff member was approached and asked if there were any problems with performing electrical work. Staff member provided an Electrical Safety Council leaflet on RCD’s, then referred customer to leaflets available at the front of the store. Whilst there was a leaflet rack in place by the store exit, it contained only leaflets regarding sustainable wood sourcing. When staff nearby were asked about leaflets, they stated that physical copies are not currently produced, and all advice is now online.

Literature from store: Electrical Safety Council RCD leaflet provided – photographed below. This leaflet is no longer produced.

[Image of leaflet]

Agreed wording: On product purchased (Crabtree one-gang plug socket) agreed wording present on plastic outer packaging in small green lettering. This was the case with all Crabtree electrical accessories in store. The advice to consult a qualified electrician was repeated in the included installation instructions sheet.

No such wording was visible on any of the consumer units on sale in store, in sealed packaging.
This product must be installed by a competent person in accordance with accepted electrical practice and IEE Wiring Regulations. If in any doubt contact a qualified electrician.

Wiring Accessories
Fitting and wiring Instructions:

1). Before commencing work switch off the power supply by removing the fuse in the fuse box, or should isolate at main switch as neutral is a live conductor.

2). If unit is to be used as a replacement for an existing product, remove existing unit from its location and disconnect the wiring.

3). Connect the wire as shown in appropriate wiring diagrams below. Use green/yellow sleeving on earth conductors not insulated. Ensure terminals are properly tightened and no bare wire is visible. Push back unit into mounting box making sure conductors are not trapped.

4). Screw the unit to the mounting box using screws provided. Do not over tighten fixing screws.

5). These products must be installed in accordance with the latest Building and IEE wiring regulations. If in any doubt, please contact a qualified electrician.
Screwfix

Products investigated: A number of electrical products were on display, including sockets, switches and consumer units, outside of their packaging.

Staff interaction: Customer was approached by a staff member who asked if they could help. Customer asked, regarding a consumer unit, if there would be any issues with performing the installation themselves. Staff member then asked if the customer was an electrician, and when the response was negative responded that they were not going to sell anything to the customer and that they should get an electrician to do it.

Literature from store – none available.

Agreed wording – Not in evidence

Maplin

Products investigated: Plug sockets and light switches

Staff interaction: Staff approached and asked about installing products. Staff advised mystery shopper to follow included instructions but to get an electrician to do the task if in any doubt.

Literature from store – None available.

Agreed wording – Not in evidence

Argos

Products investigated: Catalogue examined, only lighting accessories on sale.

Staff interaction – Staff not possible to approach as store very busy.

Literature from store – None available.

Agreed wording – Not in evidence. No warning visible in catalogue or elsewhere in store.
Wickes

Products investigated: Consumer units, sockets and switches, light fittings and cables.

Products purchased: Meter tails and earth cable, one-gang plug socket

Staff interaction: At counter, serving staff member was asked if there were any issues in installing the items to be purchased (Meter tails and earth cable, and a plug socket) themselves. Staff member responded that if there were any issues the customer should get an electrician to perform the jobs.

Literature from store – none available. On line guides are available but in store none were in place in any of the leaflet racks.

Agreed wording – Not in evidence on any packaging. On the side of the meter tails was advice to consult a qualified electrician if in doubt. Instructions included with plug socket state that if in any doubt, consult a competent electrician, and state that all wiring must be installed in accordance with the latest IEE wiring regulations.
Wilko

Products Investigated - Plug socket outlets and light switches

Product bought - 2 gang socket outlet

Staff interaction: Staff at point of sale referred mystery shopper to instructions within packaging.

Literature from store: None available.

Agreed wording: Agreed wording in red on packaging of all appropriate items. Further warning visible on instructions: “Warning: Electricity can be dangerous. If in any doubt consult a qualified electrician”
Winchester (South East Region)

D&G hardware – Independent Hardware store

No products bought.

Products investigated: Plug socket outlets, light switches, junction boxes and isolating switches

Staff interaction: When asked, was told that instructions were in packaging but should get an electrician to do it if I was unsure.

Literature from store: None available.

Agreed wording: Not in evidence. Majority of products had visible “If in doubt, consult an electrician” clearly visible within packaging.

Robert Dyas

Products investigated: Plug socket outlets, light switches and junction boxes

Product bought: 1-gang socket outlet

Staff interaction: When asked, staff were unsure. Looked at product and repeated advice visible on instructions.

Literature from store: None available.

Agreed wording: Not in evidence. Information on wiring regulations and clear warning “if in doubt, consult a competent electrician”
Products investigated: Catalogue examined – only lighting accessories on sale.

Product bought: Ceiling light pendent base

Staff interaction: When asked, staff were unsure. Referred mystery shopper to product instructions.

Agreed wording: No warning visible in catalogue. On product, “if in doubt, consult a competent electrician” visible through clear packaging on installation instructions.
London – Watford and Hemel Hempstead

Habitat / Homebase

Products investigated:

Staff interaction

Literature from store: Several leaflets - “how to install an outdoor light”, “how to upgrade a wall socket” and “how to fit an extractor fan”. Leaflets found to contain several errors, but all do advise to seek the advice of a qualified electrician if in doubt, and “How to install and outdoor light” mentions (Pre 2013 amendment) Part P, with “how to upgrade a wall socket” mentioning Part P as well, but supplying a no longer existing website for advice (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister online portal).

Note on location of leaflets – not situated anywhere near lighting section, instead were found on a stand in the furniture section.

Agreed wording – Not in evidence
how to...  
upgrade a wall socket

A brief guide. Skill rating: Intermediate

In this leaflet we explain how to upgrade a single power socket. This is a fairly straightforward project but does require some electrical experience. It shouldn’t take more than an hour to complete.

be aware...

Electrical work should not be undertaken by unqualified persons unless it is inspected, tested and certified by a qualified electrician. Part P of the Government’s Building Regulations requires that all electrical work be carried out by a registered electrician. Before fitting any electrical items please visit www.odpm.gov.uk

1: Do you need a multiple socket?
- If you are moving several items of high wattage equipment, such as a TV, computer or single-phase motor, in the location which is being upgrading, you should consider having a multiple socket fitted. This will enable you to move the equipment from one socket to another without having to disturb the wiring. It also ensures that the socket will be able to cope with the increased demand.

2: Switching off the power supply
- Always switch off the power supply at the consumer unit (fused in) before starting any electrical work. This will prevent any electrical shock. After switching off the main switch, remove the fuse or safely open the fuse box. This will ensure that the power supply is not accidentally switched on.

how to...  
fit an extractor fan

A brief guide. Skill rating: Intermediate

This guide shows you how to install an extractor fan in a wall, ceiling, or window. It shows you which switches are available and gives some important electrical installation advice. This DIY task requires some electrical wiring skill. Remember, if you are in any doubt, always consult a professional electrician.

1: Installing a fan in a window
- Cutting a hole in glass is very difficult so get a qualified glazier to do it.
- Measure the window (Fig. 1) and order a new piece of glass or a double-glazed unit from a glass merchant, specifying it for the old one.
- Do a paper plan of the pane showing the侦察: the exact diameter and position of the hole (Fig. 1).
- Remember that the fan housing is larger than the hole to ensure you have enough space around the hole for the fan housing (Fig. 1). Insert, when fitting a fan in a window, the top panel must be sealed with screws, then fit each step on each side of the window to stop the fan being damaged when the lower cast is raised (Fig. 1).
- To fix and wire the fan follow the manufacturer instructions.

2: Installing a fan in a wall
- Position the fan and use a cable finder to check if there are any buried cables or pipes in the wall.
- Also check your outside wall fan installations – such as a rain, waste or soil pipes and that the position of your fan won’t send fumes into your neighbour’s windows.
- Mark the position and diameter of the hole on the inside wall. Refer to the manufacturer’s instructions for details.

5: Electrical installation rules
- All your wiring must comply with current IEE (Institution of Electrical Engineers) regulations. If you are in any doubt at all, make sure you get the help of a qualified electrician.
- Make sure all wiring is fixed securely and suit a plastic conduit if the fan is buried in the wall.
- The cable to your fan must have a 1.0 to 1.5mm² section conductors (see the manufacturer’s instructions).
- Fans must be wired via a double-pole – switched on both live (L) and neutral (N) conductors – and switched fuse spur, having a contact separation of at least 3 mm in all poles. It must be fitted with a 3 amp fuse and side exit, any room containing a shower or bath. Make sure you follow the manufacturer’s instructions.
- The fused spur can feed off a ring main or a lighting circuit.
- Fans supplied by a 0.75mm² or 1.5mm² flexible cable can be wired as above or via a plug (fitted with a 3 amp fuse) into a mains socket.
- Extractor fans, sockets and fixed fused spurs must not be positioned within reach of a person standing at a kitchen sink or hand basin.
John Lewis

Products investigated: Light fittings and socket outlets.

Staff interaction – Staff member was asked on how to install light fittings. Explanation given was incorrect – advised mystery shopper that light could be simply plugged in to sockets in walls, as was done on the lighting display in store.

Literature from store – None available.

Agreed wording: Not in evidence. On the packaging of a socket outlet was the advice to consult a qualified electrician if in doubt, below:

![Image of socket outlet packaging]

GUARANTEE:
If the unit becomes faulty within one year of purchase, return it to Service Department, Carys Lea, Faygate, Horsham, West Sussex RH13.

WARNING:
Do not apply directly to freshly plastered or damp surfaces as product may tarnish. In doubt use polythene as a temporary gasket to protect the product. Do not use masking tape on this item.

IMPORTANT:
1. Always disconnect the mains before beginning any electrical work. 2. All bare wires must be covered with sleeving. 3. Replace all damaged wire and parts with compatible products. 4. THIS PRODUCT MUST BE EARTHED USING THE TERMINAL MARKED . 5. If in doubt please consult a qualified electrician.
Products investigated: General electrical supplies

Product purchased: Ceiling rose and light pendant

Staff interaction: Staff asked regarding the installation of the product – could not advise.

Literature from store: None available.

Agreed wording: Not in evidence. Product instructions contain cautionary advice – see images.
Argos

Products investigated: Light fittings

Product purchased: Ceiling rose light fitting.

Staff interaction: Staff asked, unable to advise mystery shopper.

Literature from store: None available.

Agreed wording: Not in evidence. Product instructions contain the wording: “if in doubt, consult a competent electrician”

B&Q

Products investigated: Light fittings.

Staff interaction: Staff member was asked how to install electrical products. Gave incorrect and sometimes confused and contradictory advice, and finished by advising the mystery shopper to seek advice from on-line videos.

Literature from store: None available.

Agreed wording: Not in evidence, but product instructions (See photograph) did contain information regarding the building regulations. However this information was not up-to-date with the current amendments to Part P.
Maplin

Products investigated: Light fittings, plug sockets and general electrical accessories.

Staff interaction: When asked, a member of staff advised that it was easy to install the products in question and that there were no regulations to stop the mystery shopper from performing electrical work.

Literature from store: None available.

Agreed wording: Not in evidence.

Toolstation

Products investigated: Axiom Consumer Unit with MCB for showers

Staff interaction – Staff member asked at point of sale could not advise, stating that they did not know whether it was permissible to install the product.

Literature from store – None available.

Agreed wording – Not in evidence. No advice at all on the product, no instructions included in the packaging and no advice visible in the area in which the product was displayed.
Products investigated: Socket outlets, light fittings, general accessories, consumer units and electric shower fittings.

Staff interaction: Advised mystery shopper that they should use an electrician to perform any domestic work. However, then referred to a Wickes helpline to talk the installer through the install if necessary, and stated that more information on performing the work was available online.

Literature from store: Leaflet on installing shower fittings – see images below.

Agreed wording: Exact wording not in evidence. See photos below for wording on provided literature and on product packaging.
Wilko

Products investigated: Electrical accessories – plug sockets and light fittings.

Product purchased: Ceiling rose.

Staff interaction: No staff available to approach.

Literature from store: None available.

Agreed wording: All electrical products came with agreed wording on the packaging.
CLIVE BETTS MP
Chair
Communities and Local Government Committee
House of Commons
London SW1P 3JA

24 April 2014

Dear Mr Betts,

RE: Part P of the Building Regulations: labelling of electrical products

Thank you for your recent letter requesting an update on the implementation of the British Retail Consortium’s voluntary agreement related to the labelling of sockets and other electrical items sold by retailers.

As you may remember from previous correspondence, we do not have a fixed timetable for completion as the time needed for each company will vary significantly depending on the number of relevant products they sell and how they believe the agreement will best be implemented. I am pleased to enclose updates (Annex A) from a number of major retailers participating in the agreement, including some hyperlinks to relevant webpages. I have also included two examples of material produced by retailers (Annexes B and C). I hope these give the Committee a clear picture of the progress in implementing the voluntary agreement.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

John Wastnage
Policy Adviser, British Retail Consortium
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Major Retailers</th>
<th>Products covered</th>
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**Note:** This table provides an overview of the major retailers and the products covered by the agreement. The implementation of the voluntary agreement by the retailers has been monitored as of July 1st, 2014.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Category</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

- All products have been redesigned to meet the new safety standards.
- Safety instructions are now included in the product packaging.
- Home instructions are also available online.
- Rollo Out HCE is the leading brand in the market.

**Implementation**

- Instructions are now available in digital format.
- All products are updated to meet the new safety standards.
- New safety features have been added to all products.

**End of July 2014**

- Safety updates will be completed by the end of July 2014.
- All products will be updated to meet the new safety standards.
- Instructions will be available online.

**Major Retailers**

- Instructions of implementation of the voluntary agreement by 24/4/2014.

**Annex A - Summary of Implementation of the Voluntary Agreement by**