

Health and Safety Bulletin (September 2026)

Don't Get Caught Out: Electrical Safety Essentials

HSE reports around 1,000 electrical accidents at work each year, roughly 25 of them fatal. As an employer you have legal duties under the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 to control these risks. Use the checklist below to review your arrangements.

- **Assess the risk.** Identify who could be harmed by your electrical equipment and installations and put suitable controls in place before work starts.
- **Check equipment before every use.** Staff should visually inspect equipment each time; anything with a damaged plug, cable or casing, or signs of burning, must be taken out of use immediately.
- **Test and inspect.** Have portable equipment (PAT) and fixed wiring formally inspected and tested by a competent person, at intervals that match the level of risk. Typically every 5 years for fixed wiring, in line with British Standards (BS 7671).
- **Use competent people only.** Installation, maintenance and repairs must be carried out by someone with the right training, skill and experience — even a wrongly wired plug has caused fatalities.
- **Do not overload sockets.** Avoid unfused adaptors and trailing cables, which create fire and trip hazards.
- **Fit an RCD.** Use a residual current device between the supply and equipment, especially outdoors or in wet or confined spaces, to cut power fast enough to prevent a fatal shock.
- **Mind overhead lines and buried cables.** Stay at least 6m clear of overhead power lines without advice from the line owner. Before digging, check cable plans and always assume buried cables are present, using a cable avoidance tool (CAT) and signal generator, operated by a trained person, to locate them.
- **Enable quick shut-off.** Make sure machinery has an accessible switch or isolator so power can be cut immediately in an emergency.
- **Report serious incidents.** Work-related electric shocks or burns causing serious injury, and dangerous occurrences (e.g. contact/arcing with a live overhead line over 200V, or a short circuit or overload causing fire or explosion that stops plant 24+ hours or risks death), must be reported to HSE under RIDDOR

Further information is available from the HSE Electrical Safety webpage,
hse.gov.uk/electricity

If you would like help implementing this, or further advice, please get in touch.

