

MOT YOUR HOME

Tips and Advice



Each year around 43,000 fires are caused in the home: over 8,170 (19%) are caused by electrical faults and 10,750 (25%) are caused by people not using electrical equipment and appliances properly¹.

Here home improvement expert, **Linda Barker**, and **Tony Cable**, from NICEIC provide some tips and advice to help you protect your family and home from electrical shock and fire risks:

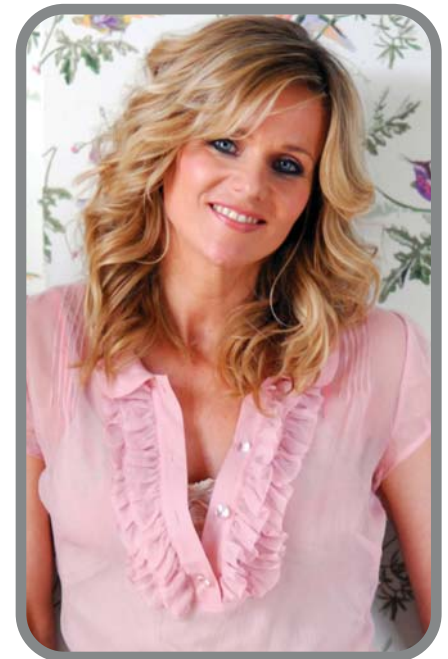
1 It's essential to ensure that sockets and switches are checked and repaired on a regular basis - especially after prolonged use. Keep your eyes peeled for any obvious signs of over-heating or damage at socket-outlets and switches. Also be aware of plugs which are hot to the touch, the smell of melting plastic and brown scorch marks as these are signs of electrical defect.

2 Flexible cables for extension leads and appliances must also be checked regularly, ideally before each use. Be aware of any fraying and never touch frayed or exposed wires; this could result in painful burns, muscle spasms or at worst stop your heart from beating. Never try to tape up an old cable when damage is found – it's much safer to replace it instead. Also make sure you don't run cables under carpets or rugs - you won't be able to notice any damage to them and this might ultimately result in a fire.

3 Do not overload sockets as this also significantly increases the risk of fire, especially if powerful appliances like kettles, toasters and hairdryers are plugged in. The use of extension leads and adaptors should be kept to a minimum and they should never be overloaded, they have a limit on how many amps they can take and if this is exceeded they could overheat, causing a fire. If you don't have enough sockets in your home ask a registered electrician to fit some more for you.

4 When seeking an electrician, always make sure you look for those registered with a Government-approved scheme, such as NICEIC. Only then can you ensure that any electrical work carried out in your home is safe and complies with Building Regulations.

5 When re-placing a plug top fuse be sure to use one with the correct current rating (Amps) for the appliance so that it does not overheat. Check in a manual or look for a sticker on the appliance to be sure. Remember that if a fuse blows for no obvious reason it may be that the incorrect current rating fuse has been used for the appliance.



Tips and Advice (continued)

6 Be sure not to put any electric heaters near curtains or furniture, or dry clothes on them, as this might result in a dangerous fire which can spread quickly. Be aware of warnings printed on the appliance or in the manual such as usage times and instructions to keep the appliance uncovered.

7 Electrical equipment and appliances deteriorate with use and over time. For this reason it's advisable that you get them checked, inspected and tested by a registered electrician periodically. Even if they seem to be working well, there may be internal deterioration that cannot be seen which if left undetected may increase the risk of a fire.

8 You can't smell it, touch it or taste it, but electricity can kill. If the electrics in your property are over 10 years old it is recommended that you employ a registered electrician to carry out a Periodic Inspection². NICEIC contractors offer a "housecheck" (Periodic Inspection Report), which acts as an MOT for your home to confirm its condition and check that the electrics are satisfactory, keeping your family safe.

9 Always turn off electrical appliances when not in use, especially at night. You don't need to turn off electrical appliances that need to be on permanently, such as fridges and freezers, but be especially wary of leaving on heating appliances such as ovens electric heaters and hair straighteners.

10 In the case of an electrical fire, where safe to do so, switch off and unplug the appliance or switch off the power at the fuse box. Do not put water on the fire, just get out of the house quickly and call 999.



A full list of registered electricians covering your local area can be found by simply typing in your postcode at www.niceic.com. In addition, when requesting an electrical inspection of your property, always ask the electrician to confirm that they are approved to undertake a "housecheck" (Periodic Inspection Report) before ordering the work.

Linda Barker and NICEIC are launching a national consumer safety campaign to warn homeowners about the dangers of electrical DIY. For more information on this and Periodic Inspection Reports* visit www.niceic.com or call **0870 013 0382**.

Notes:

¹ www.esc.org.uk

² It will cost approximately £175 - £200 for a PIR in an average three bedroom house. Homeowners should expect to be charged for at least half a days work, dependent on the size of the property. However there may be strong regional fluctuations in price, for instance in London and the South East.