



Electrical safety in rental properties

Property owners guide



Property owners and managers have a duty under electrical safety laws to ensure their rental property is electrically safe for tenants and people that visit or work on the property.

Safety switches

Safety switches protect people from electric shock, so to make your property as safe as possible, have safety switches installed on all circuits.

By law, domestic rental properties including houses and units must have a safety switch fitted to power point circuits as a minimum. If a property is rented and does not have a safety switch, the owner must ensure one is installed as soon as possible.

Don't mistake circuit breakers for safety switches. Circuit breakers are designed to protect circuit wiring and equipment, while safety switches save lives.

A safety switch has a test button. If you can't see any test buttons in your switchboard, it means you don't have a safety switch and you should contact your licensed electrical contractor to have one installed. Test your safety switches using the test button every three months.

Although safety switches can prevent electric shock, they should not substitute electrical maintenance. Have a licensed electrical contractor periodically check your property and operationally test your safety switches. It's a good idea to have the safety switches tested at the same time the smoke alarm testing is done.



Smoke alarms

By law, new and substantially renovated homes must have interconnected photoelectric smoke alarms in all bedrooms, in hallways where bedrooms are connected and on every level of the residence.

If existing smoke alarms were manufactured less than 10 years ago and are still in good working order, they will comply with the new requirements.

Property owners and managers also have the following obligations:

- Replacement smoke alarms must be the photoelectric type that comply with Australian Standard (AS) 3786-2014.
- Existing smoke alarms manufactured more than 10 years ago must be replaced (smoke alarms have their manufacture date stamped on them).
- Smoke alarms that do not operate when tested must be replaced immediately.
- Existing hardwired smoke alarms that need replacing must be replaced with a hardwired photoelectric smoke alarm.
- Test and clean smoke alarms and replace any flat or nearly flat batteries within 30 days before the start or renewal of a tenancy.
- Never remove or touch a smoke alarm unless you are testing it, cleaning it or replacing the battery.

For more information visit
qfes.qld.gov.au



Don't DIY

Don't attempt to do your own electrical work even if it saves you money—it could kill you or your tenants.

It's dangerous, illegal and can affect your insurance. This includes both plug-in appliances and permanent electrical equipment such as the hot water system.

Always get a licensed electrical contractor to do any electrical work.

For faulty plug-in appliances, contact the authorised service agent or a licensed electrical contractor to have it repaired.

When choosing a licensed electrical contractor, always check they have a current licence before agreeing to any work.

You can check their licence number at electricalsafety.qld.gov.au.



Roof spaces

There are serious electrical dangers in the roof because there are lots of electrical cables up there. If you need to get into the roof space, make sure you turn off all the main power switches at the switchboard first.

If a worker, such as an electrician or pest controller, needs to go into your roof space, allow them to turn the power off.

Prepare your tenants for the power to be turned off by asking them to:

- charge phones and electronic devices before the power is turned off
- find alternative storage for frozen food
- use battery power for medical equipment—or arrange for people who depend on that equipment to be with friends or family.



Tingles or shocks

If anyone in your property feels a tingle or shock from electrical equipment, a tap, or other metal fittings, don't ignore it—it's a sign that something's not right and could be fatal.

If the shock is from using or touching permanent electrical equipment (like a stove or electric hot water system), contact a licensed electrical contractor and tell your tenant to stop using it immediately.

If the shock is from a tap, pipe or other metal fitting call Energex, Essential Energy or Ergon Energy immediately and ask them to check your property.

Energex	South East Queensland – Sunshine Coast to Esk and Gatton areas	13 19 62
Essential Energy	Goondiwindi and surrounding areas	13 20 80
Ergon Energy	Rest of Queensland	13 16 70



Overhead powerlines and service lines

Before you begin work outside your home, check for overhead powerlines and service lines (connected to the house), especially if you're using long objects or ladders.

If you're cleaning gutters or painting the fascia or bargeboards, keep well away from the service line. While these lines are usually insulated, the insulation may become brittle with age and a simple knock may cause it to break away and expose live wires.

If a service line is damaged or falls to the ground, stay away from it and contact Energex, Essential Energy or Ergon Energy.



Private power poles

Some homes in Queensland have poles inside their property boundary for connection to the electricity network.

Property owners are responsible for keeping these poles in a safe condition to avoid an electrical incident or fire.

Over time, poles are prone to deterioration. The base of poles may rot, rust or be affected by termites. Signs of deterioration may include:

- poles leaning excessively
- evidence of rotting or corrosion at ground level or just below
- electrical fittings or wires pulling away from the pole or are broken
- cross arms splitting, loose or sagging
- trees growing into or near power poles.



Dial before you dig

If you are excavating or digging on your property where there may be underground electric lines, always check where they are located before you start.

As a guide:

- Look for electrical equipment that has electrical conduits running down external walls into the ground.
- Check the switchboard or meter box for a diagram indicating where any incoming electricity supply lines are located.
- Carefully dig down to the cable depth (typically 500 mm) until you have confirmed its location. Be especially careful digging on footpaths as many different services may be located there, including high voltage underground cables.

Ring the free Dial Before You Dig service on **1100** or visit **1100.com.au** for more information.



Electrical equipment

As a property owner, you are responsible for maintaining electrical equipment that's hard-wired into your property, like air conditioners, bathroom fan heater lights, solar panels and electric hot water systems to ensure they are safe.

If you supply any electrical appliances, such as washing machines or dishwashers as part of the tenancy agreement, it is also your responsibility to ensure they are in good working order.

Extend the safe use lifetime of your equipment by following the manufacturer's maintenance and servicing guidelines.

Don't forget to turn off and unplug equipment before cleaning or maintenance. Remember to turn the power off even before you do simple tasks such as changing a light bulb.



Solar PV systems

You should have your solar power system inspected and maintained by an accredited solar installer or licensed electrical contractor every year. They should check:

- cooling vents are clear of debris
- panels are clean, secure and free of defects
- switches are free of defects
- no parts have deteriorated or corroded
- the wiring's insulation is not deteriorated or damaged
- the battery storage system (if it's part of your system) is in good order.

Your installer should have provided you information outlining the recommended schedule for the system's maintenance.

Never do your own electrical maintenance or repairs on your system. Besides the risk of a fall, it's illegal and there are serious electrical safety risks in ceiling spaces and on roof tops.

If you do any household maintenance activity near solar power systems, take care around the electrical cables running from the panels on the roof to the inverter unit, as they will have electricity flowing through them when the solar panels are generating electricity during the day.

More information

Contact the Electrical Safety Office

electricalsafety.qld.gov.au

1300 362 128

[Facebook.com/electricalsafetyoffice](https://www.facebook.com/electricalsafetyoffice)

