

Electrical safety in regional and rural communities



Switchboards

An electrical switchboard, also known as a meter box or power box, is where the main electricity supply comes into your home or workshop. It splits electricity across different circuits, providing power to your power points, lights, oven and cooktop, refrigerator and hard-wired electrical equipment like a hot water system and air-conditioner.

Switchboards can be installed inside or outside of your home or workshop.

Inside your switchboard

- Meter – measures your energy use.
- Mains switch – turns the power on or off.
- Circuit breaker/fuse – protects electrical wiring from being overloaded, reducing the risk of fire or damage. They do not protect you from electric shock.
- Safety switch – monitors the flow of electricity and turns off the power instantly when it detects an unsafe situation. They look similar to a circuit breaker but have a 'Test' or 'T' button.



Safety switches

Safety switches protect you from electric shock.

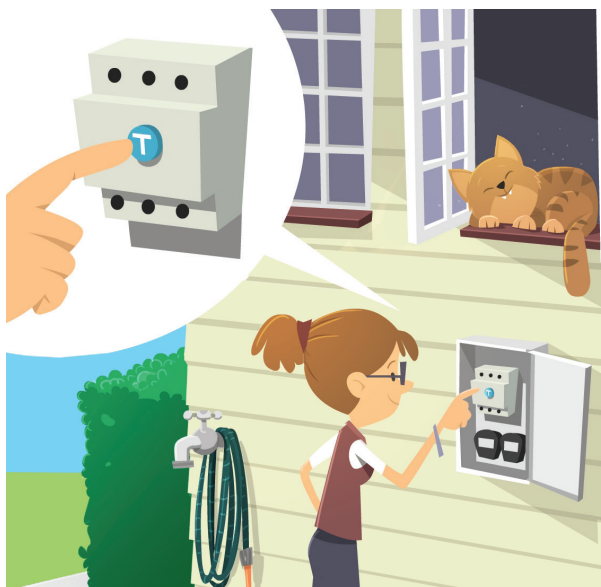
They work by continuously monitoring the flow of electricity and turn off the power instantly when an unsafe situation is detected.

You should have safety switches installed on every circuit to make your property as safe as possible.

Test your safety switches using the test button every three months.

Call a licensed electrician if:

- your switchboard still has rewirable fuses
- you are unsure whether you have a safety switch installed on every circuit
- any safety switch does not turn off instantly when the 'Test' or 'T' button is pushed
- any safety switch appears to be faulty.





Smoke alarms

Working smoke alarms save lives. You should:

- test and clean smoke alarms once a year
- have smoke alarms in each bedroom, on each storey and in the most likely path of travel to exit the property.

Remember: never remove or touch a smoke alarm unless you are testing it.

From 1 January 2022, all homes or units being sold or leased require hardwired photoelectric, interconnected smoke alarms.

From 1 January 2027, all existing private homes, townhouses and units will require hardwired or non-removeable 10-year battery powered, photoelectric interconnected smoke alarms.

For more information visit qfes.qld.gov.au

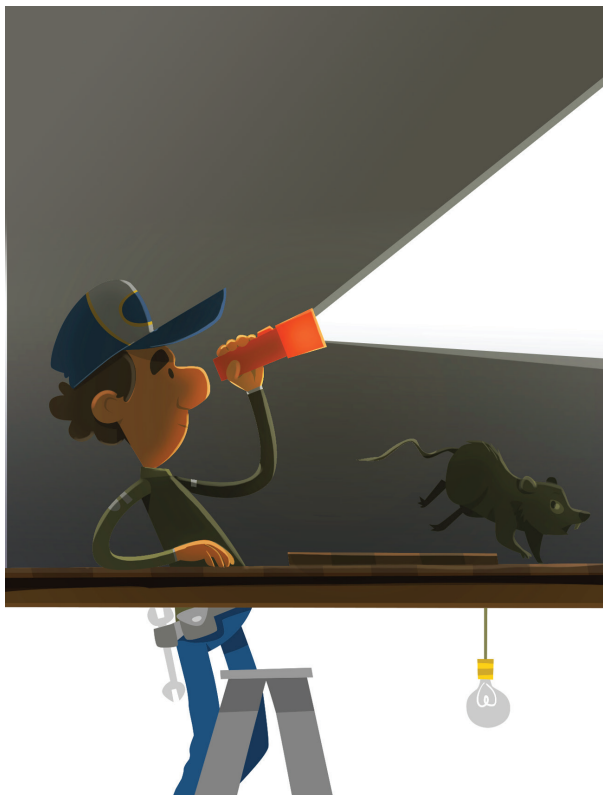


Don't DIY

Don't attempt to do your own electrical work—it could kill you and the people you live with. It's also illegal and can affect your insurance. Always use a licensed electrician.

If a plug-in appliance is broken, replace it or have it repaired by a licensed electrician or appliance repair company.

When choosing a licensed electrician, always check they have a current electrical contractor licence. You can check their licence number at electricalsafety.qld.gov.au.



Roof spaces

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

If a worker like an electrician or pest controller needs to go into your roof space, let them turn the power off first.

Prepare for the power to be turned off by:

- charging your phones and electronic devices
- finding alternative storage for frozen food
- using battery power for medical equipment – or arranging for people who depend on that equipment to be with friends or family.



Shocks and tingles

Getting a shock or tingle from electrical equipment, taps or other metal fittings? Don't ignore it—it's a sign something's not right that could seriously hurt you.

- If you get a shock from using or touching metal electrical appliances like a dryer or toaster or hard-wired equipment like a stove or air conditioning unit, stop using it immediately. Get it checked out by a licensed electrician.
- If you get a shock from a tap, pipe or other metal fitting, stop using it and call Energex, Essential Energy, Rio Tinto or Ergon Energy immediately and ask them to check your property. **This is a free service.**

Do not turn your power off as this could give you an electric shock.

Energex

13 19 62

(South East Queensland – Sunshine Coast to Esk and Gatton areas)

Essential Energy

13 20 80

(Goondiwindi and surrounding areas)

Rio Tinto Australia (Weipa)

1800 820 711

Ergon Energy (Rest of Queensland)

13 16 70



Electrical appliances

- Only use them for what they're meant for.
- Follow the safety instructions in the manual.
- Water and electricity don't mix—don't use them in or around water, like in the rain or the bath and don't touch them with wet hands.
- Maintain them by following the manufacturer's maintenance and servicing guidelines.
- Unplug them or turn off the power before cleaning or maintenance.
- If they're broken stop using them and throw them away or get them repaired.

If you're a tenant, it's the property owner's responsibility to maintain hard-wired equipment and keep it safe (for example air conditioners, solar systems and electric hot water systems).



Check it out before you plug it in

Check your electrical appliances before you plug them in—don't use them if they are damaged.

Portable electrical equipment including extension leads and seasonal electrical equipment (like room heaters, electric blankets and Christmas lights) are especially prone to damage and causing fires.

Over time, all electrical equipment can become unsafe. Signs to look out for are:

- broken casings and cracked plastic covers
- changes in colour from overheating or moisture
- water damage
- frayed cords or damaged plugs
- damaged extension leads
- full or dirty filters.



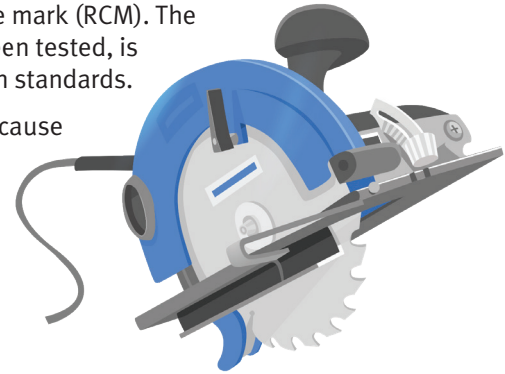
Buying electrical appliances online

It can be dangerous to buy electrical appliances on the internet from overseas sellers as they might not comply with Australian safety standards or have information about how to use them safely.

If you are buying electrical appliances, check they have the regulatory compliance mark (RCM). The RCM means the product has been tested, is compliant and meets Australian standards.

Non-compliant appliances can cause electrical shock, fire, injury or death.

You may not be able to get a refund or exchange if your product turns out to be non-compliant or faulty.



Overhead powerlines, service lines and underground cables

Look up and Live

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

Keep away from overhead powerlines. If it's damaged or falls to the ground, don't touch it and contact Energex, Essential Energy, Rio Tinto or Ergon Energy.

Make sure there are no crops or trees planted under powerlines or around poles and their supporting stay wires. Don't store or move irrigation pipes under overhead powerlines.

Don't operate or park vehicles or equipment under overhead powerlines.

Contact your electricity distributor for advice on:

- electrical safety
- clearly marking power poles and their supporting stay wires on your property to avoid accidental damage
- ensuring private power poles on your property are maintained in good condition.

If you're excavating or digging, make sure there aren't any underground electrical cables before you start. Find out where they are located by calling the free Dial Before You Dig service and also checking for underground cable danger signs or markers in the area.

Energex (South East Queensland – Sunshine Coast to Esk and Gatton areas) **13 19 62**

Essential Energy (Goondiwindi and surrounding areas) **13 20 80**

Rio Tinto Australia (Weipa) **1800 820 711**

Ergon Energy (Rest of Queensland) **13 16 70**

Dial Before You Dig Queensland **1100, 1100.com.au**

More information

Contact the Electrical Safety Office • Electricalsafety.qld.gov.au • Phone 1300 362 128 • [Facebook.com/electricalsafetyoffice](https://www.facebook.com/electricalsafetyoffice)