

Energy Safe Victoria

Media Release

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ESV extends ban on safety switches with design fault

Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) has banned electrical safety switches with design faults that mean they do not protect people from electric shock or electrocution.

Installation of safety switches like RCBOs (residual current breaker with overload protection) on all power circuits is compulsory in new dwellings and when large electrical modifications to existing dwellings are made. RCBOs detect faults involving current leaking to earth and cut the power before people can suffer an electric shock or electrocution.

After a two year prohibition, ESV has now extended the existing ban for certain types of RCBOs that had design faults which meant they could be installed incorrectly and therefore fail to operate. The ban on RCBOs begins today and lasts for 10 years.

“Accidentally sticking a knife in the toaster, or running over a power cord with a lawnmower are silly mistakes. But they do happen and can result in electric shock or electrocution,” Director of Energy Safety Marnie Williams said.

“An RCBO is designed to instantly cut the power should this kind of thing happen. Better to be red faced with a knife stuck in the toaster than in hospital, or worse.

“This ban will stop the supply of these RCBOs in Victoria. Supply, including installation of these devices, is now a crime, punishable by a maximum two year jail term.

“We have worked closely with suppliers to ensure they can supply RCBOs that meet ESV’s specifications.

“While the number of incidents involving a faulty RCBO is very low, it is a risk to community safety and ESV has an obligation to address it.”

Given the low number of incidents but the significant number of affected RCBOs in Victorian homes, ESV came to the conclusion that a recall of these devices was not practical.

“The best way to check whether your RCBO or safety switch is working correctly is to test it,” Ms Williams said. “Go to your meter box and you should be able to find a row of switches. The RCBO or the safety switch will have a small ‘test’ button. Pressing it should cut the power completely and require you to reset the device. If the power stays on, you have a faulty RCBO and should contact a licensed electrician immediately.”

Compliant RCBOs are listed on the ESV website.

For more information and guidance on testing your safety switch, go to the ESV website esv.vic.gov.au/campaigns/household-wiring/

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